

THE THREE PRINCIPLES  
OF THE PATH  
TO ENLIGHTENMENT  
by Je Tsong Khapa

**Kyabje Gelek Rinpoche**  
a commentary in 'Tuesdaynight teachings' 1987-1988  
revised edition



*Jewel Heart Transcript*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the transcription of a series of Tuesdaynight talks, given in the United States in 1987-1988 by Gelek Rinpoche, the spiritual leader of Jewel-Heart. The course is based on a text of Je Tsongkhapa, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path to Highest Enlightenment*. We used the text-translation of Robert Thurman, to be found in his book *Life and teachings of Tsongkhapa*, pg. 57-58, the text used at that time.

The transcript is lightly edited. In transcribing I took the liberty of adding a few words where thought necessary and moderately adjusting the sentences; only just enough for the text to be well understood without Rinpoche's intonation and way of talking. Questions and answers on the talks are only transcribed as far as understood and thought relevant and for the sake of easy study put in the Appendices. The drawing on the cover we received from Alfred Woll.

These teachings have proved to be very, very useful for the first step - the introductory year- of the Jewel Heart Training Programm. After this one moves into the *Odyssey to Freedom* and from there into the big *Lam Rim Teachings*. For the sake of the students as well as the facilitators, headings and divisions in the text, suggestions for home-practice, suggestions for reading, notes, glossary and index were added.

This third edition has been revised on three points;

1. The English is revised by Anne Warren, USA.
2. The total text has been adapted to the purpose these teachings: an introduction into Buddhism, as the first step of the Jewel Heart Training Programm. Pieces of text less suitable to this purpose and more suitable elsewhere have been transferred to their proper places. E.g. a teaching piece on dharma, which is very concise and difficult, has been moved to the *Lam Rim Teachings*. Pieces on refuge, on concentration and on emptiness haven been transferred to the *Odyssey to Freedom*. A small piece of the Lamrim teachings in Malaysia, Muar may-june 1992, have been inserted. Within this *Three Principles* teachings some pieces have been shifted around in order to make it easier for group discussion.
3. The suggestions for reading at each chapter have been updated. They are meant to be a help to the students as well as to the facilitators.

Any mistakes are to be blamed to the transcriber, who enjoyed very much transcribing those beautiful inspiring western-oriented talks.



# CONTENTS

The root text	5
Part I: INTRODUCTION	
1. My need for spiritual development	9
2. Spirituality and watching the mind	15
3. What are our real problems?	21
PART II THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PATH BY JE TSONGKHAPA	
4. Preliminary remarks on the root text	29
5. Introductory stanzas	37
FIRST PRINCIPLE: DETERMINATION TO BE FREE	
6. Why you need a determination to be free	45
7. 'Leisure and opportunity are hard to get': embracing our life	53
8. 'And there is no time to life': facing death realistically	61
9. Seeking refuge	69
10. Renunciation	73
11. Karma: actions and their consequences	87
12. Suffering in samsara	93
13. Our distorted view	97
14. Circling in samsara building the determination to be free	103
15. How to lead a spiritual life: the four noble truths	109
16. Delusions and the circle of existence;determination to be free	117
SECOND PRINCIPLE: ALTRUISM	
17. Why develop the altruistic attitude	123
18. How to develop the altruistic attitude	139

4 *The Three Principles*

THIRD PRINCIPLE: THE PERFECT VIEW

19. The perfect view: an unbiased outlook on reality	161
20. APPENDICES	173
Outlines of the root text	174
Preparing for meditation: the practice of Ganden Lha Gyema	178
Overviewing meditation	188
Questions and answers and discussions	193
21. Glossary	211
22. Literature	217
23. Index	219

# THE ROOT TEXT

## THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PATH by Je Tsongkhapa (Lozang Dragpa) (1357-1419)

Reverence to the Holy Gurus!

- 1 I will explain as best as I can  
The essential import of all the Victor's Teachings,  
The path praised by all the holy Bodhisattvas.  
Best entrance for those fortunates who seek freedom.
- 2 Listen with clear minds, you lucky people,  
Who aspire the path that pleases Buddhas,  
Who work to give meaning to leisure and opportunity,  
Who are not addicted to the pleasures of cyclic life (*samsara*).
- 3 Lust for existence chains all corporeal beings.  
Addiction to the pleasures of the life-cycle  
Is only cured by transcendent renunciation.  
So seek transcendence first of all!
- 4 Leisure and opportunity are hard to get,  
And there is no time to life; keep thinking on this,  
And you will turn off your interest in this life!  
  
Contemplate the inexorability of evolutionary effects  
And the sufferings of life -over and over again-  
And you will turn off interest in future lives!
- 5 By constant meditation, your mind will not entertain  
A moment's wish even for the successes of life,  
And you will aim for freedom day and night,  
Then you experience transcendent renunciation.
- 6 Transcendence without the spirit of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*)  
Cannot generate the supreme bliss  
Of unexcelled enlightenment; therefore,  
The Bodhisattva conceives the supreme spirit of enlightenment.

- 7 Carried away on the currents of four mighty streams,  
Tightly bound by the near-inescapable chain of evolution,  
Trapped and imprisoned in the iron cage of self-concern,  
Totally wrapped in the darkness of misknowledge,
- 8 Born and born again and again in endless life-cycles,  
Uninterruptedly tormented by the three miseries,  
Such is the state of all beings, all just your mothers.  
From your natural feelings, conceive the highest spirit!
- 9 Even though you experience transcendent renunciation (*niryana*)  
And cultivate the spirit of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*),  
Without the wisdom from the realisation of emptiness (*shunyata*)  
You cannot cut off the root of the life-cycle  
So, you should strive to understand relativity (*pratityasamutpada*)
- 10 Who sees the inexorable causality of all things  
Both of cyclic life and liberation  
And destroys any sort of conviction of objectivity  
Thereby enters the path pleasing to Victors.
- 11 Appearance as inevitable relative,  
And emptiness as free of all assertions;  
As long as these are understood apart,  
The Victor's intent is not yet known.
- 12 But when they are simultaneously without alternation,  
The mere sight of inevitable relativity  
Becomes sure knowledge rid of objective habit-patterns,  
And the investigation of authentic view is complete.
- 13 Further, while appearance eliminates absolutism,  
Emptiness eliminates nihilism,  
And you know emptiness manifest as cause and effect,  
Then you will not be deprived by extremist views.
- 14 When you realize the essentials  
Of the three principles of the path,  
Rely on solitude and powerful efforts,  
And swiftly achieve the eternal goal, my son!

## **PART I:**

### **Introduction**

1. My need for spiritual development 9
2. Spirituality and watching the mind 15
3. What are our real problems? 21



# 1. MY NEED FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Welcome to this series of talks. This is a meditation opportunity provided by Jewel Heart, open to friends who are interested in spiritual development.

## Why we base spiritual practice on a tradition

As you all know, today many different people offer a number of spiritual paths in various different ways. What you are going to read here is based on the Buddhist tradition as it developed first in India, then in Tibet and is now developing in the West. However, it will not necessarily be presented here in a strictly traditional way. I would like to focus on people's needs and teach accordingly. Still, what is taught here is based on traditional Buddhism as it developed via Tibet.

The reason we need to base our practice on a tradition is that we want development; we want benefits. Developments and benefits are sure to come if we follow a path that has been taught by somebody who has him- or herself developed spiritually and obtained the awakened state following certain principles and practices. Not just one, but a number of people, one after another, have done so by following this path. So, it is safer for us to follow this path, because it has been proven by experience. If we don't have this sort of base, we won't know what we are doing.

Actually, in the West, the spiritual path has developed quite well now; it is developing everywhere. However, most people do not know what they are doing. They just do it for the sake of doing it, they sit for the sake of sitting, they aim for the sake of aiming. Really, they don't know exactly what they are doing, where they are going, or what they are working for. That is what I observe; you find different things here and there, but, in general, people do not know exactly what they are doing. Take those who emphasize sitting meditation. They sit because they are told to sit, but I do not know whether they really know where they are going, what their goal is, how they would like to pursue the goal and all this. I do not know. People have short-range goals sometimes, "Well, I'd like to have a little harmony and a little pleasure and so I'll sit down and meditate." I am not saying that is bad, do not misunderstand, but I don't think it is a very good way of pursuing a spiritual path.

## My need for a spiritual path and practice

Why do people need a spiritual path? I suggest you first ask yourself the question: "Why do I need a spiritual path?" I am sure many of you have thought about that and many may not have thought about it. My feeling is that the very first step is to find out why you need a spiritual path.

You may have different answers. Some will say, "I do need a spiritual path, because..."- I don't know what purpose you have. Some will say, "Yes, I have a problem, I have pains, problems and misery and I would like to get rid of that." Some people don't even think about having a problem, some people think, "I need a spiritual path, because I know that is the right thing to do and the other things are the wrong things to do." I am not sure how much you know it is the right thing to do. You have to question yourself about these sorts of things.

The first and foremost step is this: you need to know, you have to make clear to yourself why you do need a spiritual practice, why you do need a spiritual path. I think that this is very important. Then

you will begin to know what you are doing it for. Otherwise, you may do it like a lot of people, just for fancy's sake, out of curiosity, for whatever reason, or for some funny reason half known and half not-known and then tell yourself it is something you need.

I suggest you first ask yourself: Is a spiritual practice necessary for me? *Do I really want a spiritual practice?* If so, *what is my reason?* Maybe you don't need it. After all, this is quite a nice country. There is peace, everybody has nice people around, there is no economic hardship, you get enough food to eat, and to waste, too, you have a comfortable place to live and a car to drive, so why should you need it? Is there any need for it? Some may say, "Yes, there is a need, because I want happiness." Then I would like to raise the question: What is happiness? Everybody wants happiness; there is nobody who doesn't want happiness. What are you really looking for? That is the second important thing you have to consider: *What do I call happiness?*

When you want to be happy, how far do you look? We do have methods for keeping ourselves happy. We have securities, social security, savings, and all this. They are going to give you happiness, aren't they? Or won't that be the happiness you seek? Some of you may say, "Well, I have money, I have a house to live in, I have everything, but I don't have peace of mind." A lot of people say that. And then, again: *What is peace of mind? What is it I am looking for?*

In short, the first thing I suggest is this: find out within yourself why you yourself really need a spiritual practice. That is so important! I know you do want it, you do need it, otherwise you would not be reading this. But what for? There are a lot of things to do outside that are more entertaining. You are reading this, that itself indicates that you need something. Why do you need something? Because you are not satisfied with something else. So the first step is to find out: *What is it that I am not satisfied with? What is this need of mine, really? Why? What for?*

Think about that! We have plenty of time. It is the beginning of moving towards a spiritual path, right? You have to find the reasons why you want to do it. If you have good reasons, your spiritual practice will be good. If you have medium reasons, your spiritual practice will be of medium level and if you have so-so reasons, your spiritual practice is also going to be so-so. That is why it is important.

You can meditate on it, think about it, and draw your conclusion. But do not make a decision without consulting yourself or someone. If you know, fine. If you don't know, discuss it with others, read, listen, collect more information and then make your decision.

### **What the tradition says about why we need a spiritual practice**

What I have been told about why you need a spiritual practice is this: material benefit is not the only thing human beings want. Not only that; material things will not be able to provide people with the happiness they seek.

What happiness do I seek? Different-level people seek different sorts of happiness. Take the case of Buddha. Buddha was seeking happiness before he became a buddha. He wanted a permanent solution for taking care of the problems that he encountered; not only for himself, but for the problems he saw other people encountering. He needed to find some kind of total solution for those problems, and that's what got him started on his path to becoming a buddha.

When we talk about humans, we tend to look outside. Never look outside, always look within yourself! You know, spiritual practice is not a sort of scientific engineering skill where you look at external things and play around with them. It may be scientific, but it is something you play with within yourself, because *you* are the one who needs help. So you have to work within yourself!

When you need something from outside, work outside, play outside, use machines – they work outside anyway – and from the beginning focus outside. When you want help within yourself, for yourself, you have to focus inside.

When I say "Look at human beings and what they need," I don't mean to look outside at other human beings. Look at yourself, look at *me* as a human being. Always look in. Never look out; that is none of our business. When we want spiritual development for ourselves, we need to look in, look individually and see what *I* need.

When we look within our life, within ourselves, we find *dissatisfaction with life*. There is not a single human being who does not feel dissatisfaction. Nobody, unless you are a fully developed per-

son; then it is a different matter. Otherwise, people are always dissatisfied. No matter how high you go, how rich you may become, how well known you may be, you have that much dissatisfaction, you face that many problems. You may find yourself at the top of your career -or whatever- yet even then you are full of dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction we encounter brings us unhappiness, discomfort. In other words, it brings us pain, a lot of pain. When you look at mental pain, physical pain is not so bad by comparison. Mental pain is much worse than physical pain. I am sure you people know that. If you have physical pains you can go to the doctor or whatever you want to do. When you have to help yourself with mental pains, what can you do? You have to deal with it through spiritual practice. That is really what the answer to “Why you need it” boils down to.

How good a spiritual path you need depends on how thoroughly you want to be cured of all these mental problems, these pains. (When I say mental problems don't think of being crazy, I don't mean that.) If you really want to get cured totally and permanently, you need a very high and good spiritual result. If you want a medium level or a so-so level, you can have it.

### **What did Buddha do? Buddha's life-story**

This present Shakyamuni Buddha was a prince, Siddharta Gautama, in a very wealthy Indian kingdom at that time. When he was born, the soothsayers told his parents, “If he remains in the kingdom, he is going to be one of the most powerful kings on earth, but most likely he will not stay in the kingdom and be a king. Most probably he will leave the kingdom.” So the parents asked the soothsayers, “How can we prevent him from leaving the kingdom? How can we keep him?” The soothsayers said, “As long as he doesn't see any suffering, as long as you can keep him happy, he will remain.”

So the parents concluded that they had to keep him happy. They kept music playing in the palace all the time. They selected the most beautiful girls in town to dance for him. And every time the prince looked at one of the dancers, they got the girl married to him. So Siddharta Gautama had about five hundred wives in the palace. Dancing and all these things to keep him occupied day and night were continuously going on, trying to make him happy all the time.

So the poor fellow got more and more miserable, locked in that nice little place with all these things going on. He really wanted to go outside and see what was beyond the boundaries of where he was allowed to go. He wanted to explore. He got one of the men who drove his horses and said, “Come and show me around.” The man was terrified to go, because he was not allowed to take the prince outside the boundary. However, the prince asked the *dumba*, the charioteer, to take him outside and finally he agreed.

Gautama started to go a little bit in all directions. What did he see? First, he saw old people. They normally even hid old people from him, you know. He never saw people aged or aging, because they thought that might upset him. Now he saw human beings different from those he normally saw around; not young beautiful people, but also other ones, really old and walking with a stick. He asked the *dumba*, “What is that?” The driver said, “These are old people, this is called old age.”

“Where do the old people come from?” “Well, all people become old over time.”

“Will you become old?” “Yes I will become old.”

“Will I become old?” “Yes.”

“Will I become like this?” “Yes, you'll be like that.”

“Oh *dumba*, let us go back!” He went back. He was in his twenties. Maybe I am wrong; this is a 2500-year-old record, not written down at that time, so the biographies of Buddha have a lot of variations, and they contain a lot of funny things, too. He was married at that time, had five hundred wives already, so he was not all that young!

Next time, he went to the south and he saw somebody yelling and screaming. He said, “What has happened to that one? What is it?”

The driver said, “Well, that is what we call illness, people with illnesses; they are sick.”

“What does that mean?” “They are having pain, physical pain, they are sick.”

“Will I be like that?” “Oh yes, you will be like that; yes, you will be.”

“Oh, let us go back!”

Then they went in another direction. There they saw some people carrying a dead body. He said, "What is that now?" The driver said, "That is called death."

"What happens?" "Life disappears; he is gone now from his body, he died."

"Will you die?" "Yes, I will be dead one day."

"Will I die?" "Yes, you will die." Then he said, "Go!"

Next time they took another direction again. And then, the prince saw someone peaceful, meditating. It was some kind of spiritual person who was peacefully walking along. And he said, "What is that?" "These are called practitioners. This is a person who practices a spiritual path."

"What does that mean?" "That is the path which really has peace and harmony."

And he said, "Let us go back."

He began to think. He began to think of aging, dying and of the peaceful man. He concentrated a lot on thinking, "I am subject to illness, I am subject to death, I am subject to old age, what am I going to do? What am I doing here now?" He was thinking, thinking and began to see the path that shows a solution: you really don't have to worry much about these things, these are natural things and you can overcome these problems. And he thought, "There must be a method, because I saw this man walking peacefully. I might do that." That made him want to move away from his twenty-four-hour entertainment in the palace. He really saw the palace as a prison camp and wanted to get out of it as soon as he could get the opportunity.

The opportunity came. Of course, the story goes that it was an opportunity provided by a hell of a lot of high spiritual beings. One night it happened that everybody, including all his queens, fell fast asleep, and he got up and could get out of the palace. Outside, somebody was waiting with a horse and he climbed on the horse and left. He had to leave the palace because the palace could not provide him with what he needed. He had to go away.


He went into the forest where he was by himself, without any helper. What did he do? He removed his old royal costume and gave it to the horse driver. Then some god appeared and gave him a little piece of cotton cloth, which he wrapped around his waist. He sent his horse back, cut his hair by himself and started meditating, thinking. He thought about:

1. *identifying the problems;*
2. *finding the cause of the problems;*
3. *how to get rid of the problems;*
4. *what would be gained when the problems were gone.*

These are the four major points that he thought about, meditated on and found the truth of. And ultimately he became a buddha.

*Buddhahood.* When I talk that way and you look at it that way, you may think that the state of buddhahood is something easy to reach. It is not. In reality, truly speaking, Buddha had developed, worked, many, many lives before. Now he was almost at the point of breakthrough. He had reached that far, and, with this last procedure, he shows people, "If you follow this path, you can find a way, just like I did."

Buddhahood is the very, very, very important and high level of spiritual development. It is not simply having some different feelings, seeing different things or being able to hear different sounds. Buddhahood means that all obstacles, all delusions, all imprints of delusions, even the influence of delusions, even the smell of delusions, everything is totally cleared and full knowledge is gained, everything is known! It is like the Western sense of God. Buddha developed that sort of equivalent position. That level is what we call buddhahood.

What did Shakyamuni Buddha establish by doing this? He showed that as an ordinary person, ordinary like you and me, subject to getting old, subject to dying, subject to suffering pains, he was yet able to get rid of the pains and the cause of the pains together. He showed that he himself was in the position that you and I are in. He established that. Why? If he was able to develop in that manner, then why can't you and I? There is no solid reason why we can't. If one person can do it, others can do it. It is a matter of how hard you work and how much tion you put in, how much effort you put in. Human capability is such a thing; if one human being can do it, others can do it. So he established this to show that if he can do it, why can't you?

In addition to that, he said, “I did this. These are my experiences. These are the obstacles that I faced. I applied these solutions. I overcame the problems and now I have become a buddha.” By doing that, he established two things: showing that everybody can do it and also sharing his experience.

What did Buddha do after that? He had been sitting, had made a lot of sacrifices, had gone through hardships. After all, he was a prince who had had entertainment and drinks and all this, getting drunk all the time, and all of a sudden he found himself sitting under the tree with no food, practically living on the seeds of the tree for years together. He meditated, he worked and finally he found the truth.

When he first came out, after becoming a buddha, what did he say?

Deep, peaceful, perfectly pure,  
luminous, uncompounded, and like nectar  
is the Dharma I have obtained.  
Even if I were to teach it,  
it could not be known by another.  
Certainly, I must remain silent in the forest.

*Lalitavistara sutra, The Voice of the Buddha, ch. xxv*

“Deep, profound, deep, profound, like a nectar I found.” That is what he said. “Something very deep, very profound, I found, but if I try to talk about it nobody will be able to understand me. Therefore, I better keep quiet, keep my mouth shut and stay in the forest.”

That is the first thing he did after becoming a buddha: he decided to keep quiet and to sit quietly in the forest. The reason he gave was that nobody would be able to understand what he had found. Everybody said, “Very interesting what this fellow found; we all would like to know.” But he didn’t want to share it. Now, according to the Indian tradition, Brahma and Indra – who are both angel-type gods – appeared and made the request to Buddha, “Share your experience and knowledge, otherwise the whole purpose of becoming a buddha will be wasted. You must share your experience.”

Finally, he agreed to share his own experience. So everybody was waiting for Buddha to say what kind of deep and profound nectar he had found. And what did Buddha say first? His first nectar, his first teaching, the first sharing of Buddha’s experience was what is normally nowadays known as the four noble truths<sup>1</sup>.

### **What is Buddhism?**

Buddhism is a very funny thing. It is not really much of a religion. It does not demand that you believe, that you put your faith in it, or that you worship. But, on the other hand, if you like to worship and believe, it does provide you with the opportunity; you can do those things, as well, if you want to. What do Buddha’s teachings boil down to? It really boils down to how you think, how you approach your life and how you behave. It is a way of living and a way of thinking, a way of knowing how to handle your life rather than worship or belief. That is what it is.

#### QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Do I really want a spiritual practice? If so why?
- What is it that I am looking for?
- What do I call happiness?
- What is it that I am not satisfied with?

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On having and being:

Stephen Batchelor, *Alone with Others*, ch. 1: Having and being

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, ch. 1: Consume-orientation or self-evolvement.

On looking inward:

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<sup>1</sup> For the four noble truths see 109.

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart Clear Mind*, part II, ch. 1: Where is happiness

On the life of Buddha:

*Lalitavistara sutra*, *The Voice of the Buddha*

Stephen Batchelor, *Alone with Others*, ch. 1: Having and being

Chögyam Trungpa, *Meditation in Action*, ch. 1: Life and example of Buddha.

Robert Thurman, *Essential Tibetan Buddhism*, pg. 62-94

Sherab Chödzin Kohn, *The Awakened One: life of the Buddha*

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, pg. 189-195: The Buddha's Life and the Growth of Buddhism.

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, ch. 2: The relevance of the Buddha's Life Story.

On reincarnation or continuation:

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, ch. III, 1: Rebirth, bridging life to life.

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, ch. 7: Reincarnation

Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate*, part 3, 3: Meditation on the continuity of mind.

## 2. SPIRITUALITY AND WATCHING THE MIND

In the first chapter I raised the following question for each of you: “Do you really need a spiritual practice?” I asked you people to think about this, to meditate on it and draw your own conclusions. I think you have drawn the conclusion that a spiritual practice is necessary.

### **What spirituality is and what it is not**

What do you think when we talk about spirituality? What sort of idea do you get? This is so important! I intend to go back to this all the time.

What is spiritual and what is not is not very clear in the beginning. Here I will present the spiritual path on the basis of Buddha’s experience that he has shared with us and on the basis of the spiritual development obtained by many great masters first in India and later in Tibet. What I teach is based on their experience. I would like to share it with you; however, I am not here to make you a Buddhist. I am not trying to sell Buddhism to you – Buddhism is not for sale, really. I will present you with the rough idea.

*Benefit merely for the present life.* According to Buddha, any seeking of benefit merely for the present life, either material benefit or what you think is spiritual but is related to building a material benefit, is not recommended. If you think that by attending the talks here, by listening here, you will be able to find methods through which you can develop some kind of powers, like extra-sensory perception, ability to cure illnesses, talk to somebody outside this life and relay messages and make money out of it, you are wrong. All these are related to building a material life. In that case, you are not seeking a spiritual benefit at all, because of the thought, “I can be an extra-ordinary person, I can read somebody else’s mind, I can be a channel for passing on messages, I can control somebody, I can do this, I can do that.”

So, I must tell you, you are in the wrong place for seeking a benefit that builds your name, builds your fame, builds your wealth and health. Here you are not building your wealth. Here you are not building your name. Here you are not building your health, either. It is not the place for this. Okay? If you are like Milarepa, seeking no name, no money, no health, then fine. This is the right place. You are welcome!

*Permanent benefit.* By not seeking money, health and fame, what are you seeking? A benefit for yourself. You are seeking something that cannot be bought by money. You are seeking something that cannot be taken over by power. You are seeking something that helps you and benefits you permanently, forever. And if you are seeking that, you are seeking a spiritual path. Otherwise no! Whatever it may be – no!

### **Motivation for spiritual practice**

Therefore, the first activity of the spiritual work is watching your own mind, watching your own thoughts, and watching your own motivation. The first one is motivation. And you have to watch your-

self. You don't have to tell others; you have to watch yourself. Watch your own thoughts and see why you are motivated. Watch your motivation.

If you want to read this out of curiosity, you can do it. It is not a recommended motivation, but there is no objection. Go on and read, we have nothing to hide. Otherwise, the first step is to watch your motivation.

You may think those material benefits I mentioned before are spiritual. A lot of people do think, "Hey, if I get a very special power, I can raise my consciousness, connect it to some kind of external heavenly world, get messages and through that I can relate to people and become famous." Such a thought will totally lead you to a motivation of building your own wealth, health or name, so it also is *not* recommended. And again, this is the wrong place for that.

So first, please, watch your mind and see what motivation you have. Your whole spiritual path is influenced and smoothed so much through your motivation, so you have to have a good motivation!

If the motivation is to benefit yourself life after life, then it is okay, it is suitable. The question of life after life may sound strange to a few people, but it is not strange. Life after life is definitely there. So many people have experiences, there is so much evidence that you cannot deny it any more. At least you can give it the benefit of the doubt. So, there are varieties of motivation, different levels. The whole spiritual path is at the least seeking and working for a better future life.

A better future life is what you really need help for. You need something to carry with you, something to hold on to. Because what happens is that all the security that you have built in this life so far will definitely let you down at the time of death. Each one of us will die, though we are all here gathered together today. It is like what we see in the autumn: all the leaves of the trees start to fall and the wind blows and carries them all over. Many of them gather in corners here and there, but God knows which leaf came from which tree. Similarly, each one of us is blown by strong powerful karma, which is the result of our individual deeds, and we have found a little shelter at this moment to hold on to, to stay together. The question is: How long will we remain together? Nobody knows, not you and not me. Each one of us is very good at planning to live forever, to stay forever. But...

Please! I must say it here: when I say these things, I am not joking! I am not just providing you with entertainment! I am giving you material to think about, within yourselves. You know, I give you a shock for you to use. What do you have to do? You use it on yourself, on your own ego. Use it and hit that ego! That is what you have to do. That is how it works. If you want entertainment, you better watch some television show.

### **What is real spiritual practice?**

What will we use our precious time for? What is spiritual practice, really? Will it be better if I say some mantras? Will it be better if I work for other people? Will it be better if I render myself of service to needy people? Will it be better if I sit and meditate at home or in the temple? Or will it be better if I go around a stupa like Tibetans do?

Earlier, in Tibet, lay people asked the great masters these same questions. The answer they gave was, "Each one of them is very nice, very nice, however, if you do a good practice it will be better." That has always been the answer given.

Yes, it is good if you keep on saying mantras, wonderful,  
but it is better to do a good practice.

Yes, it is good to help other people, be of service, wonderful,  
but if you do a proper practice, it is better.

Yes, it is good to walk around the stupas, to build a temple,  
to be of service to the sick, to give food to the hungry,  
to give clothes to those without clothes, and medicine to the sick  
all good, wonderful,  
but doing a good little *dharma* practice will even be better.


So the question really comes: What is *dharma*? What do I have to do? The simple answer is: *watch your mind*. How good are you? Whenever you see that you are cruel, that you are jealous, that you are


angry, that you have hatred or anything like this, you know it is bad. Why is something bad? Because it gives bad results. You don't even have to think of the future, it gives bad results immediately as well.

Take anger. What does anger do? When you quarrel with other people, your peace of mind is totally disturbed and, if you watch yourself, you look like an angry monkey. If you get angry, you look horrible, you look destructive, your peace is disturbed, and you make other people uncomfortable, too. That is the direct result you see. What does jealousy do? It is very similar. It shows the clear naked nature of the person, irritates other people, disturbs other people's peace of mind and, of course, disturbs you yourself so badly. These are the really bad ones. So, when you do a little practice, watch yourself. If you are going in a negative direction, tell yourself, "Hey, you are going in that direction, change it!" And try to change it.

When you try to change it, it is always too late, because when you start to get angry you won't realize it. You only realize it after a few minutes. You think, "Hey, it is too late!" It does not matter; it is not too late! Too late at the time, yes, but if you keep on watching yourself, each time it will gradually change, gradually be reduced. The next time you can even catch it in a much shorter period than before. It becomes shorter and shorter and shorter and after some time – believe me – there will be a time when you'll know it even before you get angry, so you can tell yourself not to get angry. You can calm yourself down. That goes for everything, jealousy, hatred, and so on.

Hatred is another one. You feel hate and think, "If I cannot challenge him or her I am not really a man, you know!" This is a serious stupid thing. Hitting somebody or showing temper to somebody is not going to make you a man at all.

When somebody has been bad to you and you can be good to him in return, what does that bring to you? Two things. If you really want to hurt your own enemy, then when he or she hurts you, you have to be good in return. That hurts even worse than telling him or her  I tell you the truth, watch it for yourself – and you are benefited twice. Instead of losing your temper, quarreling, losing your peace of mind and all this, you show love and compassion. Then you get better benefits and he or she gets even worse feelings. So here you get double benefit. However, if you do it this way, "He or she is hurt worse and for that purpose I am going to laugh at them," again, that is not good. That becomes using a good thing for a bad purpose and is bad for yourself.

Watch your own mind. Wherever bad things come in, try to stop them. Even after it happened, it doesn't matter, stop. And then repeat it, repeat it, repeat it. And after some time you get control. And when you are able to do that, you achieve something. We call that positivity versus  tivity.

### **How to use meditation**

What do you really have to do spiritually? You have to find material you can think about and meditate on. You could meditate on anything. Actually, in your spiritual practice, subject meditation is first and foremost important. You put your thoughts on certain subjects rather than on objects like a picture or an image or a blank or your breath.



What subjects? The subjects of the level where you are. What is your level? You have to know. You have to study the spiritual subjects. When we talk about Buddhist spirituality, there are steps from this ordinary level up to the level of a buddha. You don't jump up to the highest level, but rather there are steps to follow. The steps are the subjects we have to learn, and on every subject we have to concentrate, to meditate, to get used to it.

Each one of the subjects has its direct obstacles, what we call delusions. These are the negative forces that you have to challenge by engaging in positive work. And when you engage in positive actions, negative actions and the forces that motivate them can be overcome. When you overcome those, you gain positivity and that is your spiritual development.

Every step is taken like that. And each one builds up bigger and bigger and higher and higher. When you go bigger and bigger and higher and higher, you also have stronger and stronger obstacles, up until you are about to reach enlightenment, buddhahood, where the stronger challenge comes in. You have to face that. Nobody else will fight for you, you have to fight for yourself. You can get help. The help is like American aid: they give you material, but they won't fight for you (I'm joking).

Meditation it is a very romantic word and people think it has something very mystical in it, but actually the word meditation in Tibetan is *gom*, which means trying to get your mind used to it. You may think, “Is this hypnosis?” I don’t think so. Your mind is introduced to a certain direction and is getting used to it. That is – from the practical point of view – what really *gom* is. When you get used to it, your mind mixes with it, your mind accepts the conditions and once accepted, it becomes oneness.

**Practice: watch your mind**

The first meditation, if you want to do it, is this: *Watch your own thoughts!* Watch whether what you are thinking is good or bad. Watch every action you do: are you doing good work or are you doing bad work? If you are doing good, be happy about it, “Ha, I am doing great, wonderful  what do I do next? It should also be good.” If it is bad, say to yourself, “Hey, look here, hey, this ~~is~~ the wrong thing to do, let me change my motivation, let me not do it this way, let me ge.” That is what you do. So your first meditation is: watch your own mind.

I am not telling you that you have to give up the way you sit on your meditation-cushion and think and relax. But meditation is not only sitting. Do not misunderstand, I am not objecting to it. Sitting meditation is there, take it, it’s wonderful. It calms down the mind. It allows your mind to become quiet. Our mind normally goes in all directions. The more you watch it, the more you see this. Normally you pay no attention, so you don’t know what is happening. The moment you begin to pay attention, you begin to see what is happening.

You sit here for half an hour. Some of you are listening, some of you are half-listening, some of you are thinking, some of you are not thinking, some of you are alone with your fantasies, like you may be driving, you may be seeing yourself shopping, you may be doing this, you may be doing that. This is the nature of our mind. When I am talking to you, I draw your attention a little bit, but when I am not talking to you and you are left by yourself, sitting alone, you’ll find yourself doing many more mental activities! Mentally, you go shopping, you go to the bar, to the nightclub, or you go to hospital, to school, gym, do exercises, whatever, wherever, you’re doing all sorts of things. And suddenly you realize it. It doesn’t matter, don’t worry about it, everybody does it.

But use this opportunity. Don’t let it go, use it. Watch your mind and bring it back. Watch your own mind. That is so important! In other words: before you act, think! That is what it boils down to. *Think before acting.*

In the first chapter, I discussed with you whether spirituality is needed or not. Here in this chapter, it is almost certain that you need it. Not to build your name, not to build your wealth, not to build your health, but to help yourself at the time you really need help, at the time of dying, at the time of the future life. I believe spiritual development is a long road. It is a road with no highway signs. Here, in this life, you can see when you go in the wrong direction and change your direction, the signs are there. But on that highway after death, I was told, there is no signboard. So it is better to make the future sure from here, right now. That is why spirituality is necessary.

Also, you should start to act as soon as possible. I’m not saying that you have to put all your time in it, shave your hair, and so forth. I am not saying that at all! It is not even possible, not even feasible now. I’m simply saying that it’s good to spend a little time on it. The actual time that we waste in the bathroom alone could be spent on this. Then we’ll have something solidly built to hold on to in the future.

Just now most of us have nothing to hold on to in future. What do we have? You may think, “Well, I have nothing to hold on to, but neither do I have anything that will keep me away from happiness.” That is not true. You may say, “I have not committed any major bad deeds, I have not killed anybody, I have not stolen my neighbor’s wife,” and so forth. But, on the other hand, without realizing, we have done a tremendous number of bad deeds. Every action, every moment, every thought counts. Every step we take outside kills insects, everyone knows that. Every American says, “I don’t like my tax dollars used for killing anybody.” Yes, but when you put your foot outside, how many tiny

little insects will die under your feet? When you drive, how many insects will die under the wheels of your car? Think about it.

Negative forces are unavoidable with us. So you have to have some positive forces to correct them and balance them. You can't square them, "I did some bad things and I did some good things, let it be squared." That is what Americans do, right? It doesn't work that way. Each individual action works separately. Whatever bad you did will yield bad results, unless actions are taken to correct it, whatever good you did will yield good results. Separate results in each case. There is an example about the fruit tree. It is silly to grow a sweet-fruit tree with chili peppers around it, hoping that the chili peppers will be sweetened by the fruit. This does not work. You understand? This is the example you cannot square, or sum up, the good and the bad.

That is why you have to watch your own mind, watch your own actions. Okay? In the next chapter, we'll take one more step.

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Watch your thoughts. Notice how feelings and thoughts arise, and what results follow.
- Watch your actions: think before you act.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On what spirituality is not:

Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, Spiritual materialism, pg. 13-22

On meditation practice as a means to learn to watch your thoughts and motivation:

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, ch. 10: Establishing a daily practice

ch. 14: Mindfulness of the contents of thoughts.

Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate*, part one: Mind and Meditation.

part two: Establishing a meditation practice.

Joseph Goldstein, *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom*, ch. 2: Why Meditate?

ch. 3: Meditation Instructions.

Rob Nairn, *Diamond mind*.

B. Alan Wallace, *Boundless Heart*. ch. 2 Beginning the meditation



### 3. WHAT ARE OUR REAL PROBLEMS?

So far, we have been working to gain the basic preliminary spiritual opening: opening your thoughts towards a better use of your life and of your path. It is hard for Western people to be told in the beginning that the next life is more important than this life, that it makes a big difference if you have a wider perspective than just a single life. It is also very hard to digest that death is unavoidable and that it is important to think about this. Sometimes it is so hard that we even avoid thinking about it, but the thing is: death *is* unavoidable. If you really love yourself, if you feel, “I want something better for myself,” you *have* to put a little effort and thinking into that.

#### **The problem of desire**

Why do we avoid thoughts about death? Because of our deluded desires. Our desires are too strong, as you all well know. I have noticed it myself. We always develop a desire for the next thing. Even when we happy, in a pleasant situation, the thought comes up, “What about something more?”

I myself have had an interesting and funny experience. If we let our desires run wild – and that is very normal – they always seeks something more. In my case, I always wanted some kind of entertainment. And then I wanted a TV. And when I had a TV, a black-and-white one, I wanted a color-TV. And when I had a color-TV, it was not sufficient, I needed a cable system. And now, when I have the cable system – you watch it, it happens! – that is not sufficient, I need HBO now. Like that. It is like taking a hot bath. You sit in the hot tub, very nice, very quiet, no disturbances, and then you think, “Hey, what about a little music?” You turn on the music and then you want flowers and this and that. And that is very normal, right? That is how the mind leads you. This is the real example of how our desires move towards material things as well as towards things we think are spiritual but in reality may not be.

To know what really is spiritual and what is not is very important for us, particularly for *me* who is a beginner on the path. When we don’t have the wisdom of judging what really works towards spirituality and what does not, and then we can mistakenly think every little thing is spiritual. For example, a lot of sexual activities, relationships so and forth are sometimes put in the spiritual category. To have a proper understanding of what is spirituality and what is delusion is very difficult. The dividing line between reinforcing passion, desire, attachment, and reinforcing love-compassion and spirituality is very thin. Very thin. By making a mistake on that, one gets into a lot of trouble. It is so important not to let ourselves be controlled and conquered by desire and passion. Passion in particular works like glue to keep an individual stuck in *samsara*, the circle of existence, and it is very hard to get out of that. Very hard.

#### *Three ways of overcoming desire that Buddha recommended*

1. For those who cannot deal with the problems at all, Buddha suggested avoidance. In the case of passion, this means celibacy, becoming a monk or nun. That is the hard way, forcefully cutting passion by just not giving it any opportunity, by just getting away from the attractive objects, even to the extent of disciplining oneself not to look beyond certain bounds. That sort of hard-line method, even becoming a more or less impossible type of person, is one method for getting the

person out of problems of desire and so forth.

2. People who are a little bit more educated, more intelligent, and more fortunate in not being in that sort of compelled or driven state, do not necessarily have to follow this hard way. They may be able to use those energies to help to help others develop, the way that bodhisattvas do. Even in the *sutra* path, bodhisattvas use passion and so forth without forcefully cutting it for helping others, for their spiritual development, to render service. So a second sort of category or method has been presented.
3. There is also a way of transforming passion rather than suppressing it or forcefully disciplining it. The delusions which make you suffer can be transformed into the path which enables you to attain buddhahood. That is the highest technique, given in *Vajrayana* Buddhism. People often misunderstand that and think of ordinary sex being used as a *tantric* practice. That is a totally wrong understanding! *Vajrayana* includes methods to transform not only attachment, but also anger, hatred and so forth.

### **Man-made problems versus root problems**

What is really happening with us? Just now we are very strongly supplied with negative forces. You do not have to be 'a negative person' at all to be strongly provided with negative forces. You can have very good and wonderful behavior, you can be a nice person with a Boy Scout attitude, but in the meantime still be very strongly filled with anger, attachment and hatred. That is our problem. All of us are in that soup; we are all in the same boat. And this is causing us trouble. This is the thing that causes the continuation of our pains and miseries. That is why Buddha chose first to talk about pain, something we don't like to hear about.

What is the whole purpose of wanting to do something spiritual? Getting the individual better, helping the individual reach a little higher, getting closer to God, getting inside, or whatever you may like to call it; you can use any terminology. What we really want is to cut the problems that are always beyond our control.

The problems that are beyond our control are our biggest problems. But we don't go into those problems, we don't deal with them, we tend to ignore them or deny them. Why? Because we have man-made problems which cover up our deeper problems. Though the negative forces are strong with us, we don't want to cut them, we don't want to harm the negative forces. So we cover them up, we really cover them up.

*Desire.* In the East, we have the problem of poverty: no food, no shelter, no clothes. In the West, people are more fortunate. I don't think Westerners realize how fortunate they are, physically and materially, compared with others. If you go to third-world countries, you see it. You may think that you are badly off, but you are not, materially. When you don't have material problems to cover up your deeper problems, then what do you get? Emotional problems. Emotional problems are the biggest disturbance in the US. That is what I've noticed. I may be wrong, but I think every individual around here faces a lot of emotional problems. These emotional problems make our lives miserable. Sometimes they become so huge that we get almost buried under them.

Now, how are you going to handle them? How do we solve our emotional problems? What most people do is try to work them out one by one, try to deal with them one by one. If you do that, when you solve one problem, you get another one. So endless emotional problems will arise and you'll probably be buried under them.

What should you really do? I think you should look deep inside, attack the root of the emotional problems rather than solve them individually. When you start to look for the root of the emotional problems, you'll find that *your desire for yourself to be better off* is the real root. You have created imaginative happiness and you are not getting it. You have... I am so sorry. I have been saying 'you' but I should have said 'I'. When one has the imaginative "I am the most important and I want to be happy," then your happiness is something which you imaginatively build up and build up. You force yourself in that direction and you don't reach it. And even if you do get it, you are not satisfied. Remember my TV set? And you have various other problems in between that, standing in the way of

getting what you imagined as pleasure. So you get upset, overpowered and frustrated. All these kind of emotions come up.

However, what you really have to think here, is, “Is the imaginative pleasure that I am building real pleasure? Will that really satisfy me? Is that really what I need?” Each one of your built-up castles are castles in the air, which do not have much strength, I think. If you try to approach it in that manner, it may be a little helpful to you.

*Busy lazy.* We have another, even bigger problem. A friend of mine told me something a couple of days ago. I had been talking about not having time to do anything, like, “I can’t do this because there is no time, I can’t do that, I have no time.” So he asked me, “If you get a heart attack, would you have time to go to the hospital?” I thought that was a funny question, but on the other hand, it is a *very* relevant question. We are the ones who allocate our time. It is true, life in the US is very busy, no doubt. Compared with any other part of the world it is the busiest place, only the Japanese may be even busier. But it really depends also on how you allocate your time, on how you organize yourself. We make ourselves very busy, too. A lot of people have true time-pressure for various reasons. And a lot of people make themselves unnecessarily busy, not allowing themselves to be properly organized. If there is an emergency, you do have time. Even if it is not an emergency, when something attracts you, when there is something you really want, you always have time. That is the clear indication. A heart attack may be too extreme an example, but it is relevant, too, for we make ourselves a lot more busy than we need to.

Because we keep ourselves so busy, we don’t have time for ourselves, we don’t have any chance to think about ourselves and our future. And when we don’t take time to think about ourselves and our future, what do we lose? By occupying ourselves with the immediate-future needs we lose a great chance of gaining a benefit for our long-term future. Are you with me? So we are depriving ourselves of the opportunity for our future development.

*Choice of a spiritual path.* Look at the US today. What is happening? A variety of spiritual paths have been opened, unlike any previous time. From Eastern religions to Western religions to any new thing that pops up, every single different thing is there. Where in history, except in ancient India, did we have such an opportunity? Nowhere. But even when you have a lot of opportunity, what is the use if you cannot take it? What is the use? You can only make use of it if you can give yourself a little time to think about it, to analyze it, to put thought into it.

A spiritual path is *not* something which you should take up straightaway, without examining it. There are a lot of spiritual paths available. The Tibetan masters always gave this advice:

When you throw a piece of meat to a dog, the dog will smell it first, see whether he can eat it or not.  
If you have a piece of cloth, you measure it on your body and see whether it is going to fit you or not.  
You are not going to wear something just because it can be worn;  
you are not going to eat something just because it is thrown at you.  
As human beings, with our understanding, with all our capabilities, with our intellect and education, with very good common sense, we have to *select* a spiritual path.  
Examine it and then select.  
Once you have selected it, you follow it strongly and very rigorously.  
Otherwise you are not going to get any result.

These readings are trying to give you an idea of the Buddhist path. This is really what you people are involved in. I am not trying to make you a Buddhist here. I am giving you some techniques. I am throwing out some information; you see whether it fits you or not, whether it makes sense to you or not. It is a sort of opportunity to see, as if you are touring an exhibition. Okay? That is really what is happening here, if you want to know.

What is spiritual? What are the negative forces? What are the positive forces? What is your aim? What are the paths available? These sorts of things are what you really will see here in these preliminary chapters. I will talk in bits and pieces, throwing various different ways and means, just exhibiting them to you. For example, I mentioned the different methods of overcoming passion, and so forth.

**Covering up our real problems**

What you really have to learn is how an individual can handle the problems within, how *you* can handle the problems, within yourself. You must give yourself time, time to think. And then you think: really, what is the future? Is there something called future lives or not? If you don't want to think about that, it is fine. I have noticed that it is very hard for Westerners to think about death. For some at least it is very, very hard. In the Western culture, you hide all the bad things that one has to go through. Even dead bodies are hidden. If you go to the East, you see them burning a body here and burning a body there, right out in the open. In the West, dead bodies are decorated with fancy clothes and make-up. You just hide death, because you think it is horrible. It is not horrible. One has to go through it, if not today then tomorrow; if not the next day, then next month or next year. You have to go through. Nobody lives forever.

This is one example of suffering, of pain, and we are hiding it. And when there is something you cannot hide completely, you hide it by making it very nice. If you see a corpse here in the West, look how funny it is! A dead body is fully painted, with make-up, hair combed, dressed in new clothes and made to look as good as possible. But in reality, the being is gone. That is how this culture hides things. That is an example of how we hide our problems.

Any sensible person can see this. But we also hide our internal problems. We don't discuss them. Culturally, we feel it is bad to talk about them. Personally, we don't like to think about them. This avoidance itself causes us to become subject to suffering from emotions.

So the problem is that we are not thinking deeply enough. We are not really seeing the deeper issues. We are not really seeing the worst pains we have. We have man-made problems on top of everything. When you talk with any American that has a problem, mostly it is a man-made problem that has a very easy solution. Family problems, poverty problems, fighting, not getting over things, these are all man-made problems.

We do have natural pain and suffering worse than that. We totally cover them up like we cover up death. Covering up is our problem! To me it looks – excuse me – like cats' behavior; when they do their business they throw a little sand and mud on top. We do just like that. It does not get rid of the problem at all. It stinks! It makes you suffer and, to others, it stinks.

**Practice: look inside**

*Use the talks as a mirror.* The first spiritual activity is to look inside. I always say that spiritual practice means looking inside, entertainment means looking outside. Spirituality even provides a list of problems to look for. We present the problems in these spiritual talks. When we present problems, you look to see whether you have them or not. Use these talks as a mirror, look inwards and see whether you observe these problems in yourself or not? If not, be happy, and if that problem is within, you must try to get rid of it. That is how you approach them spiritually. 'Problems' means nothing more than attachment, anger or hatred, ignorance; what we call delusions. These are our negative forces. These are our real or root problems. These are our enemy.

*How to handle our root problems.* To handle them requires patience, love and compassion and wisdom. These are the weapons that one uses to fight the enemy, the antidote weapons. If you are a very angry person, patience is required. Patience is the only direct antidote to anger. For hatred, it is love and compassion; for ignorance, it is wisdom. Trying to apply that to oneself as much as possible is how a person becomes holy.

When, through using patience, you see improvement in your anger reduction, you are on the right track, you are going in the right direction. If, by meditating on or by using love and compassion, you find your hatred reduced, you are going in the right direction. It is too early for us to see our wisdom having much effect on our ignorance. First, you see the effects on your anger, secondly on your hatred. If the anger-hatred side is getting lower and the side of your patience and love-compassion is getting better, then you are okay. If you see it going the other way round, your spiritual path is in trouble. That is really what it boils down to.

Applying patience to your anger is not going to be easy. You must give yourself time. I don't mean that you can't get angry. Angry people always get angry. But when you apply patience, your anger gets weaker and weaker within you. I don't have to tell you, you'll notice within yourself. The duration of the anger gets shortened, the anger is not going to be that strong, the after-effects get less and after some time you'll realize you are not getting angry as much as you used to. If you are noticing those things, it is a sign that you are doing better. If you are not seeing that, if, instead of that, you are getting more and more angry, then something is wrong. Then you have to review it, and ask, "What am I doing wrong?"

I just mentioned to you simply to apply patience, love and compassion. I did not tell you how. I can briefly tell you how. If you realize that you got angry – even though it is later on it doesn't matter – you have to think about and meditate on how anger is harmful, how it hurts you and others as well, and then ask yourself, "Why am I losing my temper? Why am I doing that?" Do this, no matter when. Even if it is one hour later or two hours later, it doesn't matter. As a first step, you must think. Think in such a way that after a bit you feel ashamed of yourself. You begin to feel, "How could I do it? It was really nothing, I just got upset for no reason, or for very little reason. That is worthless, I could have done it this way, I could have done it that way, many other ways. There are many ways I could have solved that problem besides losing my temper." You think and apply that to yourself as long as you need to, until you feel a little embarrassed about yourself.

And that will come quicker and quicker, so that, instead of realizing it two hours later, next time it is an hour later, next time half an hour later, next time you realize it fifteen minutes later, next time ten minutes later, next time you realize it five minutes later and next time you realize it while you are still within the state of anger. And then, after some time, you begin to realize it even before you get angry. That is how you handle your anger. It is not a big deal, not a big deal at all. As a matter of fact it is a very easy way to do it. I don't mean you won't lose your temper any more. I snap at Aura, I snap at Sandy, but I forget it easily and they forget. The same counts for attachment and so and forth. Okay?

*Use your meditation.* When you meditate, what do you do? Don't sit blank. If you watch your thoughts, that is correct, but just don't sit blank, doing nothing, thinking nothing. If you think about anger, notice how it rises within you, study it, check. Think about how that anger affects you and then you'll feel a little embarrassed about it. Get that to influence you, so that you can gradually decrease the anger. What does *dharma* practice really mean? The ultimate dharma practice lies in improvement of one's approach towards life. That is what it really is.

### **Practice: your group as a mirror**

At the teachings you should discuss your problems among yourselves Don't ever feel bad here. Whatever we talk about stays in this room; it does not go beyond it. Okay? Here you should not hesitate; you should come out with whatever you think. Don't think it is not appropriate. Things should be really openly discussed. This has to be the place where you can freely talk about your spiritual things, share knowledge and experience – don't talk about anything else here – and it can be really a nice little community. That should develop. And by developing it has effects on each individual. Actually there is a selfish interest in it, but without selfish interest you cannot build anything. A lot of people talk love and compassion, selflessness, but without self-interest you cannot build selflessness. If you cannot help yourself, you cannot help anybody else. That is guaranteed, for sure. So it has to start with a little intelligent self-interest.

#### QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Watch your thoughts; see how they affect you.
- How do I recognize which thoughts and emotions are negative and which are positive?
- Mirror your day: what man-made problems did I use to cover up my real problems?
- How do I distract myself from dealing with what I see as most important?
- Do I spend the time I need on things that are really important?

- Is the imaginative pleasure that I am building real pleasure? Will that really satisfy me? Is that really what I need?

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On the problem of desire:

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*. II, 2: Taking the ache out of attachment.

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, ch. 5: Meditation; the practical method for inner development.

## **PART II:**

### **The Three Principles of the Path to Enlightenment by Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419)**

4. Preliminary remarks on the root text	29
5. Introductory stanzas	37
<b>FIRST PRINCIPLE: DETERMINATION TO BE FREE:</b>	
6. Why you need a determination to be free	45
7. 'Leisure and opportunity are hard to get': embracing our life	53
8. 'And there is no time to life': facing death realistically	61
9. Seeking refuge	69
10. Renunciation	73
11. Karma: actions and their consequences	87
12. Suffering in samsara	93
13. Our distorted view	97
14. Circling in samsara; building the determination to be free	103
15. How to lead a spiritual life	109
16. Delusions and the circle of existence	117
<b>SECOND PRINCIPLE: ALTRUISM:</b>	
17. Why develop the altruistic attitude	123
18. How develop the altruistic attitude	139
<b>THIRD PRINCIPLE: WISDOM, THE PERFECT VIEW:</b>	
19. The perfect view: an unbiased outlook on reality	161



## 4. PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE ROOT TEXT

Welcome everybody. From the start of this *Three Principles of the Path* do your best not to miss any sessions. It is important to come regularly until we finish, so have a little discipline on that. There are really sequential steps in it and if you miss one, then you miss a step in between. If you want to do it nicely, you should not miss. Okay?

Now the question may rise in somebody's mind: "By following these teachings, am I committing to being a Buddhist? Am I becoming a Buddhist?" No. You're simply getting ways and means, some methods for spiritual practice. The information is available here, along with certain guided meditations on how to channel, organize and integrate the knowledge that you have, so that it is not scattered all over. This does not make you a Buddhist and certainly not a Gelugpa, someone of the yellow-hat order. We simply provide you with the information.

### THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PATH

The root text we are using is about taking the path leading to the ultimate fully enlightened stage. I will give a very brief and short explanation, so that you can really gain some kind of understanding of what it is. In the sutra path, there are three major principles that have a lot of minor points within them; that is why this text is named *Three Principles of the Path*. What are these three major principles?

**1. Determination to be free, renunciation, seeking freedom or developing love for yourself.** There are different translations for this. The word in Tibetan is *ngen-jung*. *Nge-par* means definite; *jung-wa* means definitely obtaining. So some call it determination to be free or seeking freedom, which seems to me a better translation than renunciation, which is how others translate it. So the first point is building up the resolution, "Definitely I would like to be free." That is the first principle.

When you say, "Definitely I would like to be free," everybody will agree right away. Nobody wants to be a slave; everybody wants to be free. But simply saying that will not help. You have to get into it deeply: free from what? For what?

First, you have to see: free from what? All the points dealing with the nature of life and so forth fall into the category of determination to be free. The purpose here is to build a desire and a proper intention to really determine to free oneself. For that, we need to have the proper motivation. You can say, "I already have the proper motivation, I'd like to be free." That is not right; proper motivation for a determination to be free requires really seeing the faults on the one side and the qualities on the other side, and balancing them within you. Then *you* judge, *you* make up your mind without anybody's pressure and without depending on your intuition. Properly seeing the facts, you balance them and make your decision and go in the direction you choose. That is what it really is. To develop this needs time, labor, meditation, information, all of these. That is the first principle.

**2. Altruism.** The second principle is to realize that it is not enough that I should free myself alone. What about others, my nearest and dearest, the persons that I care about most, what about all of them? Do I walk away from them, saying that I found some way out for myself and I don't care about them?

Do I say, “Bye, bye!” and walk away? Or do I care about them and love them and do something? That is the second question. So love-compassion and the ultimate altruistic attitude, or bodhimind, is built up in the second principle.

**3. Perfect view.** The determination to be free alone is not enough. Love-compassion is not enough. We need the real antidote, the meditation on true understanding or wisdom, what we call perfect view: how to look into total reality without influence of the dualistic mind or delusion. Totally free from delusion, free from dualistic influence looking into the nature of reality as nakedly as possible; that is what we call perfect view. That is the third path.

Now the question rises of what to do with these three principles? You have to meditate on them and practice them. This will bring your spiritual level up; it takes you onto the path. And if your vehicle is good you reach there very fast; if your vehicle is medium you go normally and if your vehicle is bad you go so-so, but you go. That’s what it is.





### Three levels of spiritual development

When you talk about proper spiritual development, you cannot think of instant spiritual development. Spiritual development is not something that I can point at here and then you can just grab it one day, like you can just put instant coffee in a cup, pour water on it and drink it. No. There is no instant spiritual practice at all. It is a gradual process; you have to develop *gradually*.

So, when we look for a spiritual path, what are we really looking for? That is the question we have to deal with again and again. It is not the simple question it may seem at first. When you look for a spiritual path, there are numerous possibilities. Many people tend to regard more or less all non-mechanical or non-materialistic activities as spirituality. However, I don’t think that this tradition, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, uses that wide a definition. It is very strict in explaining what spirituality is. Buddha himself drew clear lines on which activities are really considered spiritual and which ones are not.

Buddha divided spiritual development into three different levels:

- (1) The ultimate that is reachable for us is to become a buddha like Buddha himself. That is the highest goal.
- (2) To be able to be totally free, to attain the state of nirvana or arhatship.
- (3) To be able to have at least a better rebirth  better future life,<sup>2</sup> or, at the very minimum, to have a better  me, to be a better person.<sup>3</sup>

These are the three different levels of spiritual attainment that one can practice and achieve. And any teaching or practice geared towards that is considered a spiritual path. Anything which is not geared towards achieving one of those goals but towards something else may not be a spiritual path, according to Buddha’s tradition of teaching.

So, when we talk about spirituality from the Buddhist point of view, based on the experience of the Tibetan masters, some lines have already been drawn. In addition to that, Buddha further made it clear that if you are seeking a benefit, either material or non-material, which is cherished merely within this lifetime, it is more considered a form of attachment rather than a form of seeking spirituality. So it really boils down to three different layers of the spiritual path that one can practice.

<sup>2</sup> This level is called in Tibetan: *kye bu chung* - the person of small scope.

<sup>3</sup> This level is called in Tibetan: *kye bu chung chung* - the person of very small scope.

Ultimately— from the Mahayana Buddhist point of view<sup>4</sup> – we are not looking for *nirvana* or the *arhat*-level. The stage of *nirvana* is a stage of being free, a stage of peace. Free means that you are no longer controlled by anybody else; you can do whatever you want to do. You may turn to me, saying, “I am free, I am American.” Sure, we are definitely a free nation, no doubt. However, we have our limitations in everything, whatever we do, because we are totally controlled by our *karma*. These limitations make us actually unfree, though we may think we are free. To a certain extent, we are free in the material world. In the spiritual path, I don’t believe we are free yet.


Why do I say we are not free yet? Because we do not get the things we want and we do get all the obstacles. This is one of the signs we are not free. Another clear sign that we are not free is that we have a lot of pains: physical, mental, emotional pains. We are not free of these pains; we experience them, every minute differently. When we reach the *arhat*-level or *nirvana* we will be free of those pains and obstacles, according to Buddhist teachings, meaning according to Buddha’s words and the ancient persons’ developments.

Though the stage of *nirvana*, also called the *arhat*-level, has no fallback, even then you have not reached the ultimate level. According to the Buddhist teachings, the ultimate level is what we call *buddhahood*, the stage of total enlightenment. This is the ultimate level and it is a stage human beings can achieve!

### The potential for full development – buddha-nature

The ultimate spiritual path is to seek buddhahood. The reason why you can and should seek buddhahood is very simple. Buddha Shakyamuni, the historical buddha who appeared in India, was not a buddha originally; he was not a buddha from the beginning. He was a simple human being like you and me. As a matter of fact, the qualities that that buddha enjoyed 2500 years ago and the qualities that you and I enjoy are equal. We are just as honest, straightforward, well motivated and pure as Shakyamuni, or rather Gautama was originally. So, everybody is eligible for buddhahood, in other words, everybody can become a buddha. Buddha said:

In the beginning you and I were equal.  
But one of us has been able to work hard, developed fully, and became a buddha.  
And one of us has been lazy and ran around or did not have the opportunity.  
By running around wasting time, one stayed a samsaric person and still remains in the  
samsaric circle.

That is really what it boils down to. He said that we both were equal in this because every human being  whether every living ‘sentient being’ has the potential, the seed which can develop into a complete, perfect buddha. Please mark my words. I did *not* say everybody has a buddha within them. I said: *seed*. There are a lot of reasons why I use the metaphor of a seed. A lot of people, including many Buddhists, will tell you that mind, its total nature, is pure, wonderful, fully enlightened, but that temporary delusions have covered it up and when you clear away those delusions, its nature is pure. I don’t say that. I purposely use the word seed. A *seed*. You know, if you have a seed of some food-plant or flower or tree and you put it down and take care of it, you give some warmth, water, soil, whatever is necessary, it can grow and develop. Similarly, each person has a buddha seed which has the potential to grow and develop if it is given the right conditions.

### unded spirituality

Now the question arises: how does one develop? I don’t believe you can sit here and do nothing and be hit on the head and all of a sudden, “Hey, I’m enlightened!” I don’t believe it works that way. So, how does it work? It will be a gradual development. With or without the individual realizing, it gradually grows.

<sup>4</sup> Gelek Rinpoche teachings are Mahayan Buddhism.

When we talk about spiritual development, what is it really that grows within you? In plain every-day language, it is the positivity within you that builds up. How do you get that positivity? By cutting the negativities. With each cut of something negative, you gain something positive. That positivity grows bigger and bigger, better and better. One becomes richer and richer, wealthier and wealthier by having more positivity within oneself. That is how one *first* proceeds. Again, mark my words.

How do you gain these positivities? Not just by sitting, not just by listening, not just by thinking, not just by meditating, not just by praying, but by a combination of all of these, and particularly by your own actions which follow from these steps. This is so important: your own actions, how you behave, how you think.

When you talk about spirituality, one should not fly away in the air, which is unfortunately what many people do these days, particularly in the West; You read this book, you hear that, you talk some beautiful talk, and you build up your own castle in the air, having no foundation, nothing. Spirituality should not be like that. The spiritual foundation has to be laid on solid ground, not up in the air. No matter how much you build beautiful castles in the air, they will collapse, no doubt about it. But if you build a solid little bit, if even one single stone is laid heavily in you, it helps you, it builds you, it gives a strong footing, it grounds you. In order to do that, always you have to look in; never look out, but look in. One of the authentic quotations says:

When you look into the dharma, use the dharma as a mirror;  
use it as a mirror to your own *dharma*, your spiritual practice.

Ladies, what do you use your make-up mirror for? To look at your reflection, to see whether there is any red here, too much white there, whatever. Looking in this mirror you will see whatever is too little or too much and correct it. Excuse me that I am using that funny example, but that is really what you use it for, isn't it?

Similarly the quotation here says, "You see your own reflection with a mirror." What does your own reflection mean? Your own thoughts, your way of thinking, your way of behaving, how sincere you are. Everybody talks about love and compassion but how much love and compassion do we really give each other? All these are your reflections *you* should see in your own mental mirror. The dharma mirror reflects your own thoughts and your own actions. That is how you use it.

So, again, how can we achieve our goal? It is a gradual achievement, not an instant achievement. You pick up each stage gradually, in turn, one by one. Every stage or step that you take is called a path. Out of all those paths, there are three principle or most important paths. That's what we are going to deal with in this commentary. Let us hope that this will be something very useful for you, for all of us.

### **The student's part**

In order to make it useful, you have to do one thing: *you* have to meditate. I do not mean concentrated meditation. I mean *analytical meditation*, looking inwards. Looking inwards is so important. In order to do that meditation, you need material to meditate on. When you read this commentary, that will provide you with the material and then what *you* have to do is meditate on it. What *I* do is provide you with the material. What *you* do is take the material and use it. This is the deal we have to make. How does that sound? Is that okay?

When you try to meditate, you'll face a lot of problems. If it were problem-free, everybody would have done it already, right? It is hard and difficult to achieve. If it were easy everyone would already have it, right? And when you deal with something hard, you'll face a lot of problems. Problem A: you won't know what to do. Problem B: when you think you know something about what to do, you will miss a lot of points or a lot of problems will come up.

When you come back next time, bring these in. Whenever you face a problem, make a note of it. If you just think, "I will ask it later," you're going to forget about it. Take a note and if you can solve it yourself, fine, very good. If you still have doubts when you come back here, ask and we'll discuss it and try to help you solve the problem. Some problems may be common to three or four people, others

may be very much individual. Whatever it is, we'll deal with it; that is the purpose of gathering together. I presume we agree to do that. And now we really proceed.

### **Learning, thinking and meditation – analytical and concentrated meditation**

The root text of *The Three Principles of the Path* is very short. We will skip quite a lot even of this short text, so it will even be shorter. That does not mean the path is short. When you practice it, it is not going to be short.

**Learning.** If you lay a strong foundation of the three principal paths within you, then wherever you hear anything about the spiritual path you can easily bring it in here and know where it fits; then it can help you.

Because you have an overview of the path from here to there, anything whatever you find can help. It does not have to be from Buddhist sources alone. It can be from any source, wherever you get something. When you know your goal, when you know what the negative to be put aside is and what the positive to be built up is, it becomes very easy to organize them and materialize them, make them real. That is one thing you have to keep in mind before you start.

**Thinking or analysis.** In addition, you also have to study and meditate. I tell you that if you do not study you cannot do analytical meditation. If your aim is only concentrated meditation then it is perfectly okay. You can sit and concentrate, it does not matter. But we are not dealing just with that. We are dealing with the combined analytical and concentration meditation. Why? *Analytical meditation is a must!* Because the root of all problems lies in ignorance. Ignorance *cannot* be cleared by concentrated meditation alone. No! Concentrated meditation can reduce anger, concentrated meditation can reduce attachment, concentrated meditation is tremendously helpful for emotional problems, but concentrated meditation cannot clear ignorance. In order to clear ignorance you need wisdom, and wisdom is only possible through analytical meditation.

The wisdom that we will talk about is not something I can simply show you by saying, "This is wisdom." Nor can you read it in any book. I am talking about the wisdom that is the direct antidote to ignorance. The third principle is wisdom, so we have to deal with that. But still, you can only get hold of that wisdom by doing analytical meditation. You will get your own, "Hey, yeah, okay, now I understand, that's what it is!" It is only *you* who can get it, and you can't get it by reading alone. Reading can help you to build information, talks can show you the way and lead you to think in a certain direction, but they cannot provide you the real thing, you know. If it were something that could be provided then I would be more than happy to say, "Here you are, take it." Really, I mean it. But it cannot be done that way. You have to get it by yourself. You have to gain it. And some people do get it.

Information is such a thing. You get it, you hear it or read it over and over and it does not do much, it seems just like additional information. But then there is something called an imprint. When the time ripens and you look at a certain piece of information, when you meditate on something, suddenly you'll say, "Hey yeah, this is it, that's what it means, now I get it!" That is what we call, "The time has ripened and the imprint is opened." Your efforts will help to push the ripening. When it is really ripe, you know, you'll get it.

If you look into Tsongkhapa's biography, you will see that he read a book on wisdom called *The Middle Path*, written by an early Indian saint called Buddhapalita, thirty or forty times, but the actual time he really got struck, the time he really "got it" was when he was reading it yet again. What happened? He had a dream. In the dream some kind of a bluish looking person with a huge nose gave him a book from Buddhapalita, saying, "This is my commentary on Nagarjuna's wisdom teachings, here you are." He raised the book to his forehead touched it and then gave it to Tsongkhapa. That was his dream. The next day he started reading that work of Buddhapalita again. And when he looked through a certain chapter, which he might have read thirty or forty times before, that time it really struck him, "Hey, yeah!" He got it. That is what happens. And that is meant by "your efforts help to push the ripen-

ing”: your efforts to meditate and build up the pieces of information and organize them, or in other words package and use them.

**Meditation - concentrated meditation** If you do not do any analytical meditations, then whatever you hear will be like a person telling you stories. But if you use it, it will be an effective spiritual practice. If you want it to help you, *you* have to do the work. That is: analytically try to understand and *draw the conclusion and then concentrate on it*, apply concentrated meditation. Both are necessary: concentrated meditation is absolutely necessary, analytical meditation is absolutely necessary. Without it you can never get a spiritual development.

When you are able to get some points that you found by analyzing, then *concentrate* on them. When you do that, each point merges with you; you and that point will merge together; it becomes almost oneness. When it becomes that, then it works, then you are moving in the right direction. Until then, we are simply going around it, but we are really never getting into it. Every point that you really get is a spiritual development. In order to make it become a spiritual development the individual has to merge into it. The moment you merge that within the individual, it affects the person. And that is your spiritual development. I believe this is how one should move.

Concentrated meditation alone can give you harmony, make you peaceful, wonderful, can reduce your emotions, reduce your anger, attachment, hatred, but then you’ll have fallbacks. Sometimes you can go into depression a little bit; all these funny little problems can come up. If you do analytical meditation alone and you don’t do any concentrated meditation, then you become a very talkative informer. You know what I mean? Some people have a lot of information in their brain and they go, “Tuptuptuptup... So and so said such and such, I read about it tctctactac...” but actually it has no effect on the individual themselves or the people they talk to at all.

**Effect.** What the spiritual-path development should do is affect the person. How do you know it affects the person? It changes the person’s life. It changes their behavior and their way of thinking. It changes the direction they are moving in towards being better. That is what it means to say the spiritual effect is coming in.

We are not looking for mysterious powers like flying in the air. The pilots can do their job; let’s not worry about it. We are not trying to gain the ability to remain under the water or stay under the ground, which some ancient yogis tried to achieve. Fish can remain in the water and worms can remain under the ground. As a matter of fact, in our previous lives we have been born as fish in the water a number of times, and a number of times we were a bird flying in the air, a number of times we have been a worm under the ground, nothing to be surprised at, but we are still here. So what we have to do today should be different.

**Additional help.** You may think now that getting the meaning and meditating on it are the only things you should do. No, that is not right. What about *prayer*? What about saying *mantras*? Both are very much interrelated and needed. Without them, it is harder to develop. If you do all of them together, it helps to push you.

Praying alone won’t do any good. I mean, it has its own benefit, but to really gain a spiritual development, praying alone won’t do any good. Meditation alone also won’t do any good. A combination, again, a combination of analytical and concentrated meditation as well as saying prayers and *seeking blessings*, along with *purification*, along with the *accumulation of merit*, that is what you need. If these are combined, then things will work.

For example, if you want to grow a tree or flower or vegetable or something, you need the seed, you need heat, you need soil, you need water, you need fertilizer; all of these. Similarly, the spiritual seed, the fruit you want to grow within you needs all of them. The fundamental principle is to bring together meditation, both concentration and analytical, accumulation of merit, purification, and obtaining blessings through prayer and mantra; you practice all of them together.

**Motivation.** It is very important to try to be sincere and wholehearted about practice. If you start with a good motivation, you get a good result. The motivation is very important. As many of you know, positive thinking is so important. Sandy and Aura reminded me the other day, “Tibetan Buddhism has such positive thinking, you think yourself up to the Buddha’s level!” It is true. We call it: result-oriented practice, *vajrayana*, because we are sort of visualizing and practicing the result level here. That is definitely positive thinking, so you have to have a very positive attitude. Do not bring a doubtful half-hearted attitude, for then you’ll get a doubtful half-hearted result, half raw and half cooked.

**Practice: relying on a perfect path**

1. What we established here is that we need *to rely on a perfect path*, a path which leads you to a perfect point.

So what is a perfect path, what is not? (The question concerning Buddhism being perfect, Judaism being perfect, *etc.*, is a different matter we don’t want to deal with at the moment.) What we want to deal with is the path we know. Let us see whether we can rely on the path we are going to talk about here.

The reason we can rely on it is that it is based on the experience of a lot of people who went through it and accomplished the goal. That is the solid reason. I don’t want to say: “Manjushri is the embodiment of the enlightened beings and therefore the great Tsongkhapa.....” That is, again, bullshit. What it really is, it is the experience of hundreds of people who came up to here, the lineage. These people have not fallen down, so if we follow that we will not fall down. That is the establishment, the basis we have.

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- ‘I would like to be free’: How free am I?
- What do I need to make me rely on a spiritual path?
- How can I integrate the different aspects of practice (analytic and concentrated meditation, seekings blessings, purification and positive action or accumulation of merit) into my everyday life?

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On our potential for full development:

Gelek Rinpoche, *Transforming Negativities*, ch. 1 and 2.

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, pg. 115-119: Buddha nature

Chögyam Trungpa, *The Heart of the Buddha*, pg. 210-216: Manifesting enlightenment.

On analytical and concentration meditation:

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, V, 6: Meditation.

Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate*, Part one, 2: What is meditation

pg. 56-57: About analytical meditation

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp I*, 5: Meditation; the practical method of inner development.

Chögyam Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom*, III, Sitting Meditation

Commentaries on *The Three Principles*:

Gelek Rinpoche, *The Three Principles of the Path; A Short Commentary*,

Tsongkhapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*..

Dalai Lama, *Kindness, Clarity and Insight*, pg. 118-186.

Geshe Sonam Rinchen *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*.

Lama Yeshe and Zopa Rinpoche, *Wisdom Energy*, part II, pg. 74-120.

Sopa, Geshe Lundup, *Cutting through Appearances*, pg. 13-108 (Commentary of the fourth Panchen Lama)



## 5. INTRODUCTORY STANZAS

### *Reverence to the Holy Gurus!*

#### *The spiritual master*

We need to understand why Tsongkhapa first bows down to, pays reverence to, pays respect to the spiritual masters, the *gurus* (Sanskrit), or *lamas* (Tibetan). There is a very important reason. Buddha himself said,

Monks and scholars should  
Well analyze my words,  
Like gold [to be tested through] melting, cutting and polishing,  
And then adopt them, but not for the sake of showing me respect.

In other words, “*Bikshus* and followers, check all my words with your intellect and understanding. When it makes sense take it. When it does not make sense throw it away.” That is the basic principle in Buddhism. On the other hand you also have:

Rely on a perfect spiritual guidance  
Rely on the perfect spiritual friend, who is like a mother.  
If there is no mother there cannot be a son.

The mother is the base, the foundation, the fundamental principle. That is why people refer to the earth as Mother Earth, because everything grows out of that. A mother gives birth to the children and all human beings are the result of their mother.

Similarly, spiritual development comes from relying on a proper spiritual path, relying on a proper spiritual guide and friend and relying on a proper spiritual practice. A spiritual guide is necessary, it is the root of all.

#### *Authentication*

Homage to the Guru also shows you it is coming from the Buddha. It is from Buddha, from Buddha Manjushri to Lama Tsongkhapa and so and forth. It is the continuation of the practice that has been going on over two thousand years. It is not from just simply one person who had some wonderful ideas and turned that into practice. Nor is it a person of that century appearing in this century. No. Thousands of people practiced this and each and every one of them built their own development and then shared the experience. In other words, this line tries to tell you this is authentic. All traditional religions, whether Buddhism or Christianity, carry a sort of documented record of people who have done this and have benefited. That is important. It carries a tremendous value. It carries support, because not one or two persons, but thousands of them practiced this and developed. That is what we call the unbroken lineage. That is important.

That is why as the first word Tsongkhapa chose to pay reverence to the masters. He here pays reverence to his master Manjushri and others.<sup>5</sup>

### **Origin of the text - Manjushri as spiritual master**

The great teacher Je Tsongkhapa had studied with many Tibetan masters. He was satisfied with some teachings, yet on some points he was not completely satisfied. Finally he found a great teacher who had direct contact with Manjushri, the deity who embodies all the wisdom of enlightened beings. This fellow, called Lama Umapa, had contact with Manjushri in direct-vision form.

There are three kinds of *visions*: there is direct vision, indirect vision and vision through dreams. Direct vision means that you see the people, meet them face to face, talk with them and so forth.

Tsongkhapa came to study with Lama Umapa who was a Sakya lama. He started putting questions to Lama Umapa and he found that his answers were the best among all, but still he was not fully satisfied with the answers. Moreover, Lama Umapa never answered directly, but always told Tsongkhapa that he'd take his questions today and bring the answer a few days later. So Tsongkhapa was wondering, "What is going on here? He does not seem to be reading books or anything." One day Lama Umapa told him, "I put your question to Manjushri and got the answer from him." Thus he confirmed that he had contact with Manjushri all the time. So Tsongkhapa started ask harder and harder questions, and the answers kept coming in, however they were not fully satisfying.

Tsongkhapa then made up his mind to leave Tibet and go to India where he thought he might be able to find some great living person who really could explain the difficult points so that he could meditate and gain experience on it. He prepared for that journey.

In the meantime, Manjushri told Lama Umapa, "This student of yours is a very great person. Having you carry messages between us doesn't work very well. You don't really know what the question is and when you relate the answer you do not really know what you are talking about." In other words Lama Umapa had become like a postman, delivering letters back and forth. Manjushri said, "This is not very good, so for the betterment of all beings it is better that Tsongkhapa gives up teaching and goes into retreat."

By that time, Tsongkhapa had thousands of followers. Wherever he went, these thousands of people moved with him. (You did not have to buy a ticket like here, it was easy to move, you know). So it happened that when Lama Umapa was in a place called Khadong, Tsongkhapa came to Khadong and everybody followed into the Khadong area. He stayed there a month and then went back. And sometimes some people reached Khadong to follow him only after he had already left Khadong a month ago. That sort of thing was happening.

Manjushri told Lama Umapa, "He has to give up all his disciples and everything and go and do a retreat." Lama Umapa kept on begging Manjushri, "Please, don't say that. He is of great help to thousands of people who follow him. He is giving teachings and each one of them is developing so well. This will be very, very disturbing. And it will be very hard for me to tell him, so please don't make me." Lama Umapa kept on arguing with Manjushri for a long time, actually.

At about the same time there was another person called Lopön Leggyi Dorje in Wolka area, in South Tibet, a teacher powerful in mystical power. He had direct contact with Vajrapani, a wrathful deity, sort of terrible looking and terrifying, the embodiment of power and the keeper of the secret treasure. Leggyi Dorje encouraged Tsongkhapa not to go to India, because he thought that by that time in India all the teachings were almost gone and Tsongkhapa would be wasting his time. In addition to that, the thousands of people following him would have tremendous problems going all the way to India and if they were left behind there would be no further progress for them. Vajrapani, like Manjushri, was saying,

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<sup>5</sup> On another occasion Rinpoche discussed here the relationship with the spiritual master. See Gelek Rinpoche, *The Three Principles of the Path; a short commentary*, fairly at the beginning of chapter 1. Also, see Gelek Rinpoche, *Odyssey to Freedom*.

“Send Tsongkhapa into retreat. It is very important that he should go alone.” So Lopön Leggyi Dorje, like Lama Umapa, was begging Vajrapani, “Don’t say that; besides that Tsongkhapa is not around here anyway; he is in somewhere in Khadong.” Vajrapani said, “Yes, Manjushri is telling the same thing to Lama Umapa.”

Lama Umapa begged Manjushri, “Please, don’t make Tsongkhapa go into retreat; Leggyi Dorje has already kept him from going to India, and now you want him in retreat; what will all these thousand people do?”

Both asked how long Tsongkhapa had to go in retreat. “Well, we don’t know, it could be a month, it could be a year, it could be forever.” That made them say, “Oh no, don’t say that!” Finally Manjushri told Lama Umapa, “Do you think you know better than I do?” Lama Umapa had to give in then and said, “Okay, okay now, but don’t you let him go in solitary retreat, alone, please, don’t.” Manjushri said, “Okay, I will select eight people to go with him; and *I* will do the selection, neither you nor him.”

Manjushri selected eight persons to go with Lama Tsongkhapa for a retreat and asked them to go to South Tibet to a big mountain in a place called Wolka. He told him, “Go up there with all eight, have no contact with anybody, and do a retreat.” All of them went up there and did a retreat. Each of them sat in a cave and worked hard at making mandala-offerings, doing prostrations and meditating. Though Tsongkhapa is regarded as the emanation of Manjushri, still he had to do this.

When Manjushri said “No contact,” Lama Umapa asked, “What will they eat? It is easy to go up to the mountain, but if you say not to contact anybody, where will they get food?” Manjushri said, “They should just eat what they find around there.” They found nothing except the seeds of the juniper tree. They had to boil those seeds and that’s all they had to eat for some time.

The first direct vision Tsongkhapa had was the thirty-five purification buddhas. As he was sitting on one mountain top Tsongkhapa saw them on another mountain top, just like that. So he said to himself, “I am not sure whether this is a true vision or a distraction.” You know, at high meditation level evils will also be more active; they will manifest as different things and bring you a lot of obstacles. So Tsongkhapa was not very sure. He paid no attention at all, just totally ignored them. They were there and he did not even look at them, just saying to himself, “I am doing my work and let them be there whatever they are.” So they came closer and very close to him, almost saying, “Hey hey!” but he would not bother or pay any attention. Then Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, one after the other started appearing to Tsongkhapa, yet he totally refused to bother about them, thinking that they were visions not to be trusted.

He was not like us; forget about seeing Avalokiteshvara or Manjushri, if we see something slightly different, even in a dream, how much we jump up and have hope and doubt coming up. Hope and doubt are the strongest obstacles in those sort of practices, so ignoring such a vision is the best thing to do. If it is a real good vision they come closer and open to you. If it is not a real good one, it will disappear. If it is a disturbance and you have doubt or hope, you are opening up to them, and then it is very easy for them to disturb or obstruct your work. You are giving them opportunity. Therefore you really have to ignore them. Many of the visions are simply delusions; we may call it a vision but it is simply hallucination; eighty percent of them are. Yet there are some visions we get because of the blessings of the object; some are real. The best is the person-to-person vision. When I was young there was an old lama from Kham, the east area, Lama Yeshe Ona. I was able to see him twice. He was a very funny one. If you talked to him about something important, he would tell you, “All right, I’ll ask Tara tomorrow and let you know.” People said he was in contact with Tara all the time. So the direct person to person talk in which you can ask questions and get answers is supposed to be the best.

Finally Manjushri came very close to Tsongkhapa and said, “Hey, I *am* Manjushri and I told Lama Umapa to send you and you are here and you asked me these and these questions and I gave you all these answers.” Still Tsongkhapa was not very sure, not really paying much attention. He put a lot of hard questions to the apparent Manjushri. The answers seemed to be quite satisfactory but still he was not fully satisfied. On the other hand, when you have those funny encounters and you can ask questi-

ons, ask difficult questions you already know the answer to. Do not ask questions whose answers you don't know, for they can fool you. You can always ask difficult questions whose answers you know. That is what you do, and that is what Tsongkhapa did.

Finally Manjushri was fed up, he could not get through to him, yet he had to. Lama Umapa happened to be in Kham area in East Tibet (!) by that time. Manjushri had to go back to Lama Umapa and say, "Please, send a messenger to Tsongkhapa and tell him that the visions he is getting are real, so he should not ignore us any more!" There was no mail service in these days, so Lama Umapa had to send a man on horseback with a letter, saying that Manjushri said, "These visions are real and do not ignore them." Thereafter Tsongkhapa accepted them.

The first teaching Manjushri gave to Tsongkhapa was this, these fourteen verses you have now. So Tsongkhapa did a lot of work, took a lot of trouble and we get it handed to us, nicely printed up. So we are lucky.

Later Tsongkhapa wrote a big teaching called the *Lam rim chen mo*, the graduated path. Manjushri asked Tsongkhapa, "What is this you are you doing?" And Tsongkhapa said, "I am writing that big *Lamrim* on the basis of my development." Manjushri joked with Tsongkhapa and said, "Oh, you think my *Three Principles* is not enough, so you are making a big one?" Tsongkhapa replied, "No, your *Three Principles* is the backbone and the life of my book and I add a few more techniques here and there, a few more quotations and examples." That is what he explained.

So while in Jewel Heart we have a detailed *Lamrim* teaching over 800 pages long, here we also have these three little principles which contain its essence.



### **The promise to write**

The first of the next two verses is the promise to write and the second asks people to listen properly. Each of these two verses deals with each of the three principles of the path. There are ways of explaining this in detail, but doing that in great detail would be for scholarly purposes rather than for practical work. That is the reason why I would rather just give a brief summary:

***Vs. 1      I will explain as best as I can  
The essential import of all the Victor's Teachings,  
The path praised by all the holy Bodhisattvas.  
Best entrance for those fortunates who seek freedom.***

*The essential import of all the Victor's Teachings* deals with renunciation or determination to be free, the first principle. Why? Because renunciation is the basis, the foremost important step on one's path of liberation. Therefore it is referred to as 'essential'.

This line refers to the essence of Buddha's teaching. When I say Buddha's teachings, we are not talking about the historical Buddha. We are talking about the buddhas of the past, present and future. What did the buddhas of the past teach? What did the buddhas of the present gain? What do we hope the buddhas of the future will gain? The buddhas of the past shared the experience of overcoming negativities, the buddhas of the present gained that experience; they have that development. The buddhas of the future are you and me and what do we hope to gain? That is the essence of the teachings of the Buddha.

What the buddhas wanted was to overcome their sufferings. And when they looked where the sufferings come from, they found we ourselves are creating the sufferings. We say, 'I don't want suffering, I want happiness', but yet we do create all the sufferings. Not knowing this is called *confusion*.

Not knowing this, we are afraid. That is what we call *ignorance*. We think of protecting ourselves and challenging others. We get angry with them, we try to destroy the enemy. And we think we get better by that, but that is not true. That is the *anger-hatred* part of it. ‘Oh this is wonderful, beautiful, I want it, it is mine, only mine, you can’t have it; if I don’t get it I make sure nobody else gets it’. We think we make ourselves happy by that, but that is not true either. That is the *attachment*. We are totally confused and that causes all kinds of problems in life. We don’t even know what is happening in our life. Sometimes life is very good, sometimes it is bad and usually two, three bad things will come together and it gets difficult to break through. So the buddhas tell us, ‘Don’t get confused’.

We are continually creating our own problems. The root of our problems are our negative emotions. We get angry, we act accordingly, with that we create negative karma and even though we may win today’s fight, one time or another we get punched back. That is how negative emotions cause our problems. The buddhas know that and hope that we will get to know this and act accordingly. So the essence of their message is this.

*The path praised by all the holy Bodhisattvas* deals with the bodhisattva path, called *bodhicitta* or the altruistic mind, the second principle. Why is it praised by the bodhisattvas? Because *bodhicitta* is such an important state of mind. Very important! By developing *bodhicitta* one will become a bodhisattva, a “child of the buddhas” and one day become a buddha.

It is the path praised by all those who are on the journey. What those who are traveling with us on that same road [to buddhahood], the bodhisattvas, have realized is that love and compassion are absolutely necessary. If you don’t have those you don’t make it. If you have those you make it. That is why all the great travelers on this journey praise the love-compassion. Love-compassion is magic. It is the key. If you don’t have that key you can’t open your home door, so you will be left outside in the cold rainy Dutch weather.

*Best entrance for those fortunates who seek freedom* deals with the perfect view or wisdom, *shunyata*, the third principle. Why? The moment you leave *samsara* you obtain liberation. The root of *samsara* is ignorance. The ignorance is cut by the perfect view or wisdom. The fortunate ones are the ones that are able to take the path to liberation.

For the fortunate one’s who seek freedom there is only one key to get it. That is the bicycle key: to make your bike useful you have to unlock it. (Even unlocking is not enough, the person must know how to ride a bicycle.) The key to freedom is clearing the confusion. That is wisdom. What confusion do we have? Confusion of the mystery of life, not knowing where the problems come from, not knowing where the joys are coming from. We do have some idea of what misery and joy is, but very often we get it wrong. True. We keep on drinking, thinking it’ll give a great kick, and we drink again and we know we are wrong, but still we can’t help it. That we call addiction, right? Exactly the same thing the negative emotions do to us. There’re like alcohol: we know it is not good but we can’t stop it. Once we clear the confusion, then we will be able to stop it.

That is why Tsongkhapa says, ‘I will explain as well as I can.’ It is not that Tsongkhapa has difficulty explaining, but we have difficulty to catch the message, we may be unable to get it. So, though this text is a letter to his student, Ngawang Dragpa, actually this is Tsongkhapa’s letter to us.

### The request to listen

**Vs. 2**     *Listen with clear minds, you lucky people,  
Who aspire the path that pleases Buddhas,  
Who work to give meaning to leisure and opportunity,  
Who are not addicted tot the pleasures of cyclic life (samsara).*

*Who are not addicted tot the pleasures of cyclic life (samsara)* refers to renunciation or determination to be free. *Who work to give meaning to leisure and opportunity* refers to *bodhicitta*, because *bodhicitta* makes life really meaningful. *Who aspire the path that pleases Buddhas*, refers to the perfect

view, *shunyata*, because liberation of all sentient beings is the desire of Buddha and all enlightened beings.

Tsongkhapa says, ‘In this writing I am not addressing those whose main mission in life is becoming rich and famous, in other words, who are very much attached to material success. For them this letter is useless: it will not make them famous, not make them rich, nor give them a job promotion. I am addressing the people who want to make best use of their life. I am addressing those who are interested in the great beings like Buddha, Jesus and so forth. Those are the fortunate ones, the great ones.’

This gives us a message: whether it is useful for me or not depends on my goal. Everybody can love to have money and fame, that is not a big deal. You may not make it, but that doesn’t mean you don’t have the desire. Everyone has certain desires. Some have limited, some have unlimited, crazy desires. They think of nothing but making money. Others, like kings or dictators have the desire to control under the pretext of altruism. Hitler never said ‘to make me better’; he said ‘to make Germany better’. So, when we talk about those principles, we have to be careful. Compassion is wonderful, but it has to be true compassion; you should never have the end justify the means. Also compassion has to go to everybody, and that includes your family members. You have to remember that. That is where we begin to justify the means for an end: by ignoring the living person in front of ourselves. Earlier buddhist teachers told,

If you do not know how to love yourself, you are incapable of developing love for others.  
If you don’t know how to take care of yourself, you are not capable of taking care of others.

That is why, if the first principle: seeking freedom for yourself, is solid and honest, seeking love and compassion for others becomes solid and honest. Because the second principle is totally based on the first: development of yourself.

In other words, Tsongkhapa says, ‘For whom is this not going to be helpful? For those who have a strong attachment to the samsaric picknick spots. For whom do I have hope? For those who want to make the best use of their life. The best fulfillment of the mission of your life is to liberate yourself. In order to liberate yourself, learn how they have done before, think or analyze and meditate. For those people I’m writing this.’

Learning is extremely important. I can’t emphasize that enough. Without learning one is like a armless person trying to climb a rock. Tsongkhapa says in his *Lamrim chenmo*.

Learning is like a light which clears the darkness of ignorance.  
It is your best wealth, that no one can steal from you.  
It is your best friend, who will not let you down when you are in trouble.  
It is your best weapon, through which you can destroy all your negative emotions.

What you have learned, you think about and on what you have thought you meditate.

1. You people think of meditation as relaxation. It is not. Meditation has a purpose. The purpose is: to focus. When you focus you bring in awareness and that brings mindfulness. This is the minimum, the lowest category of meditation.
2. Once you learned how to have a little awareness you begin to challenge your negative emotions. You do that through analyzing and concentration. That is the second level.
3. Then if you can even do better than that, you can defeat your negative emotions, [including the confusion, the root of all problems].

You don’t want to sit and count your breath until you die. if you do that you wait for your liberation till the cows come home.

*Listen with clear minds, you lucky people.* By rejecting all those for whom this teaching is not useful, Tsongkhapa says, ‘Fortunate ones, listen to me, without losing your awareness, without losing your focus.’

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- What qualities do I think a spiritual guide should have?
- What qualities do I think the student should have?

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On the guru:

Chögyam Trungpa, *Spiritual Materialism*, pg. 23-50: Surrendering, The Guru  
Chögyam Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom*, Ch. VII: Devotion  
Chögyam Trungpa, *The Heart of the Buddha*, Part I. Devotion  
Tsongkapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 38-46  
Gelek Rinpoche, *The Three Principles of the Path; A Short Commentary*, ch. 1  
Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principal aspects of the Path*. pg 25-38

On the first verses:

Tsongkapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 46-56  
Gelek Rinpoche, *The Three Principles of the Path; A Short Commentary*, ch. 1  
Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principal aspects of the Path*. pg. 38-44.



## **FIRST PRINCIPLE: DETERMINATION TO BE FREE**

### **6. WHY YOU NEED A DETERMINATION TO BE FREE**

*Vs. 3    Lust for existence chains all corporeal beings  
Addiction to the pleasures of the life-cycle  
Is only cured by transcendent renunciation.  
So seek transcendence first of all!*

In this translation, renunciation as well as the word transcendence refer to what I choose to call *determination to be free or seeking freedom*. Why is the determination to be free the first principle of the path? As I told you earlier, of first and foremost importance in our spiritual practice is the positive attitude, the wish to free ourselves from all miseries, in other words: *developing love for ourselves*.<sup>6</sup> That is why we are interested in the spiritual path.

Some people may think, “Oh, I am not doing it for myself, I want to do it for all sentient beings, for helping other people and all this.” If you really ask yourself the question, “Why do I want to help other people?” you’ll answer, “Because it is a good thing to do.” Good for whom? You will say, “Good for me.” Right? So it really boils down to: “It is for me, I want to be good, I want to benefit, therefore I want to help others, because people say that helping others is good.” That is really what it is. Why do I want to be good? I want to be free, I want to be better; it is for my own sake. You don’t agree? It is true. Really. Some people may think it is not right because, “I have no selfish interest.” But if you really examine even a truly altruistic attitude, you will find you also have a selfish interest. There is nothing you can produce without having a selfish interest.

That is why the first thing to want is to be free. I want to be free from the pains and miseries and problems that I encounter, and particularly from being locked or trapped in the circle of life, the continuation of life after life, one life changing into another and another.

You cannot totally deny past, present and future lives; there is too much evidence. Twenty years ago you could say, “Rubbish, nonsense.” Today if you say that you are cheating yourself. At least give the idea of past, present and future life the benefit of the doubt.

*We are locked in.* There is continuation and that is a problem for us. We are really locked in it. We cannot get out, we are caught in it, and it is not necessarily good. We often consider life as wonderful but on the other hand life is miserable. You have to eat, you have to pay your bills, you have to do so many things. Actually if you really look into this life we are living, isn’t it terrible? I am sorry. If you look at it from the point of how wonderful it is, you see things like getting everything by pushing a button, light, hot and cold water and so forth. These things are wonderful. But on the other hand, if you look beyond that, how horrible it is. Everything is sort of measured by money, everything is valued in dollars and you have to pay for everything. In order to pay, you have to be slaves. It is true, you are a slave. You have to go to work at five in the morning and get back at seven in the evening and be under constant pressure, because these automatic things require you to do that. Our life is built up in such a

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<sup>6</sup> The last few years Rinpoche emphasizes more and more to call the first principle: developing love for ourselves.

way. Then there is so-called prestige; “I cannot damage my name, it is so important, because I am on the full promotion track, if I don’t have a good reputation...” All these put more pressure on the individual to build a dollar value. In a way it is wonderful, but on the other hand, deeply, it is horrible. Really.

Ancient or traditional people don’t have that, but they also do not have the automatic things that make life easier. Since they don’t have those automatic things, they don’t have the pressure to pay for them, but they have their own problems. We solved those material problems, but we created new ones, which are even greater. Ancient life was difficult. You had to go to the well to get water, pull it up in a bucket, heat it up and boil it. We solved those kinds of difficulties by using automatic things, but then the whole economic system built another kind of pressure by putting a dollar value on everything.

The whole thing actually is that we are locked in the circle of existence. We have a lot of problems, a lot of pressure in our lives. We say we are free, but we are not. We are the worst slaves ever, not building the ultimate value we need, but working to relieve the temporary pressure. It is like allopathic medicine, treating the symptoms.

*There is a way out.* Simultaneously, we are very fortunate to be able to see there is somehow a way out of it. There is definitely an alternative. There is really a bigger way, like homeopathic or ayurvedic medicine, trying to treat the main cause rather than the symptoms. Treating the symptoms is like trying to cut the tree itself by cutting the branches; if you treat the actual cause it is like cutting the root of the tree and getting rid of it completely. We are fortunate enough to see that we not only do have to handle the branches, the symptoms, but we can do something to eliminate the whole cause.

How can we get out? That is really where the spiritual answer comes in. I hope that is the whole reason why you people are here. That is why this verse, tries to tell you that if you do not have a determination to be free then there is no way you can get yourself totally free. So what we should do is first try to gain the intention definitely to leave cyclic existence (here called transcendent renunciation). I call it the determination to be free.

## **DETERMINATION TO BE FREE; PAIN AND HAPPINESS**

### **What is happiness? What is pain?**

The moment you say ‘happiness’ what picture do you get? What do you project? Do you project zero? Do you project some other side of the world? Or do you project some sort of personal relationship? In the East, people primarily face economic problems, so probably they will project wealth. In the West, people primarily face emotional problems, so what do you project when you talk about happiness? A good relationship, children, family, or house? I have no idea. You project something. What do you project? You have to answer that yourself. And then you raise the question, “Is that really happiness?”

Before we really can talk about happiness you have to find out what happiness is. Before we talk about pain you have to find out what pain is. Everybody will say, “I know what pain is, it hurts, here and here.” That is not really what pain means. If you really realize the pain of life, you see our own true situation. We all pretend to be somebody who is moving on the spiritual path with determination. But really watch it: the spiritual path is to bring happiness. That we all know. We don’t have to raise a question on that, because it has already been repeated a number of times; we all know it. Otherwise why would people bother? Why would you have to bother about spirituality? It is more complicated, it does not give you any money, it does not pay you for your time, *etc.* But we all know it has more than that. It will bring happiness; that is why you are all doing it.

But then what is happiness? This is so important. Meditate on what is happiness, discuss it among yourselves, read, get information poured in, do whatever you have to do, but you have to find out what happiness is. What do you project? What do you think? Do you look for it somewhere up in the sky over the clouds? Or what? That is the main thing.

Probably it will help you if you know what pain is, what the problem is. And then being without that will be happiness. If you know the pain, then when you get out of it, you feel happy. Say you got a bad headache and you take an aspirin, then after some time you say, “Oh, good, now it is gone.” So you

found happiness. You found that happiness because you experienced the pain before! The pain projects happiness, the happiness projects pain. They are dependent arisings. People say, "Buddhism talks about pain, pain, pain and I don't want to hear it." We talk about pain because by feeling that you know happiness. And when you realize the pain is less and less you realize you get better and better. We don't have a blood pressure machine like the doctor has, we don't have that type of measurement, but after all it is all based on ourselves within. You have the experience and you know how much you feel it. This is how you measure. So, you have to see the pain first in order to see the happiness. Painlessness is happiness.

What is pain? Physical pain is nothing compared with mental pain. On the other hand physical pains are equally difficult. For most of us, fortunately our physical condition is quite perfect, so we don't really know how painful physical pains are. But those persons who have physical problems know how hard it is. If you don't have any experience, then it is very difficult to project it, however, if you have a little bit of experience, you can judge.

### **Practice: guidelines for an analytical meditation on pain and happiness**

Say you are sick and it is something complicated, not something straightforward for which you can take an aspirin and get better. The doctors will tell you, 'I can do this and that but still you will have this problem, you have that problem, so I don't really know whether we can take that risk or not.' At that time what do you think, how you feel?

When you think, "It is on my neck," then you really feel the pinch; until then we don't.

Think of your own emotional problems. The problems that you face between you and your boyfriend or girlfriend, the fights. When these things happen, what do you feel in your heart?

It hurts, right? I am sure everybody has experience one way or another. These are the small problems, very small compared with the major problems we face.

When you see those problems, then when you look back, you recognize the happiness. And when you recognize this happiness, you see that just now we have dissatisfaction and that is driving us in a certain direction. Right or wrong?

Ask yourself, why do I stay in the spiritual path? Why is it necessary? Because we are not satisfied. That is what it really boils down to. Why are we not satisfied? For various obvious reasons, 'I know it won't last,' that is pain. 'I know it is no good,' that is also pain. Pain is the reason why I have to have a spiritual path.

Is there anybody who does not want happiness? Not a single living being. The little ants under the tree and the birds in the tree and the cockroaches in the kitchen and the mice on the ceiling, each one of them, what are they doing? Each one of them is looking for happiness. Why are those thousands of ants running here and there? Looking for food, looking for happiness. Why is the mouse running? Looking for food. They are all looking for happiness. There is not one single living being who does not want happiness. And so do you and I. Each one of us wants happiness.

Our problem is that we are not getting the happiness. Why not? Because we don't know what happiness really is. We talk about it, we think about it, we think we know, we pretend we know, but do we really? We don't. That is why we are here. That is how we are stuck.

So when you look for happiness, don't look for happiness, look for pain. And when you see the pain, when you see less of it, you'll find happiness. Really true. (Don't laugh, it is serious!) If you keep on looking for happiness, you are not going to find it.

Warmth is happiness for sure, but it can be discomfort, too. We get too warm, we have to open the window, that feels nice, the cold air comes, we feel cold, we have to shut the window. You see? That shows it is not happiness. It shows that it is a kind of pain, because you can't take too much of it.

Good companionship: is that happiness? No, you'll fight and that is pain; surely you argue, you quarrel, you fight and it hurts.

You think of anything in this life: within our arrangement, under our eyes, within our sort of mental framework is there anything we can truly call happiness? Search from top to bottom. *That is your analytical meditation.*

A lot of people think rich people are happy; a lot of people think poor people are happy. I tell you: rich people always think the poor are happy, they will definitely think, "Hey why do they need more than that? They don't have bills, they don't have so many expenses, they don't have to worry about the stock market." And poor people think, "Oh, the rich can do anything they want to." That is what we project. But is our projection the true reality? So, really look where happiness is, go and search. The whole question of the spiritual practice is based on this. "How much foundation do I have?" Ask yourself that big question, don't ask others. You have to ask yourself, "Where and what is my happiness?" Probably you won't find it. You don't have the answer. The reason is simply that you have not seen it, you have not experienced it. But have you not even heard about it?

*What real happiness is.* Listen carefully. Everything whatsoever that I talk about here is providing material for your analytical meditation. Please, don't think it is just talk. It is material to meditate on, it is the subject you think about, okay? I am giving very little explanation, I'm not going to talk in detail, I am providing a very condensed text.

I have to presume you know happiness now – though you don't. How do you know happiness? By rejecting all unhappiness. When you throw this unhappiness out, you are left with one thing; it is the real happiness that will be left. The real happiness, the ultimate, the best possible happiness that people can achieve is buddhahood, or total enlightenment, totally liberated from the pains, again. Buddhahood or enlightenment is the ultimate happiness. Enlightenment is borrowed language, it can mean anything, people can use it at any level, so that is why I like to use the word buddhahood. In other words, to become a buddha, to become equivalent to Buddha, that is total happiness.

### **How to get to happiness**

Now the question rises: how to get that? Until you are convinced that whatever we are experiencing and whatever we all think is happiness is not real happiness, you will not be able to convince yourself that you need to obtain buddhahood. You cannot convince yourself because there is no reason why you would have to do it, because "I am quite happy enough, thank you!" Some people say, "I am happy enough, I have two grandchildren, they love me, I have enough income, I have some savings, why shouldn't I be happy, why do I need anything else?" Okay, you don't need it, fine, until you realize you do need it, but by that time you may be too late. That is a different matter, because we at least are not in that category. We know somehow that this is not true happiness, that it is again pain. Until you are convinced that whatever we experience is pain, you really don't have a strong desire to be free.

*Example of jail.* I can give you an interesting example. Say you catch somebody who committed a crime, and put him in jail. Everyone will agree that locking him up is punishment, but on the other hand the person in prison might think, "It is okay, I am happy here, I get free food, free accommodations, free medical care." If he thinks, "I am happy here. It is good for me, I enjoy it," and doesn't recognize that as a miserable life, as a punishment, then that person has no desire to get out. As a matter of fact he'd rather be in prison than go out and be free.

Similarly, if we don't recognize the problem, why would we want to get out? "I am afraid of going out there, I am afraid of facing people, of going into society. Why do I have to go out there? I enjoy it here as long as the jailer does not beat me or the others punch me, until then I am happy." We all know that such a person is stupid. Not recognizing the problem till it physically hits you – we know that is stupid.

Enlightened beings and people of high spiritual realizations look at us and get the same impression we get of the person in the jail. “I’m happy enough here. Why do I have to become free? Why do I have to become enlightened?” They get the same impression of us, because we are acting in the same manner. We all know it is not happiness. When you *really* know that, then you begin to know. When you convince yourself of that, then you really have a reason why you need a spiritual benefit, why you have to go, why you have to start. Until you gain that, you pretend to be a spiritual person and that is not a solid foundation. It is a sort of influence of other people or it is just a fashion you are following; whatever the reason might be, truly speaking you don’t have a solid base.

So first you have to build that solid base: *why do I need it?* And this step is interlinked with other ones. All the steps appear one after another but are also interlinked. Verse three actually says:

Unless you have really a determination to be free  
you cannot give up what you think is joyful.  
When you cannot give up that,  
you cannot get free from the circle of life.

In Sanskrit terminology it is *samsara*, the circle of life, the life-cycle, not from birth to death, but from birth to death and from death to birth, and again from birth to death and from death to birth, and so on. Until you really build up a determination to be free, there is no reason why you have to start cutting this circle. No reason at all. So the first step is: building the determination to be free. This is enough on this. In the next verse you’ll read why is it necessary.

### **Practice: how to do the meditation – mindfulness and alertness**

We don’t have to feel, “If I have a problem and I talk about it here, maybe it is bad, maybe it is a disgrace, maybe it shows I know nothing about it.” Don’t worry about that; whatever we discuss remains here and as it is a spiritual problem, no one is an expert. Everybody started at the beginning; nobody was born as a learned scholar or great saint. Even those born as great saints also needed to learn, at least to pick up again; this is necessary because of the change of life. So don’t worry about it. Problems have to be discussed, otherwise not I but you will be the loser.

Did anyone meditate on what has been covered? *Your homework is meditation.* When you try to do the meditation you’ll face all the problems. If you don’t, then you don’t have problems because you did not try. If you tried but you did not know what to do, you have a problem we have to talk about. If you think, “I really don’t know what to do so I’ll just keep quiet and forget about it,” you will be the loser, not me.

When you meditate, or when you say your prayers, it is the time to really devote your body, mind and speech, all three, towards spiritual activities, and not to think of other things.

*How not to meditate.* There was once a Tibetan nobleman who was a government official. He had a lot of things to do, office work as well as political work. Every time he sat down to meditate and say prayers, he told his servant, “Make sure you put a pen, pencil and pad on my desk when I meditate.” During the time he said prayers he best remembered what to do, what not to do, to whom he had to give something to and from whom he had to collect, what and how to manipulate, so he started taking notes there. This was the best period for him to play the political or economic games. After some time, some other people heard about this and then more people came to know. In that way, it later became a famous example of how one should *not* do meditation.

*Mindfulness and alertness.* It is very easy to say one should not do this, but it is very difficult really to take your mind away from this sort of distraction when you are thinking about some meditation topic. It is a sign of how active the mind is and also a clear indication how difficult it is to catch the mind; it is like catching a fish in the water. It can also be a very big obstacle to the practice. Still, I must say it is very great that one realizes one is thinking about something else. That is a good thing. Watch the rising and let it go. Some people don’t even realize it is there. After quite some time, “Oh, what was I

thinking about? Oh, yeah,” and then you have to re-sit and do everything again. I believe it is the nature of the human mind, and so the only method to handle that is to be very alert and vigilant. Actually you have to divide the mind:

- with the principle mind you concentrate on the subject you are investigating [mindfulness]
- and a simple side-mind should be watching what is happening [alertness].

It is like when in old times you had a big camp of soldiers, most soldiers would be in the camp but a few people would sit up the high mountains and watch for the enemies coming. And I am sure the native Indians did that. If something happens to the watcher, people can attack and you can lose the base camp. If the watcher is good, then you know beforehand and you can be prepared. So like that.

Now you may raise a question, “How do I divide my mind?” Dividing the mind is not like cutting an apple into two or three pieces. From time to time, on and off, you observe whether you are really thinking about what you are supposed to think about or whether you are thinking something else. You should not watch it too often; this will interrupt the major efforts you are putting in. So watch and then let it go; don’t keep on watching it. Again concentrate on the subject you are working on, analytic or concentration, whatever it is. After some time again you watch or check the mind again, saying, “Hey, am I still thinking the same thing or not?”

By repeatedly doing this, you gain stability on it. You gain it only by experience: when you have a wandering mind – bring it back, wandering mind – bring it back, you realized the wandering – bring it back. Your staying on the subject will become longer and longer and the losing becomes shorter and shorter, less and less. Slowly and gradually you are building up the experience. There is no magic injection, there is no instant enlightenment. It has to be built by experience.

Some people may say: the mind is something you have to catch and see face to face. That may be not right. Don’t think that, don’t take that for granted. If that were the case things would be a bit easy. They are not. I don’t think it is something you can catch either. Though a lot of people will say: you encounter with the mind face to face and you really see the face of your own mind, I don’t think that is really the thing. Analytical meditation is *examining* the subject that you are trying to familiarize your mind with. And the concentrated meditation on the conclusion will *familiarize* your mind with it.

*Conclusion.* We are going to handle this gradually. Every time we have to draw a conclusion on whatever we did. And whether this point is going to be established within you or not depends on you. Now today, what did we establish? We established:

1. *The first step we have to take is the determination to be free.*

Can you draw that conclusion for yourself: the determination to be free? You may say, “Yes, yes, who doesn’t want to be free?” It is not that simple. You have to think, “Am I free or not?” You may say, “I am an American, I am a free person.” Of course, yet I say, “I am under my own pressure, I am under my own karmic pressure, the tremendous karmic pressure that I have built and am building, so I want to be free from that.” I should not have said that, it just slipped out. That should be *your own* discovery. That is what you should find. But now, since I said it, measure it with your thoughts, see whether it matches with them. If it does it is okay, if it does not then there is some problem, and let’s discuss that next time. That is what I am looking for.

#### QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- What is happiness to me? Is that really happiness? What is pain?
- Why is the determination to be free the necessary first principle of the path for me?

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On cyclic existence:

Ch. Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom*, I. The Myth of Freedom, II. Styles of Imprisonment.

Tsongkapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 57-61

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, pg. 45-48.

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, pg. 107-114: Cyclic existence



## 7. 'LEISURE AND OPPORTUNITY ARE HARD TO GET' EMBRACING OUR LIFE

*Vs. 4a Leisure and opportunity are hard to get,*

...

### LEISURE AND OPPORTUNITY.....

"Leisure and opportunity are hard to get and there is no time to life; keep thinking about this." This is the true answer to why you need the determination to be free. Nobody is catching or holding you, you are not under anybody's spell, so you don't have to worry about getting free from that. What you really do have to worry about is getting free from this circle of existence, the chain that goes round like a bicycle-chain. Our problem is that we are running in it; we are not free from it.

Why is this a problem? Because of change. Cyclic existence has its ups and downs, it throws you up and throws you down, and can throw you into any different level. Most of the time it gives you sadness and sorrow and pains. That is our problem; we have to get free from *that*. The whole question on spirituality has to do with this.

Why do people work spiritually? The only real reason is because they want to get free from that circle. Some people may say, "No, no, no, helping other people, that is the great thing, that is spiritual." Sure it is spiritual. Why is it spiritual? Helping others helps you. That is the simple reason. You may say, "Oh, that is a selfish thought. Helping others helps the other one." Sure, helping others helps the other, but it also helps you and that is why you do it. Because it is good, you want to do it. Why I do want to help others? Because it is a good thing and I want to do good. Why do you want to do good? Because you want to be good. Right or wrong? Please think! It is very easy to deny it, but if you think carefully it is true. No other reason. So if you want to be good, you have to cut the circle.

*Use the opportunity.* When can you cut it? Right now! Now is the time to cut it. That is our *opportunity*. Do we have time? Yes we do. We have *leisure*. Opportunity and leisure. Will we always have that? No: it comes rarely, it is hard to find, *hard to get*. And: there is no time to life.

Okay, if I can do this and if I have time to do this, do I have all the time I want under my command? No madam, no sir. There is no time to life. You know that very well, don't you? You know that as well as I do. Why? Because we are all dying and cannot escape that.

Some people say, "I don't want to hear about dying. We all know that." There are a lot of things we all know but don't want to bother about. When we don't bother, it is as good as not knowing. We do have to die, so there is no time.

Besides that, you don't know *when* you are going to die. Generally older people die first and younger people die later, but there is no certainty. Every day we see great-grandparents attending the funeral of their great-grandchildren. Children die before their parents; parents die before the grandparents. It happens every day. It is no mystery.

"Yes, I see people dying here, I see people dying there, but I don't think *I* am dying, because I have a healthy immune system. Somehow I am immune. I am not supposed to die, I am supposed to live. They are supposed to go, not me." That is our deeper attitude. We don't think about dying, until

somebody catches us by the neck, saying, “Hey, it is your time.” When that happens, it is too late, we can’t do anything. One of the Kadampa geshe, Geshe Kamapa, said:

When we have time, we don’t think about dying,  
but when death comes, we start scratching our chest.

That is because we don’t want to die. We will think, “Hey, when I die I won’t see any of this tomorrow! I want be able to talk to her, to him! I won’t be able to do this, I won’t see anything anymore, I will be gone, I will be lost!” and we start scratching. That is one way we may act. A second way, a little better than that is, “Hey, I have come here and lived, I have not been able to build much virtue and I have built tremendous non-virtue, cheated here, manipulated there, I lied, I have done this, I did that, now I really have to pay,” and again we start scratching, but it is too late. The opportunity we had is gone, the time is wasted.

### **Importance of our present life**

One thing I want to emphasize: this present life that we have here is a very important kind of life. According to the Buddha, according to the followers of the Buddha, the great masters and particularly those of the Tibetan tradition, the life that we possess is so valuable and so important! We can really do anything what we want to do. There is nothing which cannot be achieved by a human life. The capacity of human beings is unlimited, according to the tradition of these teachings. It is unlimited with regards to material development as well as unlimited with regards to spiritual development.

In other words, if you want to be a scholar you can do it, you can become a professor of Buddhism if you want to, no doubt about that. If you want to be more than a scholar, if you want to be a good practitioner, you can do that, too. If you want to achieve a spiritual result, not only talking about it by mouth but really achieving something solid you can hold in your hand, you also can do that.

If you want to have a proper guarantee—provided you accept there is future life—that you are not going to fall into the lower realms, you also can get that. If you want to be an *arhat*, in a position where you don’t have to face suffering any more, where all suffering has totally gone from you (though that is not being enlightened, not really fully awakened), if you want that level, you can do it. If you want to achieve a strong concentration with the benefits of harmony and pleasure of both body and mind, you can also do that.

If you want to attain the total awakened state, really becoming a buddha, that, too, can be achieved in this life, this very body. That is a true fact. It is nothing mysterious. It is plain and simple. If you can think, you can understand it. As good as we are in material or scientific development, that much we are capable of reaching in spiritual development. There is opportunity in both ways.

So, this very life we have is important. It is as important and as valuable as you can imagine, so don’t you ever think you are useless! No human being is ever useless, no matter what your age or physical condition may be. When you are crazy, it is different; if you are totally incapable mentally, then it is very hard to gain complete control over your mind and spiritual development up to buddhahood. Otherwise your life is very, very valuable, particularly since you now have such a great variety of spiritual paths from which to pick and choose and select.

In earlier times people had to go totally out of the way to get a proper spiritual path. When the Tibetans picked up this path we are talking about here, a thousand years ago, they had to give up a tremendous amount of wealth and even lives in order to gain it. That included the life of a king, who gave up his life without any hesitation to gain this path for his subjects.<sup>7</sup>

Why is this very path so important? Because it gives the opportunity to gain all these results within a person’s lifetime. For us, having such an opportunity available is almost like a farmer’s fruit market: if you can’t take that advantage then it is a great waste. We will have to face this great waste if we don’t take time to think for ourselves.

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<sup>7</sup> The story is to be found in Gelek Rinpoche, *Lam Rim Teachings*. Entry: Yeshe Wö.

*Leisure.* Therefore, while you have the time, while you have the opportunity in your hand, you should use it. No matter how busy you Americans claim you are, you are artificially busy. Number one: you pretend to be busy, it is in your blood; and if you don't pretend to be busy you are not a good worker, so this is a vicious circle. Number two: if you don't keep yourself busy, you don't make enough money, if you don't make enough money you can't pay your bills, if you can't pay your bills you are in trouble; this is another circle. Number three: you want to do everything, so you go beyond your limit. All these are reasons why you make yourself artificially busy. True. You are busy, but no matter how busy you may be, you definitely find the time for things that you want to do. Those of you who like to dance find the time to go dancing. Those who like to gossip, no matter how busy you may be, will find yourself gossiping everywhere. In addition to that – most important – you have time to get sick. Right? You may say, "I cannot get sick," but if you are sick you are sick, you have to stay home. That is a clear sign we are making ourselves busy, but at the same time we can also give ourselves time whenever we want to.

That is the clear sign that you do have time. It is also true that the fewer responsibilities you have, the better opportunity you have. That is very true; if you have fewer responsibilities, you have more time.

When we talk about time, we are not talking about a lot of time. We are talking about using a little time in a well-organized way. Think a moment. Each one of us has been in school. How many different subjects did you pick up and how much time did you really study per day on each of the subjects? How many lectures did you attend on each subject? Not very much. Three times a week forty-five minutes to an hour and then you mastered it, right? In addition to that you may have put three more hours on subject study and you got a masters-degree out of that. We really are not talking about a full-time job like from eight to five. So you do have the time; the leisure is there.

*Opportunity.* There is a slightly different way of looking at opportunity. Opportunity for what? We are not looking for some general opportunity for everything. We are looking for a particular opportunity to achieve spiritual value, to achieve some spiritual result within us. We have a goal.

A lot of our lives do not have the opportunity, because the circle of life moves. When the circle moves in a different direction, we won't have the opportunity. Let's spend some time imagining some of the possibilities.

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on leisure and opportunity in my life - 1**

Imagine that you are a cat at this moment. Think, "I am a cat." Please think: is it possible, can I be a cat? Sure. It is hundred percent possible. By sheer luck I happen to be a human being, otherwise I could very well be a cat now, sitting next-door with a collar on my neck. And if I were a cat, what could I do to cut my circle, to free myself? Would I have the opportunity? No. No matter how intelligent a cat can be, a cat cannot cut the circle.

By sheer luck I have been fortunate enough not to be a cat, but a human being who can understand, who can think, who can utilize his mind. Only human beings can do so. Samsaric gods cannot do it, it is a human capability. This is why the human life is important, That is why it is said: the opportunity is there, the capability is there.

If I have the capability but I don't have the specific opportunity, again, I can't do it. What is that opportunity? Having the method to apply and the knowledge. I have to have the method. If I don't have the method, no matter what capability I might have, what can I do? It will be like a computer without a program; I can't do anything.

Methods are available, from Christianity, to Judaism, to Hinduism, to Buddhism. As a matter of fact it is unlike earlier times. Nowadays one can pick and choose, go shopping in the spiritual supermarket built up in the West. Yes, I definitely have the opportunity.

Will this opportunity last forever? No, I'll die. Sure, I'll die. When? I wish I knew, but I don't. It could be any day or not for another eighty years.

*Conclusion:* Therefore, now I am here, now I have the opportunity, why waste it? Better use the opportunity, because it does not come often.

### **Practice: debate with yourself**

That is how you're going to think. And this is going to be this week's subject: *leisure and opportunity in my life*. You analyze it, debate with yourself. I am not yet presenting you any conclusions, okay? I will not give you the conclusions now because I want you to meditate, to analyze, to try to find out the conclusions. My words or information from books will not help you as much as finding the conclusions yourself. That is why you have to meditate. This is your homework. Meditate on this.

⊟ have established already that we are not looking for anything ordinary but for an extraordinary achievement of spiritual development. We are actually looking for the highest achievement possible to be obtained within a short reasonable period of time. Keeping that as a goal, you check whether you have the opportunity or not. We are looking for a very specific purpose and a specific opportunity: whether we have the opportunity to fulfill those wishes or not.

You cannot do a concentration meditation on it until you find the correct conclusions. Once you find them conclusions, you concentrate on the conclusions. Then that conclusion you draw will be accepted by your mind, will be absorbed like paper soaked in oil. Until you get the conclusion I don't think you can do concentrated meditation, because, what can you concentrate on? I want you to So please, try to meditate. Not once a week, but daily, whenever you have time. I don't care whether you do it in your bed, on the pot, or wherever, but just do it. Okay? Thank you.

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on leisure and opportunity in my life - 2**

'*Leisure and opportunity...*'. What we are concerned with is: whether I have the opportunity to achieve the thing what I want to achieve. If you think in that direction you will feel different, and you will want to apply a certain discipline. When you say 'opportunity,' think about 'opportunity for what?' When I look at myself and say, "Do I have the opportunity to achieve the ultimate result?" the answer I find is, "I do, I do."

What if at this moment I were a totally materialistic person, believing that money is the only answer for everything, going after money and not caring about anything else. If I were at that level, would I have the opportunity to practice spiritually?

There is every possibility of being in that category, but luckily I am not like that. Luckily! That is opportunity again. If I were totally in that category, saying, "Every minute is money, everything is money, money," and my total aim were to have two beautiful houses plus three or four cars and two or three planes, I wouldn't have the opportunity to work spiritually, I would be cut off. Even though I was a human being with all the capacities and with all the opportunities around, I would cut off my own opportunity.

By not being in that category, by that alone, I do have a great opportunity. Looking at your friends, you will find that many of them don't have this opportunity. Somehow, by sheer chance, you are different and some may think you are a little bit crazy, but that is their problem. As far as we are concerned, we are fortunate to be a little bit crazy. We have the opportunity and we can do it.

What would happen if I were a multi-billionaire. What would I do with billions of dollars? Can I eat all of it? Can I wear all of it? Can I use all of it? No. It is simply going to be a new boss. I could be totally going to be slave to a multi-billion dollars.

Besides that, there will be a day I have to go without a single penny in my pocket. Then what will happen to my dollars? What will happen to my lifelong efforts for wealth or name? With my waste of this opportunity? I can't carry my credit-cards when I go, nor my car nor my house.

Not only that. I will also have to leave behind my own body that was born with me. What will happen then? That is why I said we have the opportunity now. When we go, it will be different. If you don't use the opportunity given, make it work, then when you go, there will be no difference between you as a spiritual person dying on a bed and the dog dying in the street. If you cannot make it to be a difference, it is your fault. It is not the fault of the practice, it is not the fault of the opportunity, it is a personal problem, a personal fault.

I can make that difference, I myself, while I am alive in this life. We have to be here now, but we have to prepare for that time. If we do not prepare for that time now when we have everything in our hand, then when we die, it will be too late.

Looking at equal human beings, we even have an opportunity they may not have. Some people, maybe your roommate, maybe your girlfriend, maybe your boyfriend, will totally refuse to accept all this, just because they don't have the karmic fortune to be able to take it. So what will happen? No understanding. They may simply say, "Ah, that is a crazy thing, I don't want to hear about it, don't talk to me about it, I'd rather go and have a nice time in the bar," or something like that. That very person cuts off his opportunity.

So, do *I* have the opportunity to achieve ultimate enlightenment?

Look within the framework<sup>8</sup>: do you have it? I don't blame you much just now, because you don't really know what enlightenment is. We are at a very, very beginning stage here. Whatever you may know or not know about enlightenment, you have to think of something that has no fallback. When we talk about enlightenment here, it means becoming just like a buddha: all delusions have been totally cleared and everything to be known is ultimately known. I can't say 'becoming God', but it is almost the same. Total enlightenment has no fallback from whatever you built up. The moment you have a fallback, you get the clear sign that either you are not on the right path or you are not practicing in the right way. That is what it is. So think along those lines.

### **... ARE HARD TO GET**

Let us take one more step, '*Leisure and opportunity are hard to get*'. Leisure to do a spiritual practice and opportunity to work on it, are hard to get. You have to find out for yourself whether that is true or not true, by meditating, by thinking within the framework. In that way you will convince yourself this is true: the leisure and opportunity are hard to come by.

*Cause for a human life.* How did we get into this human life? Through many efforts in our previous lives. We worked so hard. A human life is very expensive! It costs a tremendous amount of virtues or good work: morality, generosity, all sorts of things. Morality is the fundamental base to produce this life. Generosity makes us wealthy. Patience makes us beautiful.

How much proper morality do we have at present? Probably not much, and that itself indicates that it won't be easy to get a life like this again. And each part of this life, the physical part, the mental capacity, has its own direct little cause. Each one of them. Why is this my father? Why is this my mother? Why do I have this relation with my parents? Why isn't my mother-in-law more understanding, particularly towards me? Each one of these has tiny little reasons. Each one of them has a cause that I produced and a result that I am going round in. If you really have time to look into them in detail you'll find that each one of them has a cause.

When you see each one of these parts of life, you can also see how to avoid it. In order to see how to avoid all this, first you have to see it. You have to see what causes it, and how it works. It is karmic, but that does not mean it is fixed. It is not a permanent fixture, it is impermanent, movable. So you can manipulate it, you can change it, you can do all sorts of things. There are a hundred and one different ways of handling it, even within one's life. A number of them you know: if you are very positive, things will work in that direction; if you are very negative, things will work in that direction. That is

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<sup>8</sup> See page 58.

just one tiny little method. And there are hundreds of different ones. But in order to know how to play with that, you have to see first what caused it, how it works. Then you can play with it. If you don't see it and you try to play with it, it will be guesswork and guesswork may not work very well.

When you start looking, thinking, playing, working spiritually, actually you are not only playing with your present life but with the lot of future lives, too. It is a game, but you are gambling many future lives. The stakes are high. So, better play when you know what you are doing.


In short, the first step to take is: see the things, let them be known, try to understand them. You should first know and then play. Do not just play for the sake of playing or for the sake of getting television-exposure like Gary Hart. I am not joking. Don't do it for the sake of somebody else telling you to do it, or, "Because she is doing it, I am doing it" or, "Because my friends are doing it." What you are really playing for is a big thing, high stakes. And if you don't play, what will happen? You are not going to be safe either, unfortunately. The time is running out and you have to play. When you play properly, you get all the profits. In order to play properly, you need to know what you are doing. That is what I mean.

So here is the opportunity to know what you are doing and why you are doing it. Look and see whether anybody else has it: whether Mr. A has it, or Miss B or Mrs. C or Madam D. Then you find, "I have it!" That is how you look within your framework. It works. You come to the conclusion, "Okay, let me take all my time, let me think about it. Before, I didn't make up my mind properly, I was not very sure how to do it. Well, now I have all the time under my command and I'll do it!"

### **Importance of spiritual discipline. Need of a framework**

Spiritual practice is very free, no doubt, yet you have to work within a framework. If you don't work within the framework everything will happen zigzag and you will get nowhere, you will be totally lost. Particularly when you get more information and when you learn many more things, if you do not have a framework you start flying in the air, not physically, but mentally. Your mind starts going in the air and you don't come down on the ground. You pick up everything, and that really does not make any sense, "Yeah, yeah, I read it in that book, this I have heard on that tape, I have heard so and so said this this, blah, blah, blah." This "blah, blah" won't help much, unless you want to show off. It does not make sense, because it is not to the point. When it is not to the point, we are not on the ground. The fault is that you are not working within a framework.

You have to have a framework. Within the framework you set up your goal, you set up the steps, you set up the rules. When you work within the framework, then every piece of information you have becomes valuable and helpful. If you don't have that, it is everywhere, scattered, useless.

*Salt, sugar and tea.*  old Tibetan masters used to give this example. Everyone has storage bins for salt, sugar and tea. In order to make a cup of good nice Indian-style tea, you need tea and you need sugar. If you have storage containers for them, then when you get a bag of sugar or a handful of tea or something else, you can bring it home and add it to your containers, so it will be kept organized and be useful and helpful. If you didn't have the storage bins and you found a handful of tea and a handful of sugar what could you do with it? If you mixed it all together, what good would it be? Similarly, if you have a basic foundation or framework within you, then whenever you encounter any kind of spiritual path, you can say, "Hey, this piece of information can be very useful for this stage, this can be added up here, that can be used there." That is what the basic foundation or framework provides.

This is what we call spiritual discipline. You have to have some discipline or structure. If you do not have this, you cannot achieve anything. Even democracy has discipline, right? You can't say, "It is a democratic country, so I will make the decisions." If every citizen of the US were to make decisions for the US, we would get nowhere. So you have discipline. You elect the president and Congress and they make the decisions for the country. Similarly here, in your spiritual practice, you want to achieve some goal and in order to do so you have to have discipline. If you don't have discipline you will be nowhere. You have to control yourself on this from the beginning.

When I say discipline do not misunderstand. I am not talking about discipline like, "You can go here you cannot go there, you have to listen to this and you cannot listen to that, this is the only right thing." I am *not* saying that; not at all. What I am trying to say is this: within yourself you should have a framework to work with. Using that, everything will be channeled properly, your energy will not be wasted, your knowledge will not be wasted, your information will not be wasted, your efforts will not be wasted. That is what I really mean.

Suppose you hold a horse race. When there is a proper lane for the horse to run in, you can go round and achieve your goal. If you don't go within this lane, if you say, "Well I am free, I can go anywhere" and you start running the horse in every direction the horse gets tired and you get tired and you get nothing. Right? Similarly here discipline is needed and it is really very, very important, especially in the US nowadays.

Why is it more important than ever? People in Asian countries have set up a certain pattern within society and – good or bad – they have something to follow. In the West, it does not work that way, and as a result of that you get a lot of information poured out. Actually, this is a great country, you can really get all the different sorts of information you want. If you have the framework working, if you know where to put the 'sugar and the salt,' you can take every bit of information and use it properly, because you have a container to put it in so you know where it is when you need it. If you don't have the container, when you pour the 'salt, sugar and chili' in one place, what are you going to do? At the end not only will the 'salt, sugar and chili' be useless, but since this is poured in your mind, you yourself may also become useless.

This danger exists very much in the US at this moment. You pick up everything and you don't know what to do with it. What will happen is: you really become useless. Think of a little piece of dough; when you put sugar and chili, and salt and honey in it, the dough will be spoiled. If you taste it, you will taste the sugar, you will taste the salt, you will taste the chili, but the dough is useless. Similarly when you disorganize yourself, pour in too much information, then there is this danger.

How can you avoid that danger? Build a framework with you. Once you build a framework, you are organized, you know where the information goes, and from every pocket you can take out whenever you want.

It is so important. I was fortunate enough to have had those teachings earlier and to have had a little bit of practice, so anything I read I can use here and there, but I think a lot of people can't do that. I see it. They get lost; they have too many things and then when, after some time, you try to put the correct picture in, there is no room. It's like the dough, already soaked with sugar, *etc.*, no room to put anything more, totally soaked. That is the danger. So to avoid that, have discipline, have spiritual discipline.

Discipline does not necessarily mean you have to sit in a certain position, or that you have to drink in a certain way, to eat in a certain manner, no. It means: whatever your practice is, channel it properly.

#### QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Leisure and opportunity in my life:
- Do I have leisure? (Think about the special meaning of leisure here.)
- Do I have the opportunity? (Think about the special way Rinpoche uses the word opportunity.)
- Will that leisure and opportunity last?

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On embracing our human life:

Tsongkapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 75-77

Gelek Rinpoche, *The Three Principles of the Path; A Short Commentary*, ch. 1

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*, pg. 59-61.

Dalai Lama, *The Way to Freedom*, ch 3.

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, IV, 2: Our precious human life

Kathleen Mc.Donald, *How to Meditate. IV, 2: Appreciating our human life*

## 8. 'AND THERE IS NO TIME TO LIFE': FACING DEATH REALISTICALLY

Vs. 4a        ...  
                  *And there is no time to life; keep thinking on this,*  
                  ...

The determination to be free is very important, but you are not going to get it until you know that leisure and opportunity are hard to come by and that there is no time to life. This is an important point. Now let's talk about the second line.

### **THERE IS NO TIME TO LIFE**

If you keep on thinking, "I can't make up my mind, I don't understand it, so let me think about it some more..." beware! Life is short. What I am going to say is very hard and painful, but it is true for all of us.

Every one of us is very positive thinker. We are so positive that we plan to live for a hundred years. But most of the time, 99.99% of our plans backfire. Look at people who lived before us. Nobody ever planned to die, everybody planned to go on living, but unfortunately everybody died.

Let me remind you once again that I am giving you material to meditate on. If you can show me anyone from two hundred years ago who is still alive, I will surrender to you with a three-fold salute. Unfortunately you cannot. That is a clear sign that you cannot live forever.

You may think, "Oh, because it was the medieval period people did not stay alive, now with the scientific development they can." Our minds work in such funny ways that you may think this. Or you may think, "The body can be preserved in some sort of capsule and in hundred years or so people can revive it." Yeah, they may revive it, however, it is not going to be the same person that will revive; there'll be a ghost (or spirit) in it. When I say not the same person, it is not because the time changes. I mean that soul will not be there, a different soul will occupy it. The doctors or whoever did it may have guaranteed that the body will move again, but they can never guarantee that the same soul will be there.

Another thing people say is, "Oh, spiritually you can live." Unfortunately, even Buddha died. Buddha did not continue to live, he died 2500 years ago. So did Jesus Christ, so did saint this and saint that, and those great *siddhas* and the great *maha-pandits* and the great Mohammed. Today we talk as though they have gone to the bathroom, but in reality they are really gone. We simply have a few little things left over, reminding us. The great masters left their teachings, the great soldiers left their history behind, but they are gone.

We have things called memorials, that try to remind people that somebody by this or that name has been here. What purpose this serves I don't know. Practically nothing. It serves one good purpose for us: it is a clear sign that the person is no longer here. Actually, poor people like you and me won't have a memorial; only great people of power or wealth have a memorial. It is a clear indication that neither power, money, military power, nor body strength cannot protect from you dying. If bodily

strength could protect from dying, all tigers and lions would live forever, but they don't. Again, I am not denouncing body-building or body-exercises or health-care, don't misunderstand. What I am trying to say is: no one lives forever.

**Practice: guidelines for a meditation on death in three rounds**

***1. Death is unavoidable***

Death is inevitable for us, we all know that. Each one of us knows that and if you ask yourself you'll say, "Yes, of course." Each one of us will say yes, but when we watch our own thoughts, we watch our own mind deeply, none of us accepts that. You only know that yourself, others don't know. Watch your own mind. You'll say, "That's not true, I do know I am going to die, I already knew that, I told other people so, I saw this, I did that." Each one of us will come up with this sort of argument, but it is only superficial. The truth is that you believe that you will live forever. Each one of us does!

We talk about the great persons – history is a beautiful book – George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, President Kennedy. Which of them is still alive? We keep their rooms as though they had simply gone to the bathroom for a minute. That is how death becomes decorated. But what is the true message behind it? If we ask a person he'll say, "No, nobody is there." We have a nice word for it: memorial of so and so. It sounds beautiful, but if we think beyond that, why do we call it a memorial? Because the person is gone.

We have to go. Do *I* have to go? Well sure, I have to go. When we really ask ourselves deeply, "Will I really have to go?" the true answer we get from ourselves is, "No, no, not me, I am going to live here forever and you are going to go."

Meditate for yourself on whether I am telling you the truth or not, and get it. But you don't want to accept that. You know you have to go, that is why you don't want to accept it. Ask yourself the question. Don't think of the person sitting on your right or left, but think of yourself, ask yourself and watch your own mind.

We are planning to live tomorrow, we are planning to be here next week, planning to be here next month, next year, the year after that. Every one of us is planning that.

Nobody lives forever. No buddha, nobody else either. No spiritual power can give us a permanent life, no military power can, no economic power, no physical power. No power that we think of anywhere can give everlasting life attached to this body.

We all have to go. The life that we have, the gatherings we have here, the Jewel Heart organization, all of them – one hundred years from today none of us will be here. I guarantee that.

It is very much like in the autumn, when the leaves from the trees fall down and the wind blows and all different leaves are blown together into a corner somewhere. The leaves lie there together for a little while, then another wind comes and those very leaves are scattered everywhere. That is exactly what our life is. We have been blown together by a sort of wind, *karma*. Each one of us has a collective karma which brings us together here. And then another gust of wind comes and one by one each and every one of us is blown away, just like the leaves.

This is the material for you to meditate on. Don't think meditation means just sitting with a blank mind. Concentrated meditation is one thing, but analytical meditation is another thing: you have to think! *This* is material for meditation, okay? Analytic meditation is a sort of *dialogue* between you and yourself or maybe between you and your ego, whatever you call it.

We had a discussion here. Someone said, "Though people die they live."<sup>9</sup> But, the moment of separation of the physical body and the consciousness is what we call dying; you have to be satisfied with that, otherwise dying would disappear. That is relative truth: you have to accept a thing as it appears

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<sup>9</sup> All questions and answers and discussions of each chapters are to be found in the Appendices on page 193.

and functions. *Dying does not mean you are totally gone and you disappear.* You live, but you will not be in this body, you change your body, you take a next birth into a different body. Take a man in a blue suit; when he changes his suit he is no longer “the man in the blue suit,” right? That’s overly simple, but it is almost like that.

It looks easy, “changing a suit,” but in reality it is not that easy, because when you die something happens to you. You don’t really disappear, but you do not necessarily come back in the same category or at the same level. In the dying stage you really get a big shock. And when you wake up from that stage, where are you going to be? There is no certainty about that. You will wake up, for sure. After you die, you will not necessarily have the same friends, you will not necessarily live in the same environment, you will even not necessarily be a citizen of the USA and furthermore you will not necessarily have human registration or identity card. In other words, you will not necessarily even be a human being again at that moment.

*Conclusion.* Let us presume, “Yes, I accept that I have to go, I cannot remain forever.” Finally I have been able to convince myself that I have to go. The conclusion is: I am subject to death, I am going to die.

## **2. There is no certainty about the time of death**

When will that happen? When will that happen to *me*?

That is the question you yourself have to handle. No one knows how long he or she is going to be here. In reality, none of us knows.

You’ll say, “Yes, I’ll live tomorrow, I’ll be here.” Each one of us will say that. But if you ask yourself deeply, “Can I guarantee that I will be here tomorrow?” the true answer is, “I hope so, I am planning to be here.” Watch your own mind, that is what happens.

None of us has the power to guarantee that we will live this many years and then go. You may say, “Well, I checked with my doctor recently and I am very healthy.” That is the biggest reason we have. I’ll tell you one thing: that is a superficial, unreliable reason.

Each one of us has the bad habit of issuing some kind of unreliable reason, yet something to hold on to. That thought of living forever is within every human being, even with the person on his last, eleventh hour on his deathbed in the hospital. Even then we’ll still hold the same idea.

Watch this as you imagine that you are sick. Don’t think of other people being sick. Don’t even look at others. Looking at the others is not a spiritual way. Looking into your own world is the spiritual way. Why? When you look inside you begin to see your own faults and mistakes. When you look outside you don’t see your own faults at all.

Say you are sick. Let us say you are on your deathbed. You see that the doctors are not telling you the truth. They are saying you will get better and blah, blah, blah, but they don’t really mean it. You can see it by looking at their faces. You also see your family, your nearest and dearest ones, saying, “Oh, you are going to be all right, blah, blah, blah,” but on the other hand, they do something strange; they talk somewhere else and you can only half hear what they are saying. And you yourself can tell, “Well, I am not going to get better from this illness.” The medicines you take don’t work and the treatment you receive does not help that much. And especially by the actions of the doctor and of the people around you, you will probably know.

Even then you say, “Yes, I may not get better at all, however I am not going to die now. Maybe I will not get out of the hospital, however...” You will talk about who is going to come and visit you next Sunday, who will bring you what and this and that.

So we are always planning to live, “Just now I am not going to die, not at this minute.” Everybody holds onto life. When we look at someone on their deathbed we can see how unreliable that is, because we have a little better knowledge than the dying person. When we see such a situation, we see how they are holding on to life, yet we do the same thing.

Just now we are not sick, just now we are not in hospital, just now we are in perfect health, but that does not mean we are going to be here tomorrow. Anything can happen. Many people who go to sleep tonight won't get up in the morning. Why couldn't that be me? Yes, there is no reason why I couldn't be in that position. I very well could be in it.

You may think that I am talking now about all bad, painful things. I am sorry but I am. Why? Because you *have* to think of the bad things. When you think of the bad things that can happen to you, then you'll be prepared. And if you do not think that is going to happen to you, you are mistaken. Whether we think or do not think about it, when the time comes, it happens to us. It is better to think and be prepared, than not to think and be surprised. If we don't think about it now, then all of a sudden, when we realize we are going, then we feel sorry, we regret we had this long life and...

I don't want you to think very long about this. Just get the taste about it. If you think about it very long, some people will have a problem of getting to feel low or depressed. A little bit low is okay, but I don't want you to be too low.

Dharma practice is such a thing. At certain times you have to get high and at certain times you have to get low, not by the use of chemicals, but by an actual straightforward method. Sometimes a little bit low is necessary, but not too much. I am afraid today is a low day. I have to give you material for low. Just think,

When is death going to happen to me? When? You will think that it will happen after fifty years or eighty years. Nobody thinks of tomorrow or the next moment. Only very few of you will think that way. You may say it, again, but if you think very carefully you'll find that everybody is planning to live rather than to die. Are *you* planning to die? Nobody is. Ask yourself, "Am I planning to die?"

It is not necessarily the case that old people go through earlier and young people go later. Generally it is supposed to be like that, but there is no certainty. We very often see great-grandparents attending their great-grandchild's funeral. It is the clear sign that there is no certainty, nobody knows.

When you deal with your own mind, your mind will give you a lot of answers. These answers are not necessarily right. Your mind would like to have it that way; your deep desire wants it. That is why you're getting all different answers. Your deep desire will be for living rather than dying. Therefore you'll get all these excuses, "Yes, I am sure I have to go, but not for a while." You may even agree, "Yes, there is no certainty about when," but on the other hand, another part of your mind is planning something for next year or the year after or maybe ten years after. This is our mind and how it functions.

Now if you get confused, you have to get confused in between these two, your mind's desire and reality. You have to get in between there, see what is your deep desire, what is your deep planning and what in reality is really going to happen. And when you make this argument between you and your ego, finally it will come to the point: there is no certainty; there is no guarantee.

Even when you go to bed tonight, are you sure you're really going to get up tomorrow? I sometimes fear that, I used to fear that a lot. But that does not make me low. When you go through anesthesia you always wonder, "Am I going to wake up? And if I am going to wake up, am I going to wake up here or somewhere else?" Nobody thinks, "When I go to sleep, am I going to wake up here or somewhere else?" yet, in reality, it is the same thing. You hear sometimes, "So and so was okay, went to bed last night and this morning he did not wake up, we called him and called him and he is gone." That happens. What guarantee do I have it will not happen to *me*?

*Conclusion:* There is no certainty about the time. It could be the next moment, could be next week, next month, next year... no certainty.

### 3. What can help me at the time of death?

What can we do to prepare for that time? If you do not know anything about the next life, it seems to be a little easier at that time, since you will not worry so much. But if you – unfortunately or fortunately – know, then you begin to think, “Am I really going to have a next life? If so, how am I going to go? What kind of karma, good karma or bad karma, do I have?”

All these questions begin to bother our minds at that time. Yet, if that happens then, it is too late to do much. It is better to think about it now.

Death is unavoidable. Each one of us has to go through it. Death is something which hangs on our neck, can drop any minute and cut us into pieces. That is our true condition.

When that happens to me, what am I going to do? What can I do to prepare for that time? Do I have any security for that? Will I get my social-security check at that time? And if I get it can I use it?

We put in our precious time, a lot of energy, we measured it in terms of dollars, and then we put it into the bank, saying that when we become old and need it, when we get into trouble we'll have it. But: Can I really use it on that day when I die? Actually, *the so-called valuable security will let me down*. A Tibetan master said:

You may have food stored for a hundred years,  
but the day you die you have to go empty handed.  
Your mother may have stored clothes to be used for a hundred years,  
but the day you die you go naked.

Actually, it's worse than going naked. We consider the body we have so important, so precious. We tell each other, “Look after yourself. Take care.” What do we take care of? Of our body. What do we look after? We look after our body, which is so precious to us that we cannot even bear a little pimple coming up, we immediately have to do something about it. Yet, at the time we die, we leave the body and go. *That body is also going to let me down*. None of us, unless we are highly spiritually developed, takes the body along. It is a rented apartment we are living in. As long as we can pay the rent, we can stay in it, as soon as we cannot, we'll be kicked out. That is what happens. So we leave our body as well as possessions and go.

So, when I die, neither money nor wealth will help, neither my degrees nor my possessions will help, neither my family nor my security will help. Also my companion, family, my relatives and friends cannot help me. It is said,

When you are born, you are born alone; when you die, you die alone.

Even the body cannot help, because the body is left behind. It is said,

You are born with a body, but when you die you leave the body;  
your consciousness, the I or soul, will go like a hair taken out of the butter.

Earlier Tibetan masters always gave the example of taking a piece of hair out of butter. (You know, Tibet was not hygienic like it is here, I am sorry but that's how it was.) If you pull the hair, the hair will go alone, it will not carry any butter with it. Similarly our consciousness, or soul, or person, or we ourselves, whatever terminology you want to use, we go from our body like a piece of hair drawn out of butter.

The most difficult time is the time of death. Right or wrong? A lot of people think, “Death is like sleeping, you go to sleep and go.” I do not believe it is like that. At the period of death, sure, you go totally unconscious, you have no idea what happens at that instant. But you do wake up. The problem is not the dying, but what will happen thereafter. Death is the time we are most in need of help.

At that time the security that we have saved cannot help, for sure. Instead of that, it could even create problems for the persons who are left behind: “It belongs to me according to this will, according to that will it belongs to her.”

Even the body cannot help, because the body is left behind. Then the body is called a corpse; it is no longer called our body. Our names become decorated by words like “the late so and so” and “in memory of so and so.” These are beautiful words, but no matter how beautiful it is, it is a clear indication the person is no longer there.

That is very hard for us to imagine. We can easily imagine things happening to our body, but it is very hard to imagine losing it completely. Just as we get confused now when we think about getting away from the body, we will be totally confused when we actually die. Our consciousness really gets confused.

If you are lucky, your consciousness is received there with a welcome-reception with flowers and incense and so forth. People do sometimes start hearing those things even before they die, sort of half hearing, being half confused, saying, “Oh I hear this singing of beautiful dharma songs.” At the moment you begin to get confused, the dakas and dakinis will lead you through a proper path and you can go in the proper direction. The opposite may also happen: people get more and more confused and hear strange things and have horrible visions. That is how we are led in a certain direction.

So the question is: at that time what can really help? What can we use?

This is where the need for *spiritual development* really comes in, not before. Things that can lead us in that better direction can help us. Things that do not lead in the better direction will not be able to help. That means: spiritual activities and all actual honest total dedicated, clear, pure efforts that we have put in will help us. And all calculated, manipulative actions, any wrongdoings or negative actions will harm us.

In order to get that help, we cannot wait until we are dying, then it is too late. We have to prepare now. While we are living, it is very easy to do and undo things. Sometimes we even do something mean, thinking that nobody else knows about it. We think that if nobody else understood, we could escape the consequences. But unfortunately our consciousness, the actual self, can never be cheated, it always understands what we are doing. You can't cheat yourself. The moment you know that you did something, you leave an imprint on your consciousness. That imprint becomes a cause for a future result. It is imprinted on your deep consciousness like a stamp or a signature on a piece of paper, an 'IOU'. And that imprint will become activated later. And when you go, when you die, the “label” is there. You get an imprint of every action, that is what we call karma and it will ripen into a similar result. That works; it will react on everything. So it becomes difficult.

In short, material things are not of absolute value, because when you need them most, you can't use them. When I need it most, it can't help me, and therefore it is not reliable.

*Conclusion:*

at the time of the death, *only* the good work that I have done can help, nothing else.

### **Practice: get yourself convinced**

In short, the conclusions you have to draw:

1. *I am subject to go; I have to die.*
2. *There is no certainty about the time.*
3. *At the time of the death, only the good work that I have done can help, nothing else.*  
At the time of our death our security does not help, our wealth does not help, friends cannot help, family cannot help, parents cannot help; the body cannot help; nothing can help us except the good work we did. Let us establish that. Okay?

I want you to draw these conclusions: not by mouth, not by writing, but properly from the bottom of your heart. Get into it. You have to reach the conclusions by convincing yourself through your meditation, through the dialogue between you and your ego, through the material, through the examples, through anything. Get yourself convinced.

What difference will that make? That will make a difference from now on in the way you think, the way you act, your attitude towards life. Not only that. Every effort that you put into the spiritual way will be channeled, focused and directed and you will gain development. But in order to gain *you* have to think, *you* have to meditate, *you* have to do it. Don't just take my words, that won't help you. And *you* have to reach the conclusion, the proper understanding and the proper realization. You really have to convince yourself and feel it strongly, you have to reach that.

Once you reach that conviction, it is easy to go back to the *determination to be free*. Until then it is not going to be easy. Okay? Actually, this will cut tremendously your desires for this life. It will cut them tremendously. Positive thinking is one thing, desire is another thing. It creates a lot of problems for us, particularly negative desires. Mindfulness of death is the antidote for any of those desires: desire to be a multi-millionaire, desire to be loved, desire to enjoy yourself, all these limitless desires that bring dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction brings pain. Right or wrong? As a matter of fact satisfaction is one of the wealthiest things!

If you can spend a few minutes a day on proper information, with proper thinking, and the proper method, it builds up, like drops falling in a bucket. I am aware that nobody here in the new century has time like the earlier great masters who didn't have to do anything but sit in their cave or monastery. That amount of time is no longer available now. So we have to use whatever time we have available and use it the best way we can.

### **Practice: handle your meditation practice with care**

We have been talking about death and that is very depressing; it is not going to bring joyfulness and harmony. But we have to remember – I repeatedly told you here – our purpose is not just to have a calm and quiet and beautiful and relaxed meditation. Generally concentrated meditation does that. But here we are giving you a lot of different subjects for analytical meditation. The whole purpose is: sometimes feel high, comfortable, nice and sometimes feel down, low, miserable and unhappy. This is absolutely necessary, otherwise it will be food without any taste. Sometimes bland food is good, sometimes a little tamari is good, sometimes a little chili-pepper is good. It is always part of it, so don't feel bad.

On the other hand, when you don't feel like doing something, you have to be very careful. You have to handle it very carefully. In one way, you don't want to force yourself to do something you don't want to do. On the other hand, you don't want to totally neglect it. You should carry on the daily meditation-activity. You should always do at least the minimum, because if you let it go totally, you will lose, the other forces will overpower you. In the beginning it is a fight, I always tell you, the negative and positive forces have to fight and that is like a quarrel. It is not going to be an easy and comfortable journey. If that were so, everybody would have been enlightened by now without any difficulty. There is always fighting and quarreling between the forces.

What you want is for the positive forces to win, so you don't want to give up. At the same time you don't want to force yourself to the point that you get totally fed up. So it has to be handled very skillfully. That depends on the individual; you know or can learn how to handle it for yourself. You don't want to totally give up, nor do you want to force yourself too roughly. These are technical things I am telling you. Keep them in mind; apply them to yourself, to help yourself.

When you are meditating on death and dying and all these sorts of things, don't expect to feel great. These are things that have to bring you down, make you feel sad and miserable. That is what you really need here; it is time to have a little more chili or a few pickles.

Okay. I won't say too much. Too much talk may not help you. I am giving you enough material to think about for a week. Try it for yourself. Try to reach those two conclusions. Do not expect to draw your conclusion by yourself in a week, but think in this direction, gain some understanding, try to get closer to it. That is all, best of luck and thank you.

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Meditate on the three roots:
  - I am subject to death
  - There is no certainty about the time
  - At the time of the death, nothing but the good work that I have done can help.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On impermanence and death:

Kathleen Mc.Donald, *How to Meditate*, pg. 68-76: Death Awareness Meditation,  
Chogyam Trungpa, *The Heart of the Buddha*, Part three: acknowledging death.  
Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*  
Gelek Rinpoche, *The Three Principles of the Path; A Short Commentary*, ch. 1 and 3  
Dalai Lama, *The Way to Freedom*, ch. 4  
Dalai Lama, *The joy of living and dying in peace*.  
Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path* pg. 62-66.

## 9. SEEKING REFUGE

What did we established so far? We have established at least the benefit of the doubt on past and future lives. Also we spent time on what we want to be free from when we have the determination to be free. We are now talking about how to get that. Do kindly keep that in mind, so that you can adjust your listening. That maybe helpful.

The first half of verse four is the determination to be free from this sort of life. That we have almost established. Any problems, difficulties or doubts with that, anybody? This is the place where you should really speak out. You don't have to feel bad about whatever you say. And don't expect, "Well if I say this it will be a disgrace, it will be a clear indication I don't know anything about it." You don't have to worry about that. We are all sort of beginning travelers on the road. Okay?

### TAKING REFUGE

Now I want to bring in something important and well-known that is not directly mentioned in this text: taking refuge. Do not misunderstand me, this doesn't mean you have to take refuge! I am just trying to present the spiritual path that I know best, which because of my background is the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. I am trying to present that path to you, but I am not trying to make you a Buddhist. For those who are Buddhists, for those like me who at least claim to be Buddhist, the most important thing is taking refuge and this comes here.

Why does this subject come here? Nobody can live forever. When you die what happens? What do you carry with you? Not wealth, not money, not even your body, nothing but your consciousness or the I, whatever you may like to call it. I may even call it soul; normally Buddhists don't call it soul, they call it consciousness. It doesn't matter, it is only terminology, but if you pinpoint it, it is the person you call *me*, that is the one. So call it whatever you like to call it: I, consciousness, soul or me.

When I go, I have to leave my body; I separate from my body. When my body can no longer be of service to me, it is time to separate from the body. That is called death and it is a stage of shock. To make it simple - don't take it literally - it is like sleep. When you wake up from death, you don't wake up here, you don't get the smell of coffee in the morning, you get something else. That is the problem. It could be great and wonderful or terrible and miserable. That is the point. If that were to happen to me at this moment, what could I do? Do I have any power to protect myself? I cannot do anything, as I know very well. I don't have power to help myself. I can only hope, keep my fingers crossed. So what do I do?

Normally when you can't help yourself, what do you do? You go to somebody who can help you. Right? When you have a problem, let's say you accidentally break a law and the police come and arrest you and you can't protect yourself, then you can go and find a lawyer to help you. Similarly here, when I die, I will go through a procedure where I cannot help myself, so I need to ask somebody for help.

That is why this Buddhist refuge is so famous, so important. When you can't help yourself you go to somebody and say, "Can you help me?" That is exactly what refuge is.

To whom do you go? You don't go to just anybody. If I break a law and the police come to chase me, I won't go shouting in the street asking just anyone for help. Similarly, here you cannot go and ask and hope that everybody will protect you. They may give good thoughts, good motivations, good energies and so forth, but you really cannot rely on that. You need to go and get something to hold on to. You need at least that.

So here we take refuge. We take refuge, not in everybody, not in the trees, rocks and waters, no. Buddhists recommend taking refuge in *Buddha, Dharma and Sangha*. Everybody has heard about Buddha, I am sure. Some may have heard of Dharma and Sangha, some may not. Before we take refuge we ask: What is Buddha? What is Dharma? What is Sangha? This is important.

### **What is Buddha**

What is Buddha? A lot of people say, "I read about him. He lived in India 2500 years ago, was a prince of an Indian kingdom and he left the kingdom." Some say, "He couldn't manage the kingdom and ran away into the forest." Some will say, "He lived about eighty years." And some say, "He lived about eighty years, completed his mission and decided to go, so he died." Some say, "No, he got poisoned by meat, got diarrhea and died." All these pictures are there. I am not going to talk about that historical Buddha at all.

We are going to talk about: *my* buddha. Each one of you point the finger at yourself: *me*. We are going to talk about everyone's *my* buddha, *my* dharma and *my* sangha. Let that be clear first. It is very important. Now when I say: *my* buddha, *my* dharma, *my* sangha you may say, "This man is trying to do something funny; he doesn't accept the famous Buddha who came before!" I am not denying the historical Buddha at all, do not misunderstand. But at the same time for each one of us *my* buddha is so important. So let's talk about *that* buddha.

*Buddha image.* If the moment we say the word buddha, you get the mental picture of India, it is wrong. If you get the picture of a book, it is wrong. If you get the picture of an image, it is wrong. These are all clear signs we do not understand our buddha yet. The picture or the image is a representation; it is a figure which reminds us. There are two reasons for the image: (1) The most important reason is to remind us. (2) By imagining or visualizing the historical Buddha, we develop very respectable virtuous thoughts and gain good merit. But an image is an image; a buddha cannot be a picture.

*Qualities of a buddha.* Then what is a buddha, really? What are the qualities that a buddha possesses? What kind of body does a buddha have? What kind of mind does a buddha have? What kind of capabilities does a buddha have? These are the questions one has to deal with first.

1. A buddha, he or she, has the quality of *knowledge*. It doesn't mean the quality of book knowledge, it doesn't mean the quality of blackboard knowledge, but the quality of developing their own experience. That is the real knowledge, or wisdom .
2. And a buddha has the quality of *compassion*. If they didn't have great compassion, they would like some and dislike others, and they would help those they like and throw away those they don't like. They can't do this, they cannot. Because they are bound by the great compassion, the quality of compassion.
3. Then also buddhas have the quality of *power* or *capability*. It means they have every different method to suit different people, to help in different ways.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> These three qualities are sometimes symbolized by Manjushri, embodiment of enlightened knowledge, Avalokitesvara, embodiment of enlightened love and compassion, and Vajrapani, embodiment of enlightened capability. These three are mentioned in the *Migtsema*, showing that as an enlightened being, Je Tsongkhapa manifests all these qualities.

*Ultimate protector.* Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical buddha, has of course accomplished that. At this moment, he represents my buddha. Because my buddha has not yet wakened up, Shakyamuni Buddha represents it. He represents the accomplishments of a buddha. In other words, when you are talking about a buddha who had completed everything, who knows everything, reaches everywhere, and who has every different method available to suit the needs of each and every individual, Shakyamuni Buddha is that one, my ultimate protector, my ultimate aim.

*Buddha nature*<sup>11</sup>. Each one of us has the capability to become like that. Each one of us has that pure nature, called buddha-nature, which is still in the form of a seed right now, and each one of us is capable of producing buddhahood, developing until we become a buddha. That is our spiritual goal. *That result-buddha, the buddha each and every one of us will become in future, is our ultimate spiritual refuge.* It is premature now, but that is the ultimate buddha we will become when we finally overcome our problems and have become pure. That purity in us is our future buddha. That means our ultimate refuge and goal is within us, not outside.<sup>12</sup>

Is it clear now? Do you recognize your own buddha? At least do you know its qualities? Okay. When I talk next time, when you read and see the word buddha, don't get the picture of India, but get the picture of having developed the qualities. One who has done that is the buddha. I hope this will stick with you.

### **What is Dharma**

Buddhism within the individual as part and parcel of everyday life is *much* more important than Buddhism in the meditation-room or temple. As we said, the historical buddha represents your own future buddha. You try to bring out your future buddha, try to wake it up to the buddha state, the awakened state. Now you must be sleeping or dreaming of maybe you're halfway between waking and dreaming. Whether you are going to switch from dreams to waking up or choose to go on dreaming depends on you. Being awakened means being no longer under the spell of delusions like anger, hatred, attachment and jealousy; you have awakened from them. The ultimate awakened state within us is when we become buddhas. Until then there are many different levels, from 1% up to 99.9% awakened but still not fully awakened. These are all states we can achieve within us. Right from the time that we take refuge to the Buddha, it is important to realize that the Buddhist practice is an inward journey, with all the paths leading inward.

*Absolute and relative dharma.* What is dharma? Put simply it means virtuous way or pacified way. We actually have to look again at two different aspects: relative dharma and absolute dharma. Absolute dharma refers to the spiritual developments gained within the individual. Relative dharma refers to teachings and dharma practices.

Dharma is also overcoming delusions. Delusions are negativities and when you overcome delusions, you overcome negativity and gain positivity. These very positivities are dharma and since all these happen within the individual, we say dharma is the medicine. However, just as you can only be cured if you buy and take the medicine, if you listen to Buddha's teachings, read and think about them but you do not practice, there will be no spiritual development. *Spiritual development is absolute dharma, and the way to achieve that is relative dharma.* So, my dharma is the object of refuge.

### **What is Sangha**

The sangha is the companions. The relative sangha, traditionally, is more than four ordained Buddhist monk's or nuns. The absolute level, the true absolute Sangha is those who have overcome ignorance, who have seen true emptiness. Those are called special persons, Aryas in Sanskrit.

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<sup>11</sup> Also see page 31.

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this is why the Zen people say "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him."

Now in the west, those of us who took refuge to Buddha, dharma, and sangha, are called sangha members. Which is okay. It's easy to be accepted as a sangha-member and to be part of it, but that goes along with responsibility too. The responsibility is to be able to represent Buddha dharma and Sangha, so you don't want to do something that will create misunderstanding or which creates difficulties to Buddha dharma, and Sangha. That is your responsibility. The responsibility of sangha members also is to support one another, to be helpful in whatever way, to be helpful, to be kind, to be caring – all these are the responsibilities.

*Buddha, dharma and sangha* We talked about Buddha, dharma and sangha. Why are the three of them necessary? Buddha is like the guide. Traditional Buddhist teachings use the analogy of a doctor and medicine. Buddha is a doctor who can diagnose our illnesses and prescribe the medication. When we are sick, we aim to get better. The goal of the sick person is *not* to suffer, even not under the pretext of purification. Buddha says, "Life is precious. Embrace life. Don't take on additional sufferings." We have enough problems as it is. We should take whatever relief we can, and that is dharma. Dharma is like the medicine. And the sangha helps you to recover. Within the community, you sort of observe each other and help each other to see whether you are going in the proper direction or in a different direction or what is going on with you. That is how the sangha checks your pulse as well as blood pressure. And they give you the needed medicine from time to time. This is the sangha's job: as sangha, not only do you see the nature of the situation, but also you have to help.

*Ultimate refuge.* Out of these three, the ultimate refuge is not the buddha. It is the dharma, your own dharma! That dharma can protect you from the cause of suffering, from producing the cause of misery. When you take away the cause, you won't have the result. *That* is how it really protects you. Until you are able to really do that, the relative dharma and the relative buddha and the relative sangha will help. That is how it works.

*Mahayana refuge.* We are Mahayana practitioners. In order to take proper Mahayana refuge, you have to have compassion. If you take refuge without compassion, it will not be Mahayana refuge. You have to have compassion, both for yourself and for others. If you have compassion for yourself, you have the determination to be free. That *is* compassion directed towards yourself. The determination to free others is what we normally talk of as love-compassion. That compassion is the determination to free all others. We don't have that just now; it looks like we have to build up a castle in the air. But, by building that up now, you will gain it later.

#### QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Contemplate refuge and the qualities of the objects of refuge.
- What is my ultimate refuge? How do I get to my ultimate refuge?

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On refuge:

K. McDonald, <i>How to Meditate:</i>	pg. 141-143: About Devotion pg. 126-133: Meditation on the Buddha
Thubten Chödrön, <i>Open Heart, Clear Mind,</i>	pg. 115-119: Buddha nature pg. 176-186: Taking refuge
Chogyam Trungpa, <i>The Heart of the Buddha,</i>	pg. 85-107: Taking Refuge

Dalai Lama, *The Good Heart*

## 10. RENUNCIATION

Vs. 4a ...

*And you will turn off your interest in this life!*

### AND YOU WILL TURN OFF YOUR INTEREST IN THIS LIFE

This is the next step. Now, has everyone turned off their interest in this life? (laughs). “Turn your interest off” does not mean you don’t care what happens to you. No! It means turn the attachment off, turn the craving off, don’t cry for it. This goes for anything, particularly for interest in material benefits.

### Guidelines for a meditation on renunciation

What do people in the West normally want in life? What are they aiming for? Money, wealth, house, comfort, a very comfortable life in future, all sort of things. Some do not care for money; but they cry for companionship.

Bring in each one of these goals and think, “Is it meaningful or is it meaningless? Is it worthwhile to totally dedicate my life to it, my life which is so precious, so important, with which I can achieve so many things and which is limited in length? Is it worthwhile to spend my life totally for that purpose?”

Is it worthwhile for me to spend my total life building a huge bank-balance or investment? Is it worthwhile for me to spend my valuable life totally to build a huge mansion with a swimming pool on top of the roof? Is it worthwhile to dedicate my life, to spend all my life and energy and time to have any material thing whatsoever?

Is it worthwhile to dedicate my life, to spend my whole life to getting a companion? Is it meaningful or is it meaningless?

Naturally, when we think of death, automatically we get the answer, “It is not as much worth as I used to think it was.”

Strangely enough, for many people around here, money has not that much value, though you may not be wealthy at all. That is great, *but* you do have other problems, which is not so great.

Whatever your individual problem may be, address that particular problem, “Is it worthwhile for me to spend all my energy, my life, time, for this purpose?” The purpose you think is great, is it really so great? Is it something that gives everlasting happiness?

It is so important to put energy and time into thinking about that, before you put yourself totally in the service of any material goal.

As a matter of fact, not one single thing around here can really give everlasting happiness, not the house, not the money, nothing. Money is such, if you have it, you have a problem of having it and if you don’t have it, you have a problem of not having it.

Buddha's best advice here, is to be satisfied with what you have, to be content.

That is very important. If you start looking up, "Hey, he has this and that, color-TV, new car, clothes, or whatever, and I must have it, too," then you are totally a slave because you will push yourself to work hard. It's better to look at someone less well off and say, "He doesn't have anything, I have this much, I am happy." Actually, we human beings really need only a few things: we cannot bear cold, we cannot bear heat, we cannot be hungry, we cannot be naked. Right? These are really essentially necessary things. Above that, you don't have to throw away whatever you have, you can enjoy it, but be content with it. That is very important. If you are content, you are the wealthiest person. If you are not content, you are poor. You may be a multi-billionaire, but still you are poor.

*The beggar and the gold.* There is an interesting ancient story from India. A beggar found a small bag full of gold. Everybody said, "Wow, the beggar found a bag full of gold. How wonderful, great!" He said, "I don't need this, I am going to give it to the poorest man I see, the poorest of the poor." He asked everyone to come together. So everybody gathered at the market place, and the beggar walked up and down and up and down with his bag of gold. Everybody was thinking, "Maybe he'll give it to me." Again he went up and down looking at everybody and finally he said, "The poorest man in this kingdom is the king, I am going to give it to him." He gave the gold to him. The king felt insulted and said, "How can you say that I am the poorest man!?" He replied, "You are the person that wants the most, so you are the poorest person." So, when you want a lot, you will always be poor, because you don't know how to be content with life.

*A personal story.* I am not proud of saying it here, but it may help people who read this. Fortunately or unfortunately, I was born into a very wealthy family in Tibet, which owned a huge amount of land at the other side of Bhutan. Actually, our estate there was probably five times the size of the kingdom of Bhutan. In the early nineteen hundreds our family and the Tibetan government had a civil war for a long time. The capital Lhasa was divided into a northern and southern zone. We occupied the northern zone; we even had big long walls. Later we lost the war; we lost everything and then we regained it again. In the 1950's, there were very few cars in Tibet, but I had a Fiat as well as a jeep, a truck and a station car, too.

But in 1959 when the Chinese took over, I escaped with nothing, absolutely nothing. As the Tibetans say: I didn't even have a cup. Even beggars have a cup in their pocket; when somebody wants to give something, they take it out. I was quite young, a teenager. I went with absolutely nothing, not even a dollar or two in my pocket. But somehow I was never without food, and I never felt bad, never. I did not even think, "What am I going to eat tomorrow?" Maybe I would be alive, maybe not, but I never felt bad.

When I arrived at the Indian border, I said to myself, "Now, what are you going to do? Whatever is necessary." I was prepared to be an Indian sweeper who cleans the toilets. So I was prepared to be a sweeper, yet I never felt bad.

There was only one thing. In a place called Tawang in Northern India, the India relief committee put us in a trash truck, a garbage trailer without roof behind a truck. I am a very happy person, but I have to admit the thought came up, "Well, now I will never drive my own little private car again." That is what I thought. That was the only thing. And even later I never felt bad about anything. You sort of go and you manage; that is why. People who know me closely, know. Whatever I have, I just throw everywhere around; that is what happens. It is probably the influence of Buddha's teaching and the spiritual practice.

Think about the Dalai Lama. What would have happened to an ordinary person in his situation? Probably they would have gone crazy, gotten wild. Yet he doesn't; he lives as though nothing has happened. There is a spiritual reason for that.

*Organize your life.* When you think about all the material things we have mentioned, you'll find they are all meaningless. You will give them all up one day, either by circumstances or because there is a

war, or a natural disaster. Anything can change at any time. Wealthy people can suddenly become poor when something goes wrong and the market drops, as happened a couple of months ago. Things can turn around overnight; that is natural. Above all, you are subject to death. As I always say: the day that you die, you don't take a penny with you, you cannot write your own checks, you cannot use your credit-cards, you cannot make your phone-calls and transfer this here and there, you can't do that any more, it is totally gone into somebody else's hands. And if you are lucky enough, it may be in hands of somebody you want to have inherit it. If you are not lucky enough, some smart people and lawyers will take it in between.

What does this tell us? Whatever we consider to be a high priority goal to be reached in life actually has a fault in it. What we aim for as goal has a fault in it; it is not everlasting and that is a problem. So the question rises, "Is it worthwhile for me to put in too much effort and energy just to achieve that?" On the other hand you cannot go to the other extreme of, "I do not care whatever happens." Okay, you don't care, but people will chase you with your bills tomorrow and what will you do, declare yourself bankrupt or what? Again, you have to be able to go in between. That is what we call the middle way: not be totally dedicated to that material aim, but not totally to ignore it either.

That demands that we organize our life. We have to organize our life in such a way that we can put time and efforts towards our real aim and also put time and efforts towards temporary aims. That is how you have to work. You can't go to extremes, saying, "Hey, this is not needed blah blah blah," and then run away from responsibility. You can run away to India for a couple of months, but you'll come back. You have to come back because India will throw you out.

So, life is important, life is precious and it doesn't last long. These few words try to tell you all this. So, what do you do? You think, meditate, and convince yourself. You do know it, but still you are not convinced. How do you convince yourself? You have to think, analyze and then get yourself convinced. That is important, really.

### **Spirituality and (spiritual) materialism**

The difference now between people aiming at a spiritual life and people aiming at a material life lies here. Everybody is very quick to say, "Hey, I am not a materialist!" But what it really boils down to is: you cannot be totally extreme on this, you cannot be totally extreme on that, you have to be in between. You don't have to throw away whatever you have; you should always build up what you have. In other words: if you cannot be a success in your ordinary, normal, everyday life, it is very hard for you to be successful in spiritual life too.

Some people *pretend* to be very successful spiritually. When you give up ordinary life totally and run into the mountains and caves and forest, it may be different, *if* you can stay there and *be* there, not just go there for a few days, a few months, a few years and come back – that does not serve any good purpose at all – but if you can live there sort of forever and you can dedicate your life, that is great, I am not talking about that. But even in that sort of life you must know how to balance. You have to be balanced.

It is very easy for us to say, "I am not a materialist," but when you deeply go down to yourself, perhaps you are the strongest materialist. A lot of people use it as a mask. We cover our inability to take care of our material life and use the spiritual life as an excuse, as a mask. As excuse for "I can't do it," we say, "Well, I am not a materialist." Some are, maybe true, not materialist, but some are more materialistic than the actual materialist people. So, when the question rises as to what is materialistic and what is spiritual, this does *not* mean that if you are rich then you are materialistic and if you are poor you are spiritual. No! If that were the reason, we could become spiritual very easily; throw everything out and run away. That is not the way; unfortunately it is not. It is your total aim, the ultimate goal you are pursuing, which makes the difference. And a lot of people in the so-called spiritual field only pretend to pursue a spiritual goal.

**Practice: dharma as a mirror - looking at habitual patterns**

As I told you earlier, I have to say bad things here. I don't mean everybody here is bad, don't take it personally. It is because one *has* to tell bad things here. What will happen? What do these dharma teachings mean? I am sure I have told you, but I am going to say it again. You have to use these talks as a mirror. When you look at it, you see your reflection. You put on your make-up by looking in the mirror, right? So, dharma teachings have to be used as a mirror, to put your make-up on your personal mind. Okay? You look at the reflection of your mind, which is only known to you, to nobody else. Watch your own thinking, your own thoughts, your own behavior, your own attitudes. All individuals have their own patterns. Some people are very sensitive, some quickly get irritated or angry, some people are very stingy, always looking for money making or saving. All these sort of different people will have their own patterns; everybody has. It is known to you, the individual, not to others. But you don't see the faults of your patterns, because you think, "This is the only way, this is the great way, my way is the best way, because it is *me*." There is no other reason than because it is *me* and my way is the best, nothing else.

What does dharma teaching do? What does dharma practice do? What do these talks in particular do? They provide you with a mirror, where you get presented with all bad things. What do you do? You look into it, "Am I connected with this? Do I have an excess of this? Do I really pretend to be this? Do I aim more for the money? Do I aim more for the name and fame? Is this my goal or is this my goal?" That is how you look at your reflection and accordingly you make corrections.

If you correct it, you will notice a shift in your *habitual patterns*. Some of you are easily irritated, can't even take a little insult, can't even take a single little joke, yet if you listen to these talks and meditate and you see the reflection and you shift it, you become a better person, you won't get irritated as much. If some persons are very angry by nature, sort of unnecessarily getting angry all the time, then if you see the reflection in there and if you work to change it, it helps. Some people by nature have too much jealousy, like, "Why are you looking at her?" When someone just looks, you get angry and jealous. If that is your nature, you suggest yourself to reflect. You won't see it, you think "I did everything right, why they are telling me this?" Actually you don't see it, but on this mirror you project all the bad things, see the reflection and change it. And if that happens, it affects your life and you become a better person, at least in the spiritual field. Then that is helpful. Your meditation and your efforts of reading this and discussing it are helping then.

It is not easy, you know, in the West. It is very difficult to put in an hour or two every week, particularly when you drive from a long distance, so you must get benefit out of it. Only you can give yourself the benefit; by listening here and by meditating you'll gain it. I cannot get inside you and tighten the screws here and there. If you were a robot, then I could do that, but with human beings I can't. So each of you have to do it for yourself. *How* to do it, is this. Okay?

Particularly when you are focusing on a subject like this, I have to throw all the bad things at you. That does not mean you are bad. Don't take it personally. But also don't throw it away. See whether you are there or not, okay? That is that.

**What are we aiming for?**

Our main point is: what are you really aiming for? What do you really want in your life? What do you really want to do? Our mind will immediately twist to, "Of course I want to be enlightened, I want to be the best spiritually." That is an artificial suggestion coming up. You ask yourself deeply inside and you'll find a deeper answer. Spiritual desires are very difficult to build up within individuals, with the exception of a few. Why? Because you don't see it; it is something you don't see with your eyes. So you have to think of whatever your individual aim is. Give yourself time and think. You have to think about any other result besides enlightenment, any other aim that you have.

Even spiritual people bring in a lot of different aims. Some aim at meditative calmness, quietness and tranquility. What will that do? It gives you good tranquility, for a while. Yet, again, this is not everlasting. The concentration power [Skt. *samadhi*] is such that when it is exhausted, you fall back. So that does not help much. You might as well take a few drugs and get the same result for a little while. We all know that is not good. Again, why? Because it is not everlasting and at the same time it

harms you, right? Similarly, tranquility alone is not everlasting and also it damages your intelligence. What happens is that tranquility builds up and builds up, through seventeen stages. At the end of the seventeenth stage, at the highest top-level, it is so peaceful, so calm, so quiet, you have no idea of what is going on, so it is almost like being a vegetable. Therefore tranquility alone should not be the aim!

The recommendation of the Buddha, of Buddhism, is *not* to over-emphasize tranquility, but to emphasize wisdom, to emphasize totally cutting *samsara*, the circle of existence. *The circle of existence should be cut from the root.* What Buddhism takes from the concentration power is the stability of mind; Buddha does not recommend going beyond that. Buddha recommends that after you gain mental stability [Skt. *shamatha*; Tib. *zhiné*] you switch over to wisdom. That is why from the beginning level onward we try to give you *a mixture of analytical and concentration meditation.* If it is concentration meditation alone, then there is a danger. If it is analytical meditation alone, there will be too much wandering. Therefore the combination has been given. In the beginning, each one interferes with the other a little bit, after some time they will be complementary. That is how you should do it.

### Practice: the points to consider

What did we establish today?

1. We should *look for our* spiritual ultimate goal. Not only our spiritual goal, we should also look for and take note of even our material aims. How much energy, how much time, should we spend for this or for that purpose? Should it be our total life, which is so important, so purposeful, so precious, so difficult to find, and so easily gone? Just see, where would you like to throw your time and energy? To become a multi-millionaire? To have a comfortable life? What sorts of different pictures do you have?
2. Then you see that in certain areas you can't give up and you'll notice the pinch. "Do I want to be a multimillionaire and have an easy, comfortable life? Oh, not really. But I *do* really want..." Then you feel the pinch. That is good; when you feel the pinch you begin to see your problem. Until then everything is beautiful outside talk. The moment you feel the pinch in a certain area that you looked into, you know that you don't want to give that up. You don't want to give it up; it is too difficult. You feel the pinch, "Oh no, that is mine!" Try to find that and then say, "How worthwhile is this? What will that do for me? How long will it last? Will it be of benefit?" Actually, we are trying to do what is best for us. That is why we are here. In order to find the best, you have to see all the differences, particularly where you feel the pinch. This is beginning *to see our problem.* Really, that is what you have to do. At that point you have to ask yourself, "Is it worth it?" You don't have to give up everything totally. No! No, I am not suggesting that. Don't give up material enjoyments, but don't be totally devoted to them.
3. In the background you must not forget: *life is so important, precious, difficult to find and does not last very long.*
4. *On those conditions, can I afford to spend all my total energy on...?*

This is our question for the week, our point to meditate on this week.



### RENUNCIATION – CHANGE OF ATTITUDE

Determination to be free is sometimes translated as renunciation. To renounce this life is to be determined to be free from this life, from this sort of existence. What are we trying to achieve by using all these subjects, the valuable life, impermanence and death? We are trying to achieve a proper thought, a proper attitude towards our life. We aim at a *change of attitude*, whether you call it *renunciation* or *determination to be free* or *seeking freedom.*

Just now, it will be easier if I explain it as renouncing. Don't misunderstand. Renouncing does not mean you give up your families and friends and everything, shave your head and go into the forest. No! What do you need to renounce? Do you have to give up the life that you have and run away? Does it mean cut your life short or commit suicide? No, it certainly does not mean that. If you do that, you are saying that life is no good. Yet we have seen that our life is very valuable. Does it make any sense to cut it short? No, definitely not. You can achieve so much with it, so it *is* something to take care of.

It is good to try to live long and use this opportunity completely and take the value, the essence out of life. Why? Because this is the best shelter you can get. We are travelers. We have come from our previous life, we are going through this life and we will go into the future life. When we came here, we have taken shelter here. The body is the best motel available for us to spend the night in, let's make best use of it. It is an expensive, nice hotel but you have to make best use of it. You may have to check out tomorrow and you may not have made your stay worthwhile. So make the best use of it!

### **The eight worldly attitudes**

Try to look once again. Look at our life, look at what we value and ask, "Is it really valuable?" When Buddha recommends renunciation, what does he mean? What should we renounce? Nothing more than the eight worldly dharmas<sup>13</sup>. It does not mean to cut your life short, it does not mean to run away, it does not mean to escape, but just cut the eight worldly dharmas, stop your preoccupation with these things. That is what it boils down to. What are the eight worldly dharmas?

1. *Pleasure and pain.* What does it mean? If you feel pleasure, you'll be happy, if you feel pain, you'll be upset. If you have pleasure, you go up, if... It is all like this, up down, up down.
2. *Loss and gain.* If people give you gifts, respect and all this, you'll be happy, if you don't get it, you'll be upset or angry.
3. *Fame and obscurity.* If people say good things about you, if you become famous, you're happy. Everybody likes to have people saying good things about them; that is the good name, or fame. If you get it you'll be happy, if you don't get it you'll be unhappy.
4. *Praise and blame.* Likewise; if somebody praises you, you go high and happy and if somebody doesn't praise you, you go down and depressed.

What does that really tell us? To cut down our emotions, the emotional things that we do play with so much: with things we like we go up, with things we don't like, we come down. Right? That is what is really causing all the trouble. Isn't that what it all boils down to?

*Wisdom of the Kadampa masters.* I am going to tell you something very funny today, very strange things which I normally don't mention much. We are all dharma practitioners, we are all going towards spiritual achievement. We are practicing; we are gearing at least towards the greatest vehicle available, which could deliver us at the highest level. So, we think, "We are great, we are Mahayana practitioners, we are bodhisattvas, we have taken refuge, we are this, we are that, the great this and that." We sometimes are very proud about it, and it is true that we can be proud. Buddha said so and every other great spiritual master who has come through this path has said so. At the same time, if we as individuals do not deserve to be proud, then we are not accomplishing much.

In other words, when we say we are practitioners, we have to mix our mind with actual dharma practice. Our mind or our individual person has to be soaked in the spiritual practice, totally influenced by it. With every action we do, we should have the consideration of the spiritual path: helping others, compassion, altruistic attitude. All this should be soaked in.

If we don't soak ourselves in the dharma practice, if we only talk about it, there will be division between me as individual and the practice as another stage over there, I sitting here and looking at those stages up there. That won't help. This is a pity, really a pity. We have this great opportunity, the chance to do this and when you cannot integrate it, it becomes separate. If it is separate, it does not

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<sup>13</sup> See glossary.

help. It will be like watching a television show. What does spiritual mean? You have to take more steps than watching television. You have to integrate it. That is so important. The Tibetan master Lingrepa said,

In samsara, the city of preconceptions,  
wander the zombies of the eight worldly concerns.  
Here you find the most frightful cemetery.  
If you want to practice equanimity, practice it there.

The verse says, “Samsara and our thoughts are the worst city ever available.” Why is it called the worst city? Because samsara is the city of zombies. What are the zombies? I am not referring to human beings, no! These eight worldly dharmas are the zombies. It says, “And if you need a fearful cemetery, this is the one.” This is the place of zombies. It is occupied by all the eight worldly dharmas or the eight worldly attitudes and if you do a *chod* practice, an ego-cutting practice, you have to do it here.

The worst things in samsara are thoughts. The horrible things that we are confronting – what we call zombies, living dead – are really those thoughts of ours that do not recognize the evolutionary cycle or dependent arising. The eight worldly dharmas are really a denial of the evolutionary cycle, is thinking somehow that you can gain something permanent with temporal means.

*Jewels of the Kadampa masters.* There are practices that are particularly geared towards cutting the eight worldly dharmas. Like three of the ways of the Kadampa:<sup>14</sup>

Being thrown out from the ranks of men,  
Reaching the ranks of dogs,  
attaining the ranks of the gods

Excluded, found and obtained. What do you get *excluded* from? (This is going to be a bad teaching for you people, a bad influence; excuse me.) You get yourself excluded from society, the society which says you have to style your hair in a certain way, you have to tie your clothes in a certain direction, if you don't do that you are not good, if you do this you are acceptable, this is the way you eat, this is the way you act, this is the way you speak, this is how you are supposed to do things. All bullshit. (I am sorry). So you get yourself excluded from that. “If I do this, if I practice dharma, if I practice being spiritual, what will happen to me? What will the society, the whole family say? How does that affect me?” Who cares? I am sorry, I am teaching you bad things. These thoughts are considered a real strong obstacle. So you get excluded, you become an exceptional case. The traditional teaching says: you get yourself excluded from the human worldly level. That does not mean you die.

What do you *find*? The stage of the dog. Why? Because everybody will say, “Get out!” and throw stones and all this. Right? That is what you'll find.

What will happen then? You will not remain there. You will *obtain* the highest-god's stage. In the traditional Indian system Buddha is always referred to as the God of gods, Baghavan, Tathagata.

This will raise a lot of questions now, “If I do this, what will happen? What will I eat? Where will I go? Where will I sleep?” This is very exotic, but don't take it literally, okay? It is a traditional teaching, like about Milarepa. If you read Milarepa's biography, you'll find it. There is a simple answer, “*Don't worry, be in the present.* Be in the present and you'll find everything.” It is very strange. “Okay, if I do that, suppose if I get sick and die what will happen?”

### **Milarepa's way**

Great! We have died so many times  
but we never died to obtain the highest stage.  
Today may I be been able to die  
for the benefit of obtaining enlightenment for all living beings.

<sup>14</sup> Part of the Ten innermost jewels of the Kadampa masters. See: Tsongkapa, *Principal teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 66-69; Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, pg 52-59.

There can not be a greater death than this.  
So let me be happy and joyful and take it.

There are many sayings like this in Milarepa's songs, translated into English<sup>15</sup>. A great sage, Gyelwa Ensapa, who had obtained enlightenment within one lifetime, a type like Milarepa, said:

The earlier Milarepa and today's Ensapa  
need no material benefit at all,  
except a little food and a few clothes.

If I want to obtain buddhahood within one lifetime  
other material is not needed.  
I need to remain in retreat.

In Tibetan retreat is called *embe ne*, which is "quiet place" or solitude. Quiet of what? Quiet of anger, hatred and attachment. That is what really retreat means! The absolute retreat is: you yourself are dissociated from the anger, you dissociated yourself from the attachment, you dissociated yourself from the hatred. This is the real retreat, this is the real fasting, this is the real silence. Silence. If you want to keep really silent, you have to silence your anger, attachment and hatred. If you want to fast, you should fast from the anger, hatred and attachment. If you want a retreat, you should dissociate yourself from all this. This is the real retreat. Milarepa goes on:

Son, if you want to do a really deep, a perfect practice,  
develop a profound faith – a real determination to practice.  
And do not look back upon this life.

It is usually translated as faith but I don't like that. I really like to put the word determination in, real determination to practice. You should develop that.

And he says, "Do not look back to this life." You know, everybody has a hope of being remembered, everybody. Who does not have such hope? People who are in the material world to build companies, families *etc.*, hoping to be remembered, "Even when I die, the children will carry on and the grandchildren will carry on and they build companies and also they build a monument." That is hope of being looked back upon. People in dharma practices build *stupas*, they build temples and images, the teachers build the disciples and the students.... Automatically, by nature we all do it. Though we die, we hope to be remembered. This is why we live, just to be looked back upon. True or not? Milarepa's suggestion is, "Give up total hope of looking back. No looking back. Why are you looking back?" Milarepa's practice was very eccentric. He says:

Take only the truth and go.  
All your friends and relations,  
are the manifestations of evil spirits.  
If you think I am telling the truth,  
then give up the attachment.

Food and wealth are the spies of the evils,  
the more you come close, the more they will get at you.  
All building up your life, your name and all this  
are the ropes of the evils,  
that definitely tie you down.  
So please, give it up now....

### **What does renunciation really mean?**

I have gone a little bit exotic today in the Milarepa style, a bit too extreme. What does renunciation really mean? It does not mean that family is bad. It does not mean that society is bad and all this and that. On the other hand it will tell you,

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<sup>15</sup> Garma, C.C. Chang (transl), *The Hunderd thousand Songs of Milarepa*.

I myself am the most important one for myself. And I have to do my most important activity, achieving enlightenment. For that only I am accountable, nobody else.

That is why in the beginning I told you, “I am born alone, I will die alone.”

I am accountable for everything I do; I am responsible, nobody else is. People may say, “Do this, do that” but they don’t care. When I have to pay on my own flesh and blood, when I have to suffer on my own body or mind, nobody else can take it. Therefore I have to take care of myself and not expect somebody else to take care of me. When I have to take care of myself, I have to make the decision what is the best for me. The others are secondary; suggestions and advice, *etcetera*, are all secondary when it really comes to the main points.

So, *what you really are renouncing is the eight worldly dharmas*. And if you’re tied down on anything whatsoever, loosen the things yourself, however you have to. Otherwise behave properly. That is: be a nice man or woman, be respectable, don’t be very eccentric.

### **Practice: soak your mind in the spiritual practice**

Every single point whatever we are talking here is first of all material to meditate on, and secondly let it influence your way of thinking and your way of acting.

For the next week I will give you a little more work to do than usual. This time I want to you review *The Three Principles*, the whole thing we did, ever since we started it. *Review every-thing we did in meditation! Not reading your notes.* You read your notes, think, and then in your meditation you should be able to come out on everything.

After some time I will have each one of you selectively or collectively to go through it by yourself or lead the people through it. Therefore it is important for you to review everything. This is not an academic class, where you are taught certain things, you read, study and forget about it. This is the spiritual practice you have to *live*, you have to mix it with your life, and you have to get in to it. You have to build yourself in it. Therefore you really have to go through it deeply, until you get yourself within it.

*Soak* yourself in it. If you have a piece of paper or cloth and dip it in oil, what will happen to that cloth? Totally oily, right? Like that you yourself, individually, dip in it and get totally soaked. That is what I want: your mind, or self, or ego, or whatever you want to call it, soak it in the dharma; that helps you. If you don’t soak in it, it won’t help you. Then it will be a division: you are here and the dharma is there. What does that help? Nothing! Okay? That is it.



### **Milarepa’s way - continued**

We had the other week that very strange way Milarepa expressed it. I have not finished that, I still continue with that a little bit. Milarepa sings:

If I could die with none of my friends knowing that I have enjoyed life.  
 If I could die with none of my enemies knowing that I have been suffering  
 If with neither friends nor enemies knowing whether I am enjoying or suffering,  
 If without anybody’s knowledge I could die between these mountains,  
 It would fulfill my wish.

Milarepa’s way was very strange. He lived sort of completely naked in the mountains. He just used to pick up any green plant that he could get, boil it and make some sort of soup and drink it; that is what he did. He had a niece, Peta, who came and visited him sometimes. She felt very bad, “Every time I come he is totally naked, this fellow, and I can’t even face him.” She was poor but worked very hard and got a piece of woolen cloth, and one day she brought that up to Milarepa and said, “Hey, here you

are, I worked hard and got this piece of cloth now, please make some clothes for yourself.” She gave that to Milarepa and she left. Milarepa thought about what to do. The next time she came for a visit, she expected him to wear at least a blanket or loincloth or something, but what had he done? He cut up all of the cloth and made little coverings to put on every finger and toe and he said, “Okay, now I made clothes, so you don’t have to feel shy any more.” Milarepa was that type of person. So he says, “My friends will not be able to understand it.” And Milarepa sang:

If I could grow old without my friends knowing,  
 If I could get sick without my niece knowing,  
 If I could die that way,  
 I would be happy, it would fulfill my wish.

If I could die without anybody’s knowledge,  
 If I could let my dead body disappear  
 without even the birds and wild animals knowing,  
 If I could die here,  
 It would fulfill my wish.

If I could die without a single human being walking into my door,  
 And with not a single drop of blood within my cave,  
 If I could die that way,  
 It would fulfill my wish.

If I could die with nobody to look after my corpse  
 And nobody to cry over my dead body,  
 If I could die that way  
 I would be happy.

If there would be nobody asking, “Where has this man gone?”  
 And no place to trace me,  
 If I could die that way  
 It would fulfill my wish.

That is how Milarepa gave up his *samsara*, his circle of existence. That is how he looked at the life and that is how he let go.

*Holding on to our identity.* We have a problem of *not* letting go. We hold onto things. We hold on to our identity, in whatever form it may be. We always tie ourselves tightly to an identity. We can’t let go; we are holding it so tight! “If I let it go what will happen to me?!” This is the only question we have in our mind; this question always rises and it makes us afraid of everything. We can’t let our identity go; we are holding on to it. This manifests itself in a variety of things, like, “Hey, I’ll be left alone, I’ll be lonely, who am I going to talk with? I’ll be left with no friends, I’ll be left with no money, I’ll be left without this thing or that thing.” All this is the manifestation of not letting our identity go. All these thoughts and worries will come up and make us hold it harder. So, when I say renunciation, it means actually you have to renounce *that*. It does not mean you have to renounce your money, to renounce your companion, but you let go. That is the *determination to be free* in other words. Free from what? Free from all these problems and fears that manifest by holding on to our identity. We have to make ourselves free from that.

As long as we can’t let go of our identity, not only does it make us have fear in this life, but even when we die we can’t let it go, we are still holding it, and that is why we have to come back, return involuntarily. The whole question of returning is because of that. We can’t go beyond, we are holding on, we have been tied.

*Example.* An example is the Tibetan yaks. Tibetans used to tie their yaks down, particularly the female yaks they get milk and butter from. They make a hole in the nose, put a piece of wood through that and have a long rope tied down somewhere. That way the animal cannot go very far, but can go round and enjoy a little grass here and a little drink of water there, that is all. They go round and round because

they are tied down. That is the exact example for how we are tied to *samsara*. Though we don't have a physical hole in our nose, we have a mental hole and our identity is the little stick that is stuck down there. Somehow we cannot let go and so we enjoy a little bit a little part of life here, a little green grass and some water, and we suffer as well, because when there is rain and storm, we can't go very far away, we have to stick around since we are tied here. This is how we circle.

*Life after life.* Not only now in this life. When you die, you have to come back. There are past, present and future lives. When you talk about it, maybe it sounds very romantic, wonderful, or maybe it sounds horrible, but this is exactly what happens. If you could always come back as a human being – die as a man and come back as a woman or vice versa – okay fine, not a big deal. But it does not work that way. You are tied down and your attachment pulls you back. Sometimes you can't come as a human being, so you come back as a yak or dog and worse, as a scorpion or snake or something worse. Because of good luck, we are human beings now. Whether we call it luck or karma doesn't matter, actually it is karma. Every one of us has a tremendous storage of karma, good, bad and neutral. If you didn't have the karma, you wouldn't be here.

*Up and down.* What happens when you die? I am talking here about the general condition, not about any help you are getting. A lot of help can be given at the time of death, by yourself, by others, a lot of energies can help to link up a better way. But, just without any help, without aid, where are you going to link when you die, which karma are you going to link to? If you are fortunate or lucky, you link to good karma and you come back as a good human being, and if you link to bad karma... Though he didn't talk about it much, Buddha never denied the hell realm either. There is a hell, however, it is not a permanent hell, it is impermanent, changing; beings do not remain there forever. This is the problem we face. You can't go away (unless you do some serious spiritual practice); you'll be within *samsara*, though you may be up or may be down.

Even if we escape suffering today, say by fortunate karma or by help, we escape only for a short time. What happens afterward is that we repeat the whole thing, lifetime after lifetime. So what really is happening that today's old age is the cause of tomorrow's young age; today's young age is the cause of tomorrow's old age. That is how we are circling; it is the same thing repeating.

*Let go.* So we have to take care of it and if you cannot take care of it *now*, it becomes difficult then. We don't want to miss this rare chance, this great opportunity to make a difference, so we have to take care of it. How to take care of it? *Let go of being tied to samsaric desires.* Very simple, let it go. How to let it go? You can't sit there saying, "Ha, I am letting it go. Go, go." That won't do anything. That is why I said, "If you peel one layer you have another one coming, if you take one step you have another step to take and each step's face is different." When you are convinced, "I am going to let it go!" you've got the determination to be free. So you have to build up that as the first and foremost step!

### **Learning, thinking, meditation**

To build it up you have to put a lot of thoughts in it. Actually there are three steps involved.

*Learning or hearing or reading.* Today we simply said, "Here is the pain, here is the problem and because of not letting it go you have that." Everybody agrees, shakes his head. But go home and think by yourself, each one of you, and don't simply have the agreeable attitude of, "Yeah, I heard about it" or something like that. Maybe somebody did not even hear it. Though you may be here physically you may not have really heard it, you may not have really gotten it. You really need to do more than just hear or read it. You have to get it yourself; you have to convince yourself. Only convincing yourself can work, otherwise you cannot do it.

By using whatever little bit of knowledge or information you got just now, by just following what I said, and using your pre-build up package of information on the spiritual path, by using them together you'll see it, you get some knowledge of seeing it. That I call understanding following on knowledge. Just that alone, a little understanding following on knowledge, does not make you free. That will not build you a determination to be free either. You simply build knowledge.

*Thinking or analysis.* Use that knowledge: put a lot of thoughts into it, balance them, see the good and bad for yourself, think, spend time on it. That is what we call *analytical meditation*. When you do that, the knowledge will not only increase, but it will take a different shape. It will become a kind of convinced understanding, not book-knowledge. A good example is cooking and cookbooks. You can read a cookbook, right? When you read it you understand what is said. When you are at a cooking demonstration and you have seen it, it is different, right? After that, when you really try to cook by yourself, when you take the understanding from the book and from seeing the demonstration, and you actually practice doing it, actually cooking yourself, it is different again. Most of you know that, right? It is similar in the spiritual field here. With that knowledge you yourself have thought about a lot, you get a better understanding.

*Meditation.* That better understanding alone will also not do; you have to concentrate on it. You have to put *concentration meditation* on it; then it will affect you.

*Obstacles.* Listening to talks or reading books alone can't do it, otherwise we could have substituted it for everybody. It is you, the individual, who has to put time and thoughts on it, do it. When you do this, a lot of *obstacles* will come. Number one: I don't want it. Number two: I'm not interested. Number three: Ah, maybe, maybe not, or tomorrow, or next week. And then more important things will come into your life, which you would rather do than this.

Actually for me the purpose is not this life alone. The purpose is the many lives that I am going to go through, that each one of us is going to go through. And yet, anything, like commitments, appointments, all sorts of things – maybe nothing important at all, maybe only a matter of a couple of dollars, or maybe only cup of coffee or glass of beer – will take priority over this. That little thing, whatever it is, will take priority over our many lives' and many generations' purpose. This is our biggest obstacle. Why? Simply because we just don't see it. We can see things like, "If I do this, I'll get twenty dollars," and we don't see what will happen when we die. We don't even see what really causes us to have all these problems, what will cause me to get this, this, this. That is why we don't give it priority. That is why it is sort of the last thing in the life we do, or second to last. That is our problem; from that a lot of other problems will follow.

How to overcome, how to handle those problems? You cannot reject them and you cannot let them overrun you; you have to handle them very skillfully. That is very important. For that you also have *purification*. And you need *spiritual support*, to take over from your delusions. The moment you take the control over your obstacles, you are bound to get a result. The spiritual forces, the support of enlightened beings, creates the necessary environment, the favorable conditions for it. That is why you say mantras, why you say prayers.

### **Practice: how to balance our meditation practice**

Now here again today we're going to hold two points:

1. *To look into our samsara, our circle of existence and understand its nature.*
2. *To let it go; in other words: to build the determination to be free.*

*Build* the determination; it is not the word, it is more than that. I want you to really look into your life very carefully as I mentioned to you earlier, into sickness, the stage of dying, the stage of aging, the pains, the emotional problems and death. Death itself is not a big deal, but not knowing where you're going to wake up, what is going to happen, losing all friends, not seeing the things that you used to see but seeing totally different things, not knowing what you are going to see, these are the problems of death. So do not look at them as intellectual knowledge, but look at them as though they are really happening to you. And then look once again to your life now.

When by meditating on this you start to feel bad, sad and low, then stop there and look at the happiness part of life: what good things you can achieve, how enjoyable it can be, how wonderful it is, what you can achieve spiritually, what great things this life can deliver. In other words: this life is capable of delivering buddhahood to you; each one of us is capable of becoming a buddha. This very life is capable of delivering that to us if we know how to handle it.

Don't make yourself low; don't get depressed! Bring yourself up and make yourself a little bit high by looking from the point of view of the benefits. But don't let yourself get carried away by that either; seeing life again from the bad point of view will bring you down. What you have to do is sort of play zigzag between the high and low. That *is* life; you'll really feel it. And then, from those bad points making you low, you try to build up the determination to be free. That is what you have to spend some time on. *Think about it, meditate on it.*

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- We should look for our spiritual ultimate goal. Notice that there are certain things that are hard to give up: see the problem. In the background do not forget that life is so important, precious, difficult to find and does not last very long. This being the case, can I afford to spend all my total energy on something else?
- Review everything we did so far *in meditation*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On determination to be free:

Tsongkapa, *The Principle Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 61-74

Chögyam Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom*, pg. 1-18: Fantasy and reality, Disappointment, Suffering, Egolessness.

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, pg. 135-142: The determination to be free

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*, pg. 45-84.

On renunciation:

Tsongkapa, *The Principle Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 73-74.

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, pg. 49-50.

Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate?* pg. 77-80

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*, pg. 49-59

On Milarepa:

W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa*. [ch. 10: story of Peta]

Chang, Garma C. *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*.



## 11. KARMA: ACTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Vs. 4b    *Contemplate the inexorability of evolutionary effects*

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If you look into the root text of *The Three Principles of the Path*, you see as one of the three most important outline headings the development of the *determination to be free*. There are two parts to this:

1. determination to be free from the pains of this life (verse 4a)
2. determination to be free from future lives (verse 4b)

Here we are trying find a way to achieve spiritual development, by bringing together materials to meditate on. As I have said before, a lot of people in the West really don't know what a spiritual path is, what spiritual development is. They may think it is one tiny little thing, one little practice that you just have to do and then you get through. I don't believe the spiritual path is like that. It is very complicated; it has many layers and many steps.

People explain the spiritual path in different ways. A lot of people explain it this way, "It is inside, you go deeper in it, peel the layers off, go in and in and you'll find it." Another metaphor is this, "It is a very high goal, you go up and up and up and you reach it up there." Whatever way you want to describe it - whether to go in and peel it off or to step up - the spiritual path is complicated. And every step, every layer that you peel, has different techniques of peeling. Each step will show you a different challenge and has different ways of handling the challenges. So it is complicated. If it were only a single thing, everybody could do it. It would be very easy to learn and do it, but it is not. Different levels of practice are involved.

### **KARMA: ACTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES**

Karma is a Sanskrit word, very romantic and exotic, but what is karma, really? I can talk about it very nicely, saying, "Karma is great, it is so subtle you cannot understand it, it is very mysterious and deep, blah blah blah..." but what is it, really? Who makes karma? To understand this, you have to look inside; there is nothing to be pointed to outside.

What is the difference between spiritual study and scientific study? In the way of doing it, the method of investigation, there is no difference. If your spiritual study is not a scientific, logical study, it is no good; it has to be. The difference is: scientific study looks outside into the material world, while spiritual study looks inside yourself, inside the person. What you study is *karma*, your actions and thoughts, and you take measurements on that. Scientists take temperatures and measure how things get frozen, what chemicals do what and all this sort of thing. Instead of looking that way, you look in: if you take such and such an action, how much does it affect you, how much does the positivity grow, how much is the negativity cut, how do you change. That is what you have to do. Very simple, really very simple.

*Melodrama.* Meditation on karma is very important! Though the word karma sounds very romantic, actually it is very subtle and very tough. It is important and it is difficult. It is the help that we are getting and the harm that we are getting. Every single thing comes from that, really. The unfolding of the melodrama of one's life is karma. When they hear the word karma, sometimes people do think of something very romantic outside us that guides our lives. I don't know what picture you get. Some people think karma is a huge force, sitting up in the sky, which can't be altered. People even say, "It is a karmic result, you can do nothing." I wonder what sort of picture you people have. To me: my life is my karma. That is why I say: the unfolding of the melodrama of one's life. That is karma. Each one of our lives is our karma.

*Lots of karmas.* Don't look outside, you'll find nothing. You have to look into your life; you have to see how this circle really functions. Actually everything that happens in this life, good and bad, the things that we enjoy, the things we suffer from, every single thing comes through our karma. A lot of people may think karma is just one little thing; they think that one single karma runs through the life. No, unfortunately it is not like that. Every moment functions by different karmas. Though one karma created our life as a human being, a lot of different karmas are involved as we go through out lives. That is why different things happen in life. If there were just one little thing running, it should be straight, but it isn't. Our life is going zigzag because a lot of zigzag karmas.

*Own creation.* And unfortunately that karma is only our own creation and nobody else's. Nobody made the karmic system. I can say: I made all my karma and so did you make all your own karma. Your karma is not made by me, nor my karmas are made by you, neither did a third person do it. We made it all ourselves, either individually or collectively.

At each moment, we both have control as well as don't have control. What happens is controlled by our karma, particularly the feelings that we experience. The happiness, the pleasure, the sadness, the sorrow and the misery that we experience are controlled by our karma. Though we made it, we lost the control.

But it is not that we just create a karma here and expect a result tomorrow. We are now probably going through a karma for which we may have laid the cause a number of different lifetimes ago, maybe even twenty, thirty, a hundred or a thousand different lives before now. It is not like today you do this and tomorrow you expect its effect to take place. No, it may take a very long time. That is why karma is very deep and subtle; subtle means very difficult to understand. But it is very effective; you cannot escape it. So it is so important to watch it.

When you look into your life, it is all the creation of karma and experiencing the results. The real karma is the *acting* and *experiencing* of every moment. Take today, we are all sitting here, sweating, miserable, having difficulties, sharing whatever time we share, that is our karma.

### **Individual and collective karma**

*Collective karma.* Our sitting here together is the result of our previous collective karma and also we are creating a future collective karma. Our karma: your unfortunate karma and my fortunate karma brought us together. Maybe it is the other way round, who knows? Or maybe both are fortunate karmas, who knows? Anyway, that karma made it possible for us to be here together. That we are talking about dharma and spiritual development is the result of our fortunate karma, which enables us to see and hear and discuss how we can end the misery of the continuation of life. So that is a very fortunate karmic result. At the same time we also have miserable karmic results here, because we all are sweating and burning. That is an example of one or another tiny little bad karma in it, otherwise we would have our air-conditioning working and we would have a little comfort, which we don't. This is another result of our collective karma.

So when we have this good talk today, with a pure mind, with good motivation, with our thoughts putting efforts in it, then in future we will share together a good, fortunate result, and if we are lucky enough even a proper pure enlightenment. We are creating karma for this. This is how we

create karma and this is how we enjoy or suffer from the results of karma. Karmic creation is like this. You cannot go and look for something else. There is no karma factory with missionaries building karma. Okay? Keep that in mind.

*Individual karma.* There is individual karma too. Every individual person creates individual karma. Even sitting behind closed doors we are creating our individual karma. I used to think, “When I sit behind closed doors only I can see what I am doing, nobody else will know, because nobody else can see it.” It is true, but also not true. When I by myself sit behind closed doors, I am still creating my individual karma. Whenever I have good thoughts, good motivations and good actions, I am having a seal stamped on my forehead, an imprint, saying: good karma. When I have bad thoughts, bad motivations, bad actions, I get a different seal on my forehead, saying: bad karma or a negative karmic imprint. In other words, karma is inside, therefore you cannot hide from it. You cannot go to another place where there is no karma. My own karma is with me, like my body and my body-odor. It is like my body and my shadow. Wherever my body is, there is my shadow. So wherever I am, there is my karma. Therefore if I behave differently behind closed doors, I am cheating myself and when I cheat myself I create a double karma.

In short, Buddha’s idea of telling people, “You can help yourself, nobody can do it for you,” is totally based on the karmic system. Whatever we experience, whatever we go through, we share, we feel, everything is our own karmic thing; it is a result and it is also a cause. It is nothing more and nothing less than cause and effect. Whenever I produce a cause, I have an effect. Whenever I get an effect, I also create another cause. This is how it goes on.

The moment you start being careful on the creation of the cause, the results also start changing. It is like a company’s policy. If you have a bad policy, you have bad results. When you start losing money, you change your policy and it starts reversing, right? We see that. It is just like that, nothing strange. It functions quite simply with us. Because of karma you can help yourself, as well as harm yourself. Nobody else can.

### **Characteristics of karma<sup>16</sup>**

1. *Karma is definite.* It has this quality: in whatever manner you create a karma, you get a similar type of result. For example, if you keep on indulging in killing, the result will be something unpleasant like losing your life.
2. *Karma is fast growing.* A lot of people will think: when I create one little karma I will have one little result. I don’t believe that is correct. Buddha said, “No.” He said, “When you create one karmic cause it multiplies day by day, every 24 hours. It keeps on multiplying; unless you put a stop to it.” So one little karmic cause you created could have a hundred different results coming. It is like business. In a good business you invest a little bit and it multiplies and you get a lot back. Similarly in this the same principle operates.
3. *If you don’t do the action, you won’t see the result.* If you do not create a certain karma, then no matter what you do, you cannot meet with the result.
4. *The results of an action will not just disappear.* That means, if you create a karma it will definitely give the result, no matter how long it takes.

### **Results of karma**

1. The example given is the *direct result*. It may not be in this life, but there you will have other lives as well.
2. And there is a thing called: *common result*, or result similar to the cause. For killing this might make your life shorter, with more illnesses, more troubles.
3. And the worst result of all is that you will like to kill. You killed and you get used to it, it becomes a *habitual pattern*, so in future lives you’ll like to kill. When you look at kids, who do not know

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<sup>16</sup> Sometimes called the four laws of karma.

anything, you see some kids like killing or harming a creature under any circumstances. Some like to kill even little ants or flies or cockroaches or whatever. We can observe this in some kids. This is this common result, which is the worst result. The direct result comes once and is finished: when you kill you lose a life, okay, it's done. But the common result, which gives you the habitual pattern of liking to kill, makes you kill more and create more and more and it goes on and on and on. So this is considered worse. This is one example; all other non-virtues actions<sup>17</sup> have the same kinds of results and so do virtuous actions. These three are individual results.

4. *Collective result.* Collective karma gives collective results.

*How do these things affect the individual?* When you do some action, if you try to harm somebody and it harms the other person, you build a negativity within you. That negativity will remain within you, and when you die you carry it to your future lives. Every deed, good or bad, is our own responsibility, nobody else's. If we do something bad, we have to pay for it. Not in dollar-form, but in the form of physical and mental pains. Mental pains are sometimes equal to or even worse than physical pains. You have to do that and it is hard but you cannot escape it.

### **How to handle negative karma**

Now the question rises: How do I stop the negative karma? I can stop it in two ways: *purify* all the bad karmas that I did and *be mindful* of what I'm going to do in the future. As I told you, there is no instant development; it comes slowly and gradually. But be aware of it. If you slip once or twice or three, ten, twenty or even hundred times, doesn't matter. We always slip. But be aware of it, purify the negative action and try to be more careful.

*Watch.* Watch: "What karma am I creating?" That is very important. People do meditations on mindfulness: watching your own mind, walking meditation, sitting meditation. They're all drawing you towards watching, helping you learn to watch. Watch what? They say thoughts, the mind inside. You cannot really watch the mind. What you are watching, observing, is your mental attitude. Why do you have to watch your mental attitude? Every action, whether it is physical or mental, and even every attitude creates karma. That is why it is important to watch it.

The essence of what Buddha told people is to be pure, to be sincere, to be good. Pure, sincere and good. Good and bad only *you* know; nobody else will know. Only you know which it is because what you think is only known to yourself and nobody else. However close someone may be, he or she doesn't know what you are thinking. So you have to watch yourself, nobody else can watch you. You have to watch yourself, be your own guide, and your own vigilance-officer. Ultimately, it boils down to yourself. If you want to be happy and if you want to be better spiritually, you have to watch your mind.

However, simply watching alone cannot help. We have a tremendous storage of karma, good and bad. Even if you watch it for a whole life, out of the total picture of all the different lives, it is like watching for a couple of hours. That does not mean you should not watch it. Yes, good, great, go ahead and watch it. It is important, because without realizing there are a lot of things you do which you don't actually want to do.

*Purify.* What you really need is a method how to undo and do. That is more important. Because one single little action can do and undo things. Doing and undoing is more effective for us than just to keep on watching. By watching, you can prevent yourself doing something you'll regret; that is great, wonderful. However, how will that affect the stored up karma that we have? So we also have to use the method for undoing things: that is using purification. Not only formal purification, but all the methods of practice and meditation you go through are means of undoing bad karma, and at the same

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<sup>17</sup> Taking what is not yours, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive speech, slander, gossiping, covetous thinking, malice, wrong view are the ten non-virtuous actions. Actually, this list is a summary for easy reference; unfortunately, there are many more varieties than this!

time building up good karma and multiplying the good karma. That is what we really call practice. Watching is wonderful, but we need more than that. That is why we say: build up the determination to be free. That *is* the method. This *is* one of the methods of undoing past bad karma. Okay?

*Get up and go.* How does spiritual development grow within the person? It is not going to hit you on the head. It only works this way: you go and fall and get up and move, you go and fall down on your face, get up, dust yourself off, wash and go. *When you fall down, doesn't matter, get up, and go.* Get up a hundred thousand times. That is how to do it.

Nobody is perfect; nobody can do it right from the beginning. Everybody, including Buddha, went that way: fall down, get up, fall down, get up. And that is what we should do. And if, when you have fallen down two or three times, you say, "Ah, forget about it," it is worse; that is really bad, very bad. That is shutting down your own development, totally shutting it, like shutting the door. Fall, get up, move, fall, get up, and move! Everybody does it, it doesn't matter, don't feel bad, feel happy about it and go ahead. That is how people move; otherwise everybody should be a buddha from the beginning, but nobody is. So don't even worry when you fall down, but make sure you get up! That is very important. If you fall down and you sit there, you remain there, you won't go any further. Make sure you get up

In short, when we look at karma in our life, we cannot look at karma outside. Look at karma within your life, how it comes from the attractions or even addictions that we have in samsara. Individually we have different addictions. Some people are very much addicted to having power, some people are very much addicted to wealth, some are addicted to their figure or appearance, and some are addicted to fantasy, whatever. People's minds are very strange, you never know what addiction they have to what. Who knows? You yourself know. Whatever I am addicted to, I know. Whatever you are addicted to, you know. Wherever you have your addiction in the samsaric melodrama, that is where you concentrate. That is where you try to cut your attachment. Could be anything, who knows? In the tradition Tibetan we say, "From the yak's horn to the cow's dung." That is where you have to be careful and what you have to meditate on, to concentrate on. Only you can do it; it is the way you help yourself.

### **Practice: watch and catch**

The way to do it is to watch. And every time it comes, catch it! Every time it misbehaves, hit it hard! Geshe Beng Kungyel, one of the great Kadampa geshe, was asked, "Great geshe lama, what is your major practice?" The questioner expected him to answer, as people generally do, "My major practice is Yamantaka," or Vajrayogini, Heruka, Guhyasamaja or whatever big deity with a big name. But no. Geshe Beng said:

I have a weapon.  
I carry my weapon and I am standing near my cave.  
I am standing there waiting for the thief to come.  
Every time he comes I hit him with my spear.

He did not mean hitting physically. What he meant was that he is watching and whenever anger comes up he hits it with patience, whenever any delusion comes, he hits with its direct opponent. That is what he meant.

When you do this practice, then when you back three or six months later and compare your own experience of three months ago with today, you will note a difference. And then, my dear friends, you are moving, making progress!

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- I'm standing near my mind's cave.  
I'm waiting for the thief of my happiness to come.  
Every time he comes I hit him with my antidote spear.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING

On karma:

Tsongkapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 78-82

Gelek Rinpoche, *Karma; Actions and Their Results*.

Dalai Lama, *The Four Noble Truths*, pg. 74-93

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path* , pg. 66-72

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*. pg. 93-106: Karma; pg. 143-149: Ethics

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, pg. 53-60: Karma; pg. 69-78: Changing habitual patterns

## 12. SUFFERING IN SAMBARA

Vs. 4b ...

*And the sufferings of life - over and over again ---  
And you will turn off interest in future lives!*

What have we done so far? We have briefly introduced our life and the way we are functioning, not in this life only, but also in the lives that we have gone through in the past. We tried to look into how samsara circles, the continuation of it. In the Buddhist terminology, it is called the circle of existence because it goes round and round and round. We talked about what makes it go round, how we are stuck in it, what makes us stuck and how to go beyond that.

In order to *want* to go beyond, we have to create an interest in going beyond. Even before we attempt to go beyond, we have to develop an interest in going beyond. In order to develop an interest in going beyond we really have to know and understand the situation of being stuck here.

We talked about the good things, the importance and the benefits that we can get out of this life; we also talked about the bad things, the pains, the miseries and problems that we face in life. In other words, we sort of looked at the good part and the bad part of life.

Buddha recommended for us to look more into the bad part of life, particularly into the pains that we go through. It is funny, we talk about the pain and suffering, we think about it and we also say we know about it, but the pain you really experience is different. There is a big difference between talking about pains and going through the pains. That is why meditation on pain is so very important.

### THE THREE SUFFERINGS

When we talk about pains, sufferings, miseries, and problems, the whole idea is to try to lead the person out of it. Buddha devoted so much time talking about pains to beginners because the whole idea is to build up a determination to be free. What the whole thing tries to do is this: to try to make you fed up, *not* with life but with the situation, the whole *samsaric* situation. The way you get fed up can also differ, "I can't do that, I can't do that, I am fed up," is *not* what the Buddha wanted. Buddha was looking for the fed-up state that sees that the whole thing is wrong and wants to be done with it. That is why the three sufferings come in.

1. **Suffering of suffering.** The suffering of suffering is everywhere. We have been talking about this one quite a bit. We all know it: an ache or pain here, being sick, emotional pains, birth, illness, old age and death, *etcetera*.

2. **Suffering of change.** This is very hard to recognize as suffering. Buddha tried to tell us that everything in this world that we admire, material development, wealth, the good old American dream, is suffering. It looks like something you need and therefore it is hard to recognize as suffering. When you don't recognize it as suffering, the proper way of getting fed up with samsara will not rise within you, because you have still admire certain things in samsara.

A prisoner who admires the free food or the free medical treatment in prison has a big split in his mind, “Should I really get out of jail or should I try to remain here? If I get out I have to look for a place to live, I have to find a job, I have to pay my bills, *etc.*; if I remain here, there is a place to live, a bed, blankets to cover me, and everything is free.” The moment you have a little doubt or split in your mind, your efforts to get out of jail are going to be split; you will not put in whole-hearted efforts at all.

Similarly, in *samsara*, when you admire the suffering of change without knowing it is suffering of change you’re not going to try to get free from it. Why is it called suffering of change? Because it gives you a picture of something admirable, something you look for, something not bad to have. What does that do? It makes us confused and it harms us so badly directly as well as indirectly by preventing us from gaining the full benefits of our good actions.

You put in efforts towards good development, try to sit here sweating; you put in efforts to gain knowledge, you are putting efforts towards spiritual development, you are putting efforts towards purification. These little hard efforts you are taking here add up to your purification as well as to the accumulation of merit. Don’t forget, don’t feel bad if you have to sweat here. Here however is a big ‘but’: if you do not recognize the suffering of change as suffering, all these efforts will *not* become a direct cause for liberation, neither total liberation – which is buddhahood – nor liberation from *samsara*; it will go towards neither of them. So what will it become? It will become what we call lucky karma.

Within *karma* there is good karma, bad karma and lucky karma. *Without a determination to be free, all your efforts will be only lucky karma.* What does lucky karma do? It will not throw you out of *samsara*, but will give you a comfortable life within *samsara*, like being born in a family of a very rich fellow, winning a lottery, *etc.* It is lucky but doesn’t really give you any ultimate good. It is something that gives you a break, it is like buying time, like having a holiday. When you are working so hard and you get a holiday, you have a break. Just like that, lucky karma will give you a break but it will not be able to give you a total way out of your suffering.

Therefore, if you do not recognize the suffering of change, all your efforts, good efforts, meditating for hours together, will be transformed to merely lucky karma. It is a waste of energy, a waste of efforts. In other words, not understanding this becomes very expensive; it costs a lot. In order to see that, in order to make your good actions go towards more than just lucky karma, you have to recognize the suffering of change as suffering.

**3. Pervasive suffering.** Not only do you have to recognize the suffering of change as suffering, also you have to recognize something which is the result of suffering. Take our body. Our body is very useful for us, we can take best use of it, it gives a tremendous opportunity for spiritual development and also material development in this life. However, it is the result of a contaminated karma, so it has the capability of producing unfortunate karma again. In other words, it is the result of bad (or merely lucky) karma and could be cause for bad karma, too. It is important to recognize this.

#### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on suffering**

Take the pain of sickness that we think we know about. Each one of us will think, “Yes, it is bad, it is very difficult, I know about it, I have seen it.” But think carefully. When I say me, each one of us should think of him or herself in that position.

We think, “I know about pain. I know all about it. I know sickness. I know that it is very difficult and painful to be sick.” And also we say, “Oh yeah, emotional problems are very difficult and fears are difficult, the fear of being lonely, the fear of getting old, the fear of rejection, all these.” All these are very easy when you say it. You say, “I know about it,” but when you really get into it, it is different.

Say somebody that you know or who is close to you goes through a big trouble, a big illness, is unconscious, and you try to talk to the person, saying, “Everything will be all right, keep your spirits up, doctor says everything is going to be okay.” You keep on talking and that person can

do nothing but just look up a little bit, just open their eyes a little bit; that is the only response you can get. Suppose I imagine myself, *me...*

Imagine yourself in that position: though you can understand what is going on and how bad the situation is, you can't respond except by moving your eyes. You can't look much this way or that way. Imagine yourself being in that position; anyone of us could be in that position, right? It is not very far. And further imagine being like that day after day and week after week. What does that make you feel?

If we have a little bit of trouble, if we are hit or cut, how much we shout and scream and yell! We make more noise than a dog who has broken his leg, you know.

When you look into your life that way, you begin to see and think, "Is there any meaning in getting preoccupied with this life?" In other words: In the short period that we can move round, is it worth for me to make a division between what I call friends and what I call enemies? A huge difference of color we put on people: a huge very bright white and a very bright black; in white and black we make a division among the same fellows. And from that division we start, "Oh, the close one is my friend, my dear, my this and that," and that brings closeness. And, "This is my enemy, my this and that," gives distance.

Not only do we make that division of distance and closeness, we work for it. We work very hard to build what we call "my dear" and we work very hard to destroy "my hated one." It may mean nothing to them, but I make this division, I make myself to work this way and that way, and I accumulate a tremendous amount of bad karma while doing this.

Now another question will rise: who is going to pay that karma, who is going to suffer? You can't look at anybody else, or ask a friend to pay your karma. Or will your enemies pay your karma? That will never happen. You alone will have to do that; you alone will be responsible.

Now you have to look for the conclusion and get your mind used to it: wherever I look within samsara, – higher, lower, medium – it has either the influence of the suffering of suffering, or the suffering of change, or pervasive suffering. There is no other area. Therefore I would really like to get out of it.

And in case I could not develop to the point of freeing myself, what will happen if I die? I have fear of falling into the lower realms.

So I take refuge in Buddha, to Dharma, to Sangha.

You see, looking in, meditating or imagining yourself in that position and looking at life from an intellectual understanding of illnesses, sufferings and pains projected onto life are two different things, two totally different things! When Buddha reminded us and said, "Look into the problems of life," I am convinced he meant *not* the intellectual way of looking at it, but the way we have just described!

These pains and miseries are the obstacles we face. We have to recognize them in order to build the determination to be free. Not only do you have to have intellectual knowledge, but you have to meditate on it, you have to think about it and you have to gain realization on it. The moment you get that, your door opens.

*When you have built the determination to be free, every effort you put in will be a direct cause for total liberation.* Otherwise, no matter what efforts you put, there is every possibility of moving round, transforming it into lucky karma rather than into karma to become enlightened. Get it?

So the first and foremost step in this spiritual path is to build a determination to be free, not by listening to or saying words, not by intellectual knowledge, but by thinking, by seeing, by meditating it, by really adopting it, mixing your own mind within that. In other words, you need an unshakable absorption. Your mind should absorb that unshakably. And then your first door on the spiritual path has been opened. Get it? So when we talk about suffering, suffering, suffering, pain, pain, pain, don't worry about it, don't get upset. This is the whole reason why we do this.

You are not going to get rid of suffering by talking. We do have all three sufferings; even the things we consider as good things have suffering in them. Again, don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that everything is bad. I just say that most of them are samsaric points. There are good points too. Okay?

### **Problems of samsara in general**

- the fault of uncertainty
- the fault of dissatisfaction
- the fault of changing all the time – becoming high and becoming low
- the fault of getting things you don't want and not getting the things you want
- the fault of loneliness.

### **Practice: samsara and 'going beyond'**

You see very funny things happening all the time. It is nothing strange because we are in a strange 'place', called *samsara*. And when you are in a strange place strange things happen, it is natural. Don't think I am talking about the West, I am not even talking about this universe, I am talking about the whole of samsara. There are many different universes. A lot of people have the idea that our galaxy is the worst galaxy and if there is something else out in space it has to be great. Not necessarily. There are better galaxies for sure, but not necessarily all of them. Within samsara, it is all the same, wherever you look. Unless you get beyond that.... The moment I say 'beyond' don't look beyond this global thing; we are not talking of getting off the map. The 'beyond' thing is inside, is very much deeply in.

So, we have to *look in and find the 'beyond' within ourselves*. How to look in, that is what we talked about from the beginning. If you have forgotten, too bad. If you have not forgotten, try to review it, try to think about it. If you don't think, it won't help at all. Think whenever you a little extra time, like when you are relaxing in the woods or in the river, think – but don't over think – and then get your mind used to it. And when your mind gets used to it you don't have to put any efforts, it automatically happens. That is what practice really is.

### QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Contemplate the three kinds of suffering
- Look in and find the 'beyond' within yourself.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On suffering of samsara:

Tsongkapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 83-88

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*, pg. 72-79

On the three sufferings

Dalai Lama, *The Four Noble Truths*, pg. 50-57

K. McDonald, *How to Meditate* pg. 81-88: Meditation on suffering

## 13. OUR DISTORTED VIEW

### Cause of suffering: our rted view - building false securities

Gautama was able to understand reality. He was able to look at the true nature of existence. He was able to see inside. He was able to touch reality. Maybe he had better opportunities than us, maybe he had a better environment. Whatever the reason might have been, something happened to him.

We, on the other hand, have as yet been unable to do that. Perhaps we have been lazy, or ignorant, or overly jealous. Somehow, we have not been able to get in touch with our own reality. We have not been able to get in touch with the true nature of existence. The true nature is not outside, it is inside. It is not an external object that you have to obtain, it is within us. However, we are unable to see it and get in touch with that, because we have a wrong view, we look at it the wrong way, we have a wrong way of seeing. When we look at things they seem real or true to us, but they are not. What we see is not really there in the way we think it is.

Yesterday I was in New York city with an old friend of mine, who has studied with me for fifteen years and has developed high-tech meditation techniques. In her office, there was an interesting thing on the table, some sort of little polished plate, hollow on top, a kind of hologram. It had three little things inside, a conch shell and a red and a blue pebble. When you look, it looks like the three of them are standing on that hollow empty place on the top, but when you try to touch them, your finger goes through and you can't pick them up. You have to put your finger deep really down and then they are down there. That is an example for how we see things: we look and we think it is what we think it is, but it is not. Our way of looking and thinking are defective and we don't really see until we try to touch it. And when you try to touch it, it is not there. I thought that was a good example.

That is exactly how we cannot really get in touch with true reality. It is blocked. Our view is distorted. We see the reflection; we don't see the real thing. Why can't we see the real thing? We have too much tightness going on within us, too much holding on. We can't let things go. We are afraid of letting go, afraid of losing something. What are we afraid of losing? We don't even know. Losing our identity? Losing our security? Actually we all have a strong **fear**, and because of this, we have a wrong view, a distorted way of looking at everything.

People have the fear of not being able to satisfy themselves, the fear of losing their own identity, the fear of loneliness, the fear of being unable to manage; it all boils down to the fear of not being happy. And that again boils down to fear of pain, fear of misery. You may not like to acknowledge it, but this is what it is. It sort of indirectly leads to that. So we have developed a *false security* and we hold on to it.

Why do we develop a false security? Because we have a wrong way of looking at things. We have a wrong way of seeing happiness, we have a wrong way of seeing pains, seeing our projections or whatever. We project something which we call happiness and we direct all our energies towards achieving

it. And we are afraid of anything that is not going in that direction. We fear it because we could lose that false projection of happiness.

Every person has his own projection of happiness. Some project material happiness, some project spiritual happiness. We project all sorts of things, and we hold on to that. We never raise a question within ourselves about whether it is a correct happiness and whether it is achievable. In the meantime, we are fighting to achieve the false goal and all our efforts, all our activities, are related to that. You think you are about to lose something fantastic, you think you're going to lose all sources of your happiness. This is the way we look at it. This is why we can't let go. We hold on to something which in reality doesn't give us happiness. It gives us pain and misery, yet we refuse to acknowledge that it gives us pain and misery. We think and we project something as source of happiness, as a source of security for that happiness, and as a result we suffer. That is what I call distorted view.

Every view that we hold is distorted! Why? Because our mind, which is projecting and looking at it, is not clear. It is like wearing fancy-colored yellow glasses; you look down and see even small things as yellow. Similarly our mind – which is constantly projecting – is distorted, influenced by that fear.

The major thing, I think, is the fear. Then attachment/lust and aversion/anger come in. In other words, the true crystal reality has been 'painted' by our emotions. We see all sorts of colors, and yet we are unable to see the pure crystal, because the mind which is looking at it is distorted. When you get to know that, or even if you simply begin to have some doubts about how you usually look at things, it helps you tremendously.

After all, what is real practice? What is practice that is aimed at helping us develop spiritually? A lot of people think that practice means sitting down and having a silent meditation, or sitting down and saying a mantra. But real practice is to work on your own mind, on your view, on the way you project things, the way you look at things, the way you think things are. See how your mind has been distorted by these wrong projections, see the wrong colors you put in. This is real practice.

Let's say you became angry on the basis of having just a little information about some situation. By looking at certain things that happen in everyday life you gained some kind of understanding which you thought was true, rare and perfect. And after some time, when you got more information, you have a chance to look back at it. When you look back at the situation, you see what you did, how you took the decision, how you made up your mind and so on. Then sometimes you feel a little embarrassed about yourself, because of what you did at that time. Though at that moment, based on whatever your understanding was, you made the best decision, later on, when you are better informed, you feel embarrassed looking back at how you reacted. This is an example of how we can have a wrong view in approaching life, approaching true nature. Ninety percent of people have a distorted view, a distorted way of looking at reality.

We are strongly influenced by fear. What we are afraid of, we don't even know, but we do have a tremendous fear of things not going in the direction that we want, fear of not satisfying ourselves. As a matter of fact, this life that you and I have in this world today, called *samsara*, or cyclic existence, is not going to go in the direction that you want or project at all. It won't be achieved; it won't be there. We get what you don't want, and whatever we want, we don't get. This is the nature of *samsara*. Whether we are afraid or not afraid, whether we have something to hold on to or not, whatever is meant to come will come. So what is the use of carrying fear and making oneself miserable in one's life? Why give additional pain to ourselves? It is the way *samsara* is. We know that, if we think about it clearly.

Think one step further. Even what we believe to be happiness is not happiness. I am telling you that it is not and Buddha has said that it is not. Even what we call happiness is in the nature of pain and suffering.

Things that we project are very hard to achieve, whether you have positive thinking or not. There are people who tell you, "If you keep on thinking positive, everything will be positive and if you are thinking negative everything will be negative." I call that superstition. If you keep on thinking positive, eve-

rything is *not* going to be positive. If you forget all about the negative things, and you keep on saying “positive,” put it on your tape-recorder, stick it on the wall to remind yourself, it doesn’t make it positive, not at all. Some people may think it works, I guarantee you it will not. To a certain extent, yes, because of “mind over matter,” but definitely not all through.

Moreover, even if you achieve something that you projected, even then your mind is not going to be satisfied. We are never satisfied. Never! This is not difficult to understand. By looking into our life, we know how much we are satisfied and how much we are not. Everybody here, or most of us, whether young people in their late twenties and thirties, or old men of my age, when we look at our lives, everybody is full of dissatisfaction. Who is fully satisfied? Nobody, almost nobody. If you have one or two satisfactions, you may think you are satisfied. I can prove you are not! I do have people who tell me, “I am happy, because I have enough in the bank, two houses and two cars,” and this and that, but when you raise the question, say, “Are you really happy?” and look at their eyes, their eyes are saying, “I am not.” This is dissatisfaction.

And sometimes – excuse me ladies if I say so – I see a lot of sourness and sorrow under beautiful make-up. The make-up itself has become a projection of pain, at least to my eyes. Painting everything and trying to hide the pain, misery and sadness they have, trying to wear the most uncomfortable clothes – I am sorry (laughs) – and walk in a way that is very uncomfortable to walk, all that is trying to project something else, which itself is again a sign of pain to me, of dissatisfaction. In that way you try to give people a distorted view of you, your body, your way of doing things, again because of fear.

Every moment of your life, whatever you are doing, whether alone and all by yourselves or in a group, at work in the office or in your residence or whatever, the fear is accompanying you all the time and influencing your life. So you try to keep up or do all sorts of things you don’t want to do in true reality to try to protect yourself and your projected happiness. That is useless fear, as I have been telling you. Whatever you do, it is not going to change things outside you, maybe a little bit here and there, but in reality not much. So the question you really have to put is: What am I afraid of? Why am I afraid of it?

We are not afraid of what we really need to be afraid of. We are not afraid at all of what we ought to deeply fear! We don’t have the fear that the enlightened beings or highly developed beings have recommended for us to have. We have a sort of unwanted and unnecessary fear, which makes us miserable and in pain. So why do we carry that? Try to overcome that by realizing that whatever happens within this lifetime stays a short period only, is a temporary result; it doesn’t last forever. It is not going to affect us for a long time, if you believe in reincarnation.

Reincarnation is something which you have to think about. I am not going to ask you to believe in reincarnation, but I am asking you not to deny it. Reincarnation deserves at least the benefit of the doubt.

Even if you don’t believe in reincarnation, even then that pain, sorrow, sadness that you are projecting is changeable. It is impermanent. There is nothing permanent; things *will* change. Each of us, again, is a temporary person, a temporary phenomenon; we are all constantly changing. Why do we make ourselves suffer too much, even before the suffering comes? It may never come. And if it comes, well, we may have to suffer during that period, but why are we making ourselves suffer long before and during and after? What is the use of giving ourselves pain which we don’t need? We have enough of it.

### **Distorted view – karma – circling in samsara**

What should a spiritual person do? Try to see that the view you have is distorted, a distorted projection of happiness. The fear that you have is the wrong fear, a useless fear. Try to see it clearly for yourself! If you want to meditate, you meditate on that. If you want to think, think about that. This is one simple example of what is happening with us in our lifetime.

Every view that we have is distorted, making us have more problems and more pains, not only now, but in the future as well. I am not talking about a little pain here, but I am talking about the whole circle of life. That distorted view will act according to how we react. Our distorted view causes us to develop aversion/hatred and attachment and accordingly we plan and we act under the influence of those delusions.

With every action we do, we build a separate and different karma. When we build a different karma, it gives a different result. That is how we plough and create our circle, samsara. We ourselves created our circle of samsara. No one else did it. No one can do anything for me except myself. No one else can help that much; no one can do it for you. So, you are so important for yourself!

You yourself, your own life you have today, is very valuable to you. Don't you ever think, "My life is no good. My life is not good enough for me. My life is shit." (Excuse me.) You can't think that! A lot of people may think that, but that is a wrong view, again. No matter how bad you may think your life, you yourself are very valuable for yourself, because only you can help yourself!

You can also do it in this very life. (I am talking from the viewpoint of having many different lives). This very life here at this very moment (when I say moment I don't mean this minute and hour, but I mean your life in general here) is the very best available for you to help yourself. Because this is the moment in which you have the capacity to understand. This is the moment you have the information available. This is the moment you have the opportunities available to you. So this is so valuable and so important. Your life is very, very valuable.

When you think about reincarnation some people may have in mind, "I am a human being so I will always remain as a human being." That is not the case. The true reality is that human beings are impermanent, and hence, the form of life is changeable. A person that is a human being today can be a pig or dog or something worse tomorrow. Can you imagine: you and me as human beings today living in a comfortable place with controlled temperature, all of a sudden we become a dog, and maybe not an American pet, maybe an Indian dog? Our body covered with hair, living in the street, and no one can understand us no matter what kind of noise we make. Can we imagine it? Can we bear it? Yet, it is possible.

And *that* we have to be afraid of. That fear we should have! But we are never afraid of that. We are simply afraid we are not going to get some projected happiness. We are afraid of losing or not achieving some projected funny 'dream' which we consider to be happiness. We are afraid of being lonely. We are afraid of funny things, but we are never afraid of becoming a dog tomorrow, left in the street in the middle of the snow, and nobody wanting to talk to me and nobody even recognizing me. They will call me "Dog" and "Get out of here!" and they'll throw things at me. Can we ever imagine that? Think about it. It is possible, it is very much possible. You cannot deny it. It is also possible to become very powerful tomorrow, a very powerful high spiritual being. It is also possible to change in that direction. It is all possible.

Have we ever thought along those lines? If you have not, please think about it. If you have a fear, be afraid of that. If you have a desire, develop it in that direction. You may also think, "Okay, if that is so, it is God's wish." That is not true. I can guarantee you God never wanted us to become a dog, neither does anybody else. Knowingly or unknowingly, we ourselves can create the causes to become a dog tomorrow. Creating a cause gives results. What can we do? Whom can we blame except ourselves? Even when we blame ourselves, if that situation has been created, and nothing has been done to change it, it is too late.

### **Practice: can I help myself?**

It is never too late to think about it today, while we have control over our minds and actions. It is never too late! Think and think and think. And raise the question to yourself: *Can I help myself?*

Is it possible? Certainly it is possible. If you can't help yourself, who else can help? If I can't help myself, no one else can. So I have to help myself. I have to help myself not to become a dog or something worse tomorrow. I have to keep all my mind focused and together. I have to keep all my energy together. I have to direct my energy towards achieving that goal. If I do this, I can guarantee that I am not going to be that dog tomorrow. That is because it is *karma*, the natural law of actions and consequences that governs us.

This is our true picture. This is how we have the distorted view. This is how we look at reality in the wrong way. Because we look in the wrong way, we act in the wrong direction. By acting in the wrong direction, we get the wrong karma: by building the wrong cause we get the wrong result. This is how our life and lives circle around.

If you want to correct it, you have to correct it here: by looking in the right way and creating the right karma. You can't do anything about the result; it is automatic. When the cause is created, the result comes automatically when the conditions are right. You can't manipulate anybody to get it changed, though with the right knowledge, you may be able to purify a negative action by working on the conditions. At the level of the cause, where you are creating, you can definitely do something. That is the whole of spiritual practice.

Spiritual practice is to make yourself see a correct picture, to see to it that you create a good cause so that you will be guaranteed to enjoy a good result. For that you may meditate, you may do anything.

It is so important for us first to look at what is wrong and what is right, what is wrong action and what is right action. And it is very difficult for us, too, to judge what is right and what is wrong. It is not easy. But it is not impossible.

If we have a fear, we should be afraid for our long-term future, not for what is going to happen within a couple of years. If we love ourselves, we have to create the causes of happiness for ourselves. We must not create causes for suffering, like a diabetic does when he or she enjoys sugar. If you put all your efforts in that direction and try to see the true reality, it will help you.

Actually, it boils down to "Care about yourself and help yourself." That is the message Buddha gave us two thousand five hundred years ago. So I passed it on to you today: Help yourself!

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Do I need help?
- Can I help myself?
- Do I care for myself enough to help myself?

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On distorted view:

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, Part II, ch. 5: Closed-mindedness.  
Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path* pg. 45-47.

On cyclic existence:

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, Part III, ch. 3: Cyclic existence.

On the six realms:

Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pg. 128-148.  
Chögyam Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom*, pg. 17-40: Styles of imprisonment



## **14. CIRCLING IN SAMBARA BUILDING THE DETERMINATION TO BE FREE**

### **A short guided meditation on one's pure nature**

Sit comfortably. If you can sit crossed-legged, wonderful. If you can't, okay; it is not compulsory at all. Sit as comfortably as possible, but don't lie down.

Concentrate at your heart. Concentrate there carefully. At the center of the heart-chakra we find our own pure mind, in the nature of light. It is inseparable from that of Buddha or any other enlightened being that you meditate on. It is our divine nature.

That light gets bigger, radiates more and fills up our body completely. It goes to the upper part, up to the crown, and also radiates to the lower part of the body. Our body becomes filled up with light.

Not only does the light fill up the body, it also purifies all the untruth or non-virtue. The power of the true buddha-nature light purifies the essence of wrong deeds we have committed. We become pure.

Not only do we become pure, we become a fully enlightened buddha. All the impure part is gone. We become a true, pure, enlightened living being.

We begin to radiate light from our body. From all parts of our body a tremendous amount of light radiates and fills up every one of the people around us in our house, in our city, in the whole country, the planet, this universe, and the multi-galaxies of the universe.

This light from our body reaches everywhere. And each one of these light rays carries a small buddha on its tip. That buddha goes and sits on the crown of every sentient being of every different galaxy everywhere. Wherever there is a living being, my light is there. Wherever my light is, there is a buddha helping the sentient beings.

Each one of these buddhas radiates light from his or her body and it goes through each one of those sentient beings and purifies all their non-virtues. By purifying their non-virtues, it removes all their sufferings. By the removal of their sufferings, they become happy and joyful.

Not only are they joyful; they remain in equanimity. All of them are filled up with love and compassion and remain in equanimity.

After fulfilling that activity, the light that we have radiated dissolves back. We collect it back to ourselves, to our body.

Within our body, we dissolve the light from the bottom up and from the top gradually down into the heart center.

At the center of the heart, the buddha nature, the pure light remains with us. It will remain

with us forever, as a source of our strength, as source of our spiritual development, as source of our happiness, and above all source of our buddhahood.

*About Vajrayana meditation.* Today we did a little Vajrayana meditation. Training yourself in buddhahood and carrying out the activities of the buddha which *you* manifest is a Vajrayana practice, a tantric practice. Why is it a Vajrayana practice? Because it is result-oriented.<sup>18</sup> We do not use a causal statement like “I will become a Buddha.” Instead of that we imagine, “I *am* a buddha, I already have become a Buddha,” and we carry out the activities of helping others. Though you and I know that we are not a buddha yet, by visualizing that we are carrying out these activities, we are working in a result-oriented way. Therefore, a meditation like the one we just did has a much greater and better effect. The result of obtaining the pure development also comes quicker, so it is much more helpful in that way.

At the same time, we are trying here to find a way that one can *become* a buddha, a purely enlightened being. That is what we are trying to do here in these gatherings. For that we need the three major principles to be involved: first, the determination to be free or renunciation, second, the altruistic attitude or the compassionate fully committed mind of the bodhisattva, and third, wisdom or the unbiased outlook on reality



#### **SAMSARA AND THE DETERMINATION TO BE FREE**

We are still talking about the first principle. The first principle to become a buddha is: one has to develop the desire to become a buddha. In order to develop the desire to become a buddha, we have to see the problems that we face here now. Buddha chose to call the problems: sufferings and pains.

**Samsara.** If you really truly look carefully into *samsara*, the circle of our existence, you find it is full of misery and problems. Sometimes we don't recognize them. Sometimes we do very much recognize them, but we don't really feel the effect on ourselves, the way we do when we actually experience them. The pains and problems definitely get us, we get caught up in them, but still I say that they do not affect us. We need for it to affect us in the good way, to get us going. Normally we don't get affected the good way, but the bad way: we feel miserable, we feel up and down, we feel that something is wrong, “He did it, she made me do this,” *etc.* Bad effects will cause more problems rather than helping. So we need to try to let pain and suffering affect us the good way.

We have to go through the pains; there is no way to avoid it. As long as we are born here, we will have all different sorts of problems. We have to face them; we have to go through them. But we could go through them in a better way: instead of blaming the other person or ourselves, recognize them as natural as long as we are in this uncontrolled circling of life after life. Circling in *samsara*, these pains do come up, sometimes much more and sometimes much less, but always there are misery and problems. You should continuously try to acknowledge that.

Then the question will rise: why do I have to acknowledge this, what benefit is there for me in seeing this? There is something of great importance in spiritual sense. The importance is this. If you have one problem, it will create another one or more problems. We should recognize the continuation of the problems, how one cycles into another, but we don't. We always think of it as one problem and we think it is a huge one. We project a huge one in which we have to circle for years. After some time, you may be

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<sup>18</sup> Sutrayana is sometimes known as the causal vehicle, Vajrayana as the result vehicle.

able to solve that problem or the problem may solve itself, and then you think it will be over. But no! Then you find another problem or problems. It is a constant movement. The ancient Tibetan masters gave an example:

Samsara is like the waves of the ocean. If you have gone through one wave you think you have made it, but another one will come, and another one will come, *etc.* You may sit there twenty-four hours watching but the waves will not be finished.

Like that our problems come. Sometimes another example is given:

Samsara is like a man's beard; no matter how much you shave it off, it will grow again.

Another question rises. We may say, "So what? Then that is it, not a big deal in that." If we say that, we are overlooking an important point. The point we overlook is the question, "Can we cut totally eliminate that?" When we say, "So what? It is part of life," we are overlooking that possibility. Some people even like it the problems. Sometimes they even say, "It is the spice in the food." Maybe, maybe not. We overlook the important point: "Can we cut that out, eliminate it?" Some people do not overlook it, but say, "No, no way. It is just the way things are." But Buddha or any other great spiritual master says, "Yes, you can eliminate that." Buddha says, "I cut through and if I can do it, why can't you do it?" So that question should not be overlooked.

Then rises the question, "All right, great, how? Is it easy?" Unfortunately, it is not at all easy. It is very difficult. If it were easy, everybody would have already become a buddha. It is difficult, but one can make it. It depends on how much determination the person has. It is a hard journey, but if you have a strong determination you can make it. You'll make it because thousands of people made it and they left their experience with us. We follow their experience and that gives us a way, a path. It is rough and tough, but if you have a strong determination, you get through.

**Determination to be free.** So, the first principle is to build up a strong determination to get free, to cut the problems out. That is a must. If not, we start enjoying samsara, "It is spicy, gives a good taste." If you enjoy it, you don't want to cut it.

I gave the example of a person in jail who does not want to get out of prison because he enjoys the free food he gets. If you look at it from that angle, you'll never want to get out of prison, because you don't see it as a problem. As people outside, we don't see the prison as something nice, we always see it as something bad. But the person who enjoys that life, for him it is okay; it is nothing bad.

Similarly, when we enjoy the samsaric things, the ups and downs, the fights and problems, illnesses and deaths, the bombs and killings, when we keep on enjoying it, we'll never be able to build the determination to be free, to get out. So it is first and foremost important to see the problems as problems and to see there can be an end to it and to build a strong determination to reach that.

**What holds us back from building the determination to be free.** Now what is the biggest problem we get in building that strong determination? *Attachment*. Attachment will hold you back; definitely, nobody else will hold you. We easily blame other persons, "He or she holds me back!" No! He or she can't hold you back. If you have the determination to go away, nobody can hold you back. But when you have attachment, it holds you back from anything: from gaining spiritual development, from building your independence: attachment will hold you back from building anything different.

Particularly in this case, when you really want to build a higher spiritual development, your funny fancy attachment holds you on to some kind of fancy samsaric joy like becoming famous or wealthy. Samsaric things, which in reality are all suffering, painful, unsatisfactory (Skt. *dukkha*) take different shapes and different presentations. We tend to enjoy these things, so we hold on and cannot give them up. Actually, when you try to hold onto something good in this existence, you can't. What you really hold is the pain. The earlier Tibetan masters gave an example:

Samsaric pleasures are like honey on the edge of a sharp knife;  
If you lick it, what do you get? A cut.

Attachment not only hurts in that way, it also brings *anger* with it. I don't have to tell you, you know it. When you have attachment, often what you are feeling is not the attachment, but anger. You get angry because you are not getting the things you wanted and so you feel miserable. A lot of people think attachment is something nice and beautiful; maybe they think it is love.<sup>19</sup> No, I doubt it. I doubt it very much. Why? It is something you *want*, it is not something that you want to give. It is something *you* want to get from a person or persons or anything. It is something *I* want. I am clinging on and holding on to it, and when I don't get it, I get angry. So the spice, the chili is the anger and that is what you experience. And when that chili goes away a little bit, you feel a little relaxed and better and you think it is the quality of love. It is not. It is simply experiencing that the effect of the anger has slightly gone down, and you feel a little bit softer.

If you are free of anger and attachment, you will feel much better than that, and you enjoy much more. This is the clear example.

### **Practice: cutting the delusions**

If you get rid of those delusions or negative emotions, you will be much better off, because their effect will be gone. The effect of delusions makes us miserable.

Now the question rises: can you cut that straightaway totally out? No. There is no instant cutout, neither for anger nor for attachment nor for any other delusion. There is no instant cure. But there is something you always can do: *be aware of it*. Be aware of your own mind. The moment you begin to feel anger, acknowledge it and don't let it overtake you or take you over. The moment you get attachment, acknowledge it and don't let it overtake you. The moment you get jealous, acknowledge it and don't let it overtake you. The moment you are watching the power and the strength of the anger or attachment, it will drop down. The moment you acknowledge it, automatically it will lessen. It will not totally go but it will get much weaker. So in a gradual process one gets better.

What should you do if you are naturally an angry person? If you keep on watching your mind, be aware of it, next time you'll realize your anger is softer and lasts a shorter period. Instead of an hour it will be 45 minutes, then 40 minutes, then 30, then 20, then 10, then 5 minutes, so gradually you go. I said, "Be aware," but at the beginning you will not be aware. Again, don't worry. You may only come to realize that you were angry half an hour later. That doesn't matter. But recognition is so important. Keep on building it up, keep on recognizing it until it becomes habitual. Then the moment the anger starts coming up, you say, "Hey, here you are coming, I better be careful, I'll be prepared." And then the anger will not be able to come. And after a while what will happen? When you start getting such a disturbing emotion, you say, "Hey, I have not seen you for a while. How are you? come in have a cup of tea." When you can say that, it won't take you over. Right?

This should be the result of the practice, this should be the result of dharma work, this should be the result of meditation. Okay? This cannot be the result of sitting meditation alone, just sitting and thinking nothing. Such a meditation cannot affect the delusions. It gives some calmness, and a little bit of feeling happy, sure, but cannot cut the disturbing emotions. So you have to have a strong analyzing practice, analytically looking within the mind, looking at the attitude of the mind, how the delusions come in. You observe them, acknowledge them and try to stop them, put the stop sign wherever you can. First you will forget and be taken over, but then give yourself a ticket and go on doing it.

When I started driving here I used to get tickets all the time and lately I don't get tickets at all. You know, at first I was concentrating on the road, didn't see the signs at all, didn't see the police, but when I got used to it, I began to notice all those things, and now I don't get tickets. Similarly here, when you pass through this mental delusions or negative emotions without being aware of them, give yourself a ticket and after some time you won't get any tickets. That is what one should do.

There is also another important thing here. Very interesting. *Keep a record* of your own mental thoughts and delusions and how strong they are. Keep a record and keep on practicing, and after about six months or a year you go back and compare what you are doing today with what you used to do. If

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<sup>19</sup> The Tibetan tradition defines love for someone as wanting them to be happy.

you have an improvement, be happy and carry on. If you have no improvement, something has gone wrong somewhere. Find the loophole and fix it.

**The need for review.** Another problem I noticed with spiritual practitioners is that they don't review or check themselves. Let's say you keep on doing something year after year, you say your morning prayers properly, meditate, say food-offerings before you eat or drink, do your regular dharma duties everyday, and then when you get angry you get much more angry then ever before and when you are caught in attachment you are caught even worse than anybody else and still you think you are going somewhere: if that happens, I think you have a big problem.

It is a tremendous problem as a matter of fact, considering the limited time we have to live this life, considering the importance of this life, considering what you can accomplish in this life. When you keep on wasting ten years, fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, then what? One day somebody will knock on the door, and say, "Hey, time for you to go." You can say, "Hey, wait, wait!" but death won't wait. You can't say, "I haven't packed yet!" That is what I call a waste of life, a total waste. A great opportunity came, you met some path that really shows you ultimate development and you couldn't make use of it. That is a total waste. Terrible. In order not to have that, it is very important to review, to keep on reviewing whether this path is having any effect on you.

**The sign of spiritual development.** The sign of spiritual development is not the clothes you wear, is not how you cut your hair, is not how you sit, not how long you sit. It is whether your mind becomes smooth or not, whether your anger has been affected or not, whether your anger-power has been reduced or not, whether your attachment-power has been reduced or not, whether your jealousy-power has been reduced or not, whether your mind has become smooth or not. *That* matters. It doesn't matter whether you are yellow, orange, pink, maroon or white, but watch your heart. In Asia we say that the mind is here, at the heart, not up in the head. Whether it is here or there doesn't matter, watch your mind, watch your heart. See that you become a better person, smoother. When I say better, again I don't mean a good old neighbor, I don't mean that.

One important thing in getting oneself affected is meditation, particularly meditation on the subject of karma.

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Look into your samsara, your circle of existence.
- Let it go; in other words: build the determination to be free.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On what holds you back from determination to be free:

Thubten Chödrön, *Open heart, Clear Mind*. pg. 135-142: The Determination to be Free.



## 15. HOW TO LEAD A SPIRITUAL LIFE: THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

I am very happy to talk with all of you who have taken interest in your spiritual development and are trying to make yourselves better. A great quality of human beings is that we can work to develop ourselves. It is also a great opportunity, a great gift of life, that we can really make use of it. That way we are very happy you are here, and it is very interesting we came across each other.

This chapter is titled how to lead a spiritual life. People often raise the question: What is spiritual? Before knowing how to develop spiritually, it is important to know what spirituality is. In the West you find a lot of different spiritual things, a sort of spiritual super-market. Every single non-mechanical or non-electronic topic seems to be regarded as spiritual, and so it is hard to show what is really spiritual. But according to the teachings of the Buddha, what is spiritual is not quite so broad.

By the way, what are the teachings of the Buddha? If you look to India, where the Buddhist teachings came from, in the original places in India it is totally lost, there is nothing left. Buddhism was rebuilt elsewhere, like in East Asia and in Tibet. Somehow the pure teachings of the Buddha remained with the Tibetans – at least we claim that. Actually, we do have a very good preservation of Buddha's teachings. For quite a number of years the Tibetans remained totally land-locked and totally isolated, so we did preserve things very well. Also we put in a lot of hard work to bring the pure teachings from the Buddha from India into Tibet, a lot. I will not go into the details.

Again we come back to the question: what are the teachings of the Buddha? If you look into the *Theravadin* tradition they will tell you: the *Tripitaka*, which includes the *Sutras*, the *Abhidharma* and the *Vinaya*. And if you look into the *Mahayana* teachings, as in Tibet, they say: the collected words of the Buddha, the *Kanjur*.

But whatever the different philosophical thoughts and ideas and suggestions are, one common thing they share, is that the information given by Buddha is based on his own personal experience. Whether he or whether his followers wrote it down after his death doesn't matter. What he really shared with the people, what he really contributed, is the spiritual development he obtained, based on his own experience. That is important. When Buddha taught he didn't say, "So and so says this and so and so has written that." He said, "I felt and I experienced and I noticed this and this and I would like to share that with you." This is how Buddha really taught. That is what I consider when I say "teachings of the Buddha." It is his experience that he shared with the people.

### THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The first thing he shared is what is called *The Four Noble Truths*. Why are they called noble or *Arya*? That term refers to those people who have a high spiritual development, who see and perceive the truth differently from the way we see and perceive.<sup>20</sup> When you hear people talk about the dualistic

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<sup>20</sup> They are those who have reached the third path, the path of seeing.

mind and so on, it is because our ways of perceiving the truth differ from those of highly developed spiritual persons. We look at and see the same thing, but what we perceive is slightly different from what they perceive. We cannot perceive the truth straightway, because our mind has some kind of blockage or veil. On one hand we know that we human beings are really a completely extraordinary kind of being, but at the same time we also have tremendous problems and delusions within us, too. So though we do perceive something, we perceive it in a limited way. That is why this teaching is called “the four truths as the noble ones perceive it.”

The funny or the nice thing is that Buddha was an ordinary person when he was born. He was not born as extraordinary; he was just an ordinary human being like you and me. You may say, “Well how can that be, Buddha has something grown on top of his crown, he has long ears and this and that, we see it in the picture!” The drawings may have been a little exaggerated here and there over the years; that is my personal thought. It is not that he does not have such characteristics, he does have some slightly, but not huge like that. He was just an ordinary human being like you and me. By chance he had the opportunity; he was able to think, able to meditate, to look in, and he perceived the true nature and became a buddha. We on the other hand are still stuck here. That is unfortunate. Why has Buddha managed to be up there as a buddha while are we left here? If it were the other way round, it would be much better for us. True. But unfortunately that is not the case.

Soon after Buddha first obtained buddhahood, or in other words became a buddha, he shared his experience. When he started talking the experience that he gained, he saw two different levels or qualities of existence. One level is what we refer to as *samsara*, the circle of existence. This is the life that we are in today. And the other is *gone beyond*, gone beyond whatever this life we have, the other side.<sup>21</sup> Now this is funny. When I say “this side” and “the other side” you may think you’ll get out from here and will be transplanted over there, that you will literally go from one place to another place. You may get that picture, but I don’t believe it is like that. There is no such a thing as having to go from here and reaching over there. All things happen within the individual person, inside. When you talk about it, you talk that way about the levels of development, but in reality it works within the individual.

Buddha is very famous for talking about sufferings and pains; that is what Buddha talks most about. Why does he do that? Suffering is our nature, it is the nature of human beings and all samsaric beings. We all have pains and sufferings, but we don’t recognize the pains and problems properly.. Some people may often think we don’t experience much pain at all. They think “I am happy, I am really great.” Okay, wonderful, but however there is pain. Some people simply refuse to acknowledge it and some people over-acknowledge it, so they get buried under it. Their sort of over-acknowledging is also not properly acknowledging it.

### **The first noble truth: the truth of suffering**

When Buddha attained enlightenment, the moment he obtained enlightenment he said:

Deep, peaceful, perfectly pure,  
luminous, uncompounded, and like nectar  
is the Dharma I have obtained.  
Even if I were to teach it,  
it could not be known by another.  
Certainly, I must remain silent in the forest.

*Lalitavistara sutra, The Voice of the Buddha, ch. XXV*

He said, “I found something like a nectar, pure, profound, of light nature, but if I share it with others nobody will be able to understand it, therefore I choose to remain silent.” So after attained enlightenment Buddha kept silent for a while. Everybody was wondering, “What kind of nectar did Buddha find?” They were all waiting. Then he came out with the truth of suffering. That was his nectar!

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<sup>21</sup> Also referred to as nirvana.

Why suffering? Because it is the nature of our existence at this level. The first truth is about our level, about what we are, what we are doing and what we experience. Buddha found that, no matter what your status, whatever you do, whether you are an Indian prince inside the palace or a beggar outside in the street, what you experience is *suffering*, pain. That is true; it is true for you, true for me, true for everybody.

A lot of people do think, “I have a good life on the whole.” Yes, true; definitely we have a good life, no doubt. At the same time that good life is not free of pain. It has physical pains, it has mental pains, lots of pain. And when we our life comes to an end, that is not the end of the pain. It continues.

**The continuation of the person.** Who is the person that continuously suffers over lifetimes? A number of people may think that when you die you just blow out and disappear, you’re just gone. When your body is buried you are not buried; your body is buried. Definitely *you* do not get buried; you continue. This life ends, but you start another life. That is the continuation.

A lot of people wonder what is the reasoning behind this? I tell you one thing: each of us has come from a previous life and we are a person who will go to a future life. I do not ask you to believe it. If you think sensibly, you can understand it yourself. Even if you do not understand it, it deserves to be given the benefit of the doubt. You see, so many people have shared their previous experiences. Some may be lying, some could be pretending, but not everybody is. So, when Mr. A has a past, present and future life, it is sure that Mrs. B and Miss C so and forth must have it.

Not only that. Look at yourself, how you function in this life. You *are* a continuation. Yesterday’s Mr. A is the result of the Mr. A of the day before yesterday; it is the continuation of that person. And tomorrow’s Mr. A is going to be the result of today’s Mr. A; it is going to be a continuation. But: yesterday’s Mr. A is not today’s Mr. A; it was yesterday’s Mr. A. Are you getting me? Similarly this life’s Mr. A is the result of last life’s Mr. A and is the cause for the future life Mr. A. That same person is going to go through as the yesterday’s man went through today and will go through tomorrow. Similarly it will go. There is no difference between yesterday today tomorrow and past present future. No difference.

You may think, “Hey, what do you mean there’s no difference? I know everybody I knew yesterday, I remember them, I will recognize them, say, ‘Hey!’ and they’ll say, ‘Hey!’ to me. But what about people I knew in my previous-life? They don’t say, ‘Hey!’ to me and I don’t recognize them. What happened?”

You have come through some tremendous shocks since your previous life: the shock called death, the shock called the life-in-between<sup>22</sup> and the shock of what we call birth. And when you have a big shock, you forget. It is not only the shock, also when the time goes you forget. If you know somebody when you were ten years old and you don’t see the person for twenty years, you don’t even recognize him or her, because the time makes us lose memories. From the previous life until now, not only has a lot of time passed, but you have had tremendous shocks. That is why you don’t see it or remember it. Those who can remember have good shock absorbers; they were able to manage, to be protected from the shock, so they didn’t get damaged, they remember. But even if you remember a previous life when you are a child, as you get older, you don’t think about it and as time goes you forget. Things of your previous life that you may have remembered in childhood, you have forgotten today. In your forties you have definitely forgotten everything, because forty years have stretched out without thinking of it.

So, not remembering, not knowing, not seeing is not good enough to convince ourselves that there is no previous life. On the contrary, when other people— those who have good shock absorbers — do remember that is good enough to convince ourselves to doubt our conviction of no future life. The truth is: going through yesterday, today and tomorrow is the same as going through a past, present and future life. There is no different person; it is the same old fellow. You may have a different name, you may have a different appearance, you may have different parents, you may have a different home, you may have a different citizenship, you may speak a different language; all of that is borrowed *identity*, unreliable identity. The name is only labeled onto you, and you identify with that name. Your parents

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<sup>22</sup> Also referred to as the bardo

are this-life's parents, your home is this-life's home, next time it changes. All of them are like rented apartments, including our body.

When you rent an apartment you sit there, you occupy it, it is your house, it is your home, it is the place where you stay. When you move, when the landlord asks you to go, you go and it is no longer yours. You lived in that apartment. Having a body is similar. As long as it is serviceable to us, we remain in it. When it is no longer able to protect us, is no longer of service to us, we have to go. It is like leaving your old apartment and along with that your home, your parents, every single thing you have borrowed or was provided is gone. It is like a hotel-room. When you occupy your hotel-room it is yours, including the television or whatever. It is all yours. But the moment you leave, you leave everything. So, home, parents, wealth, identity, whatever, everything is borrowed.

How do you know it is borrowed? Very simple. Say your name is John. Are you really John? John is only the name given to you. You may say, "I am John, the driver"; you add your profession. Check with yourself. Are you really John or are you the driver? "I am both." You become a driver when you start driving; until you drive you are not a driver. You became John because somebody called you John. Until then you were not John. If you were already John at birth your parents would have said, "John is born," but nobody that. They say, "The baby is born, what name shall we give it; is John better or James or Mary?" They will look everywhere for the best name, think of your ancestors, then pick a name and say, "This is the name." From that day you are identified with that.

Think carefully: that itself is the clear sign indicating that you are in borrowed land and everything is rented; your name is rented, your body is rented, your parents are rented – I am sorry – everything is rented.

If this is true, who is this fellow or person? Where does he come from? That person is a real person and is *identity-less*. You have the identity of being identity-less. That is yourself, that is me, who has come from previous lives with all sorts of experiences, who will continuously function here according to our experience, and who will continuously experience the results, as we always do.

From the moment we have taken birth we have been subject to certain pains. We have been subject to growth, we have been subject to illnesses, we are subject to death. The fault is neither me nor the others. Being born is the source of faults. It is the source of happiness, too. Don't feel bad, since it is the source of happiness as well as of problems.

*Spiritual work.* When you want to work spiritually, you work on how to cut these problems out and how to develop this source of happiness. I think that is really what spirituality is. It is something that cannot be done by material means, that cannot be done through anything else except working with your own mind, trying to get developed. Putting efforts in that direction is working towards spiritual life.

When you work that way, where are you going to end up? What do you achieve? Is it a goal-less goal you have, or is there totally no goal or is there a huge goal? What is it? What do we really want to do? Do we just sit, not moving an inch, while thinking we are going somewhere? Or do you want to achieve something? These are questions one has to think about. Buddha was a very strange fellow. He had what we call a huge heart. He always chose to say:

Well, you have to get the best.

It is possible for every human being to achieve the best goal. They can achieve it.

He gave a simple example. He said:

I achieved it, why can't you?

I was able to do it, why can't you?

As much as I am intelligent, you are intelligent,

As much as I am stupid, that much you are stupid.

As I have been able to achieve it, why can't you achieve it?

So he introduced buddhahood as goal, as the highest you can aim at.. He said, "Everybody can become a buddha." Let us not bother about the details, buddhahood is something you can aim at.

Now the question rises: What is there if you become a buddha? Something great which we don't have here? There are a lot of important qualities in buddhahood: purity, knowledge, capability, you can render service to others and help them effortlessly. Buddhahood is full development, all blocks or delusions are totally gone. It is a tremendous stage, a stage where you will be able to see and know everything together at the same time.

Today, if anyone of us is able to read somebody's mind we consider him quite good and if somebody is able to read a few people's minds at the same time that person must be fantastic. But when you become a buddha you read every living being's mind and you understand everything together. You may think, "Wow, this is terrible stage, you may go crazy!" It is not like that. You'll have the capability to cope with it. So it is a fantastic level, a totally developed stage.

*Spiritual development.* What does spiritual development mean? Is it gaining power to be able to fly? Or power to remain under the water or under the ground? These are karmic gifts, not actually spiritual development. Some people have a karmic gift to be able to fly, some people have a gift to be able to remain under the water, some people have a gift to be able to read somebody's mind and some people have a gift to read the future. These are karmic gifts, not necessarily a spiritual development.

Then what is really a spiritual development? You know, we do have a lot of delusions within us, we have a lot of obstacles towards buddhahood or total enlightenment. When you apply the antidotes to the delusions within you, then when these delusions have been cut you gain positivity, and *that* is spiritual development. If you work with your anger, and you are able to overcome it, that is spiritual development. When you work with your attachment and are able to cut that, that is your spiritual development. And that is the case with is hatred, jealousy, so and forth.

We mistakenly look at those problems as practically nothing. We say "It is just human nature." Some people may even go to the extent of looking at things like anger, attachment, hatred as good qualities. In the West they do that sometimes. When someone does not get angry or upset, some people think it is abnormal. They take the person to the therapy, saying, "This fellow is not angry, do something, get him angry." But actually anger, like the other negative emotions, is a source of problems, because it is non-virtuous.

What does that mean? Anger disturbs our peace and makes the mind rough. The smooth quality of the mind gets destroyed, so you cannot use your mind properly. You lose your control; anger takes over when the person is angry. I don't have to tell you, we all know that. When somebody is angry, goes wild, does all sorts of things, it is not really the person who is doing it. The anger influences, the person doesn't even see it, can't even think about it; it goes its own way. The same with attachment, hatred, everything. The smoothness of the mind gets destroyed, so therefore the mind is not in a position to be used in a proper way. That is why these things are called delusions and cause problems.

What does spiritual work really do? It tries to cut that and reveal the purity of the pure nature of the human being, the pure nature of the mind. Spiritual work is able to reveal that. Whatever efforts you put towards that is spiritual work. Why? Because the result of these delusions is that we get those pains, the pains we know, sickness, *etc.* It is very hard even to recognize the pains. We have sometimes a very strange mind, "It is okay if I am sick.

The doctor will take care of it. I can go to the hospital. The insurance company pays my bills." We think that way, don't we? But that is not truly acknowledging it. If we think carefully for some time and imagine that some problems complications develop that cannot be handled by doctors or medical science, if we just imagine that for a little while, we get a different feeling. So all these pains, that is a problem. We usually look out, sort of do not bother much, but when we look in, when we go through it, we see how difficult it is.

Change itself is pain. Change is wonderful and beautiful, but change is also a big problem, full of pain. Changing from friend into enemy – a lot of your friends change into enemies – that is painful, that is a problem. Youth changes into aging, birth changes into death – change is painful, but we don't see it.

### **The second noble truth: the truth of the cause of suffering**

Each one of these pains is the result of delusions that we have. Because of the delusions we act in a way that will give a result of pain. These pains that we bear, we do not bear without any cause. So the Buddha's second noble truth is about the cause of pains. The cause is not created by somebody else somewhere, it is me, this person, who created this particular problem that I go through. Therefore it is me who has to work it out.

What are really the causes of pain and suffering? The causes are karma and delusions. Actually, the real cause is the delusions, nothing else. We talk about *karma*, we say karma is great, a very mysterious type of thing. That is the way we look at it. *Karma* is a Sanskrit word and we say, "Wow" and look at it in a romantic way. But it is not romantic or exotic. It is simply our life that we go through. And we create it! Karma runs all the time: when you do bad things you get bad results and you continuously, continuously go on, when you do good things you cut the negative forces down and there is no negative result.

Buddha's solution is to tell how to reverse the present situation. It cannot be reversed at the result level; it has to be done through the cause level. So he says, "Let us change the delusions and when you change the delusions, your life is going to change." That is what he understood and experienced.

### **The fourth noble truth: the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering**

The truth of the path is the truth of the practice, the practice of how to catch the cause of suffering. The truth of practice is the truth itself. Where do you find that truth? Within ourselves. Nothing outside. We have to look in, you'll find it within yourself.

*What is spiritual practice?* To improve ourselves, change our wrong behavior, switch the bad things we are used to over to good ways of doing and being. That is really what it boils down to. Spiritual practice is like a war, a war between good and bad, between negative and positive. Or: it is like gambling with a bet on yourself. Instead of the money, I am the stake of the gambling game! It is the negative forces and the positive forces in you that are fighting. When the negative forces gain power I will be influenced by them. So what to do? I have to win, I want to be good.

How do we win? By making the negative forces smaller and smaller. When the negative forces become smaller, you don't have the negative effect. And when you don't have the negative effect you become more and more positive. The positivity that you gain is your spiritual development.

The method is: first: learning, second: thinking, third: meditation, fourth: you win the war. So, the purpose of spiritual practice is *not* just to get a little harmony, not just to get a little peaceful mind, but to win the war against the negative forces, to improve the individual. Okay? That is what it really boils down to.

And we are not talking about five, ten, thirty or forty years of our life. We are talking about the many lives that we have passed through and the many lives that we have to go through. I am not talking about the period from birth till death. I am talking of life within the whole circle, with a number of deaths and a number of births in different varieties: as a human being, as a dog, as a pig, as a snake, as cockroach and as a little angel or small-g god. We have been born a number of times in each of these situations and we will continue to do so, unless we take care of ourselves. The taking care of ourselves is spiritual practice.

### **The third noble truth: the truth of cessation of suffering**

You develop the cessation by cutting the negativities. That cessation itself is the third truth. There are deeper meanings of course, but I am making it simple, on-the-ground work.

### **Practice: analytical and concentration meditation**

How do you work? Through meditation. Meditation is mind work, it is mental work. So, if you do not have any mental stability or concentration you can't do much. If you cannot concentrate you cannot

use your mind. In order to use the mind you have to be able to concentrate. So the *concentration* is one of the important parts, one half of meditation.

Then the question rises whether the concentration alone can do it. No it cannot, definitely. Concentration can give you a tremendous harmony, peace, pleasure and all this. However, it does not have enough power to cut through the delusions. What you need is *analytical meditation*. The combination of concentration and analysis is the perfect meditation one needs. What do you analyze? You need to work and analyze on a number of different points, subjects, ways to develop, varieties of methods, because a single method cannot work alone. One of the ancient Indian scholars and a saints, Chandra-kirti, has given an example:

When the bird wants to fly across the ocean, it needs two wings.

When an ordinary person like you and me wants to cut *samsara*, to fly over the sea of *samsara* and go across, we need *wisdom* and we need *method*. Wisdom and method are the real points we have to meditate on, both. First we have to analyze and find the point. And then you concentrate and gain development. That is how you work; this is what you do.

Another thing is try to remain pure, that is very important. *Be what you are* and try to move from here. A lot of people don't want to be what they are; they try to be somebody else. First, try to be what you are and then move from there. You can't move somewhere else unless you're here. You have to be what you are, recognize it, sit down, think and from there you begin to move. If you do not move, then things move by themselves and that is not necessarily favorable for us. Whether we do something or we don't do something, our life will go on. Better do something. Thank you so much. Shall we meditate a little bit and dedicate our virtues?

#### QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Be what you are.
- Review the Four Noble Truths in meditation, using your own words.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On the four noble truths:

Dalai Lama, *The Four Noble Truths*, pg. 74-93

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, pg. 33-43: The Four Noble Truths

Ch. Trungpa, *Spiritual Materialism*, pg. 151-166: The Four Noble Truths

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, pg. 129-134: The Four Noble Truths



## 16. DELUSIONS AND THE CIRCLE OF EXISTENCE DETERMINATION TO BE FREE

**Vs. 5**    *By constant meditation, your mind will not entertain  
A moment's wish even for the successes of life,  
And you will aim for freedom day and night,  
Then you experience transcendent renunciation.*

We have almost completed now the first principle, the *determination to be free*, i.e. *developing love for ourselves*. We have given various reasons why freedom is necessary. By nature samsara is not such a good thing, because in samsara everything brings unhappiness and dissatisfaction (Skt. *dukkha*) to our lives. When we look into our lives, into our way of thinking and the things happening to us, we get very often agitated, we get angry or unhappy.

Sometimes we are very low and sometimes we are too high and don't really know what is going on. When you look at it superficially, the low times look sad and the high times look happy, but it is our dualistic mind which is reading it that way. The high time is also not actually happy at all; by nature it is pain, because it is not everlasting, you'll lose it. The high times are actually not as great as we think they are, nor are the low times as bad as we make them out to be.

But when you look at all of this: why is it like that? It is because of dissatisfaction, especially the low times. We expect something out of our life, something for *me*, something for *my* benefit, something for *me* to enjoy, something for *me* to feel pleased with, something for *me* to feel proud of, something for *me* to be satisfied with. And when I don't get it, I am dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction takes me over and then I become extremely low, I become unhappy, unhappy, unhappy.

### OUR DELUDED MIND

*What is delusion?* All this is the activity of the *delusions*. What does delusion mean? A delusion is something that makes the mind rough. They have after-effects. When the delusions have passed through your mind they leave some kind of print on your mind, like a handprint. The print is this, either too extreme a high or too extreme a low. You cannot use your mind properly, you lose your control. That is the effect of what a delusion does to your mind. Because of the imprint of the delusion this result-activity develops. When the delusion goes through you, you may or may not recognize it at that point, but when these effects come on the body or on the mind, you certainly recognize that.

*How to handle that?* Recognize that it is not as bad as you made it out to be, recognize that it is not as great as you made it out to be, recognize that what passed through your mind is the result of delusion. Just recognizing alone will itself cut the power of the delusion down. It may not take you out of the low or high emotional state immediately, but it will definitely have a future effect on you. When you are flying try to tell yourself, "Hey, it is the result of my delusion." When you are crying, try to tell yourself, "Hey it is the result of my delusion." It may not help much immediately, but recognizing that

it is the effect of delusions and that it is not true reality happening of itself will cut down a lot of its power.

This sort of recognizing may not happen immediately. When you are angry or attached, have lust, or are running after something, you may not recognize it on the spot, but the moment you recognize it, it will slow down a little bit. It may happen a week later, it may happen a day later, it may happen an hour later, it may happen half an hour later or it may happen ten minutes later, still recognizing even then is very important.

Also the duration of the delusion will be cut down. If you are angry, the duration of the anger will become shorter. And if you are attached to somebody or have lust for something the duration will be shorter. When you do recognize it, then if the delusion normally remains an hour with you, it will remain 50 minutes, then 45 minutes, then 30 minutes, *etc.* And after some time, even before it comes up you will begin to recognize it. That is how you challenge the delusions. So, do this. The duty of a spiritual practitioner, the duty all of you have towards yourselves, is to challenge the delusions. And the first step is: *recognize* them

### **Delusions – karma -- suffering**

We are controlled by karma and delusions, as I told you earlier.<sup>23</sup> But the delusions actually have a greater effect on us than karma. Why? Even if you don't have a karma, a delusion will immediately create a karma and it will circle and create a result. That is how samsara works.

And I also told you: karma is nothing but the melodrama of your life.<sup>24</sup> That is exactly what it is. If you want to see what kind of karma you have, look back in your biography up to today. It is a great drama. When I look back on my own life from the time I can remember something it is a drama, a great drama that you could present in the Opera house. Each one of us has that. And of each one of us can look back and say, "Oh good, I did this" or, "Oh how shameful, I did this," or, "Oh, my God, how did I manage through this?" We all have all these sorts of things. It is how karma pushes you through, which is the clear sign that though we did the actions and created the karma, we have no control. If we had had control, we wouldn't need to say, "Oh, how could I have done this?" We wouldn't have to get embarrassed when looking back at our lives. This is how life functions. So each one of our karmas that result from our delusions, what do they produce? They produce some kind of pain and sadness.

If you look back into our lives up to today, no matter how old you may be, you may be ten or fifty years old, when you look back you find sadness and sorrow. Definitely. Think of the people that you knew who are not here anymore. "Oh so and so, yes, oh she died." Recall, look back. Everywhere there is something that has gone wrong. You didn't have a perfect past, very few have, everywhere something is missing. Even when you think you did something very successfully, look at who has contributed, who helped you, and see whether the person is still there or not. There is nothing you can find, really nothing, which does not have some element of sadness in it, is there?

So the conclusion is: life has sadness and sorrow and pain; pain of separation, pain of loneliness, pain of dissatisfaction, all of them are there.

You don't have to wonder whether I am telling you the truth or not. Give yourself half an hour in the evening today and look back. Go through your old memories; go through your old experiences. Look at all the faces that you have known; many of them are not here today. Look at the changes that have taken place in the environment, in your friends, in you, everywhere. This is the reason why Buddha insists:

Collections in the end disperse,  
Whatever rises must also fall.  
All meetings end in separation,  
The final end of life is death.

*Dhammapada*

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<sup>23</sup> See page 114.

<sup>24</sup> See page 88

In other words, as long as something is created, it is created for a sad conclusion. What is the result of anything that you collect together? Separation, exhaustion, finished. What is the result of birth? It is death. What is the result of companionship? Separation. It is the reality, the nature of our life is such: the end of company is separation, the end of birth is death, and whenever you are born you are born to die, nobody is born not to die. It is not the fault of me or any other person, it is the fault of the nature of our current existence we are caught in.

So the total blame is on the circle of existence, *samsara*. Because of the circle we are doing it and we are repeating it. Whatever we are doing today is not for the first time. We have done it a number of times and we will do it a number of times if we do not take care of it now.

Our most serious problem today is *attachment*, as I told you. Out of all delusions the attachment is the most difficult one to get out of. Attachment is like oil soaked into paper; it really soaks through us. Therefore our biggest problem in really determining to be free is attachment, our attachment to worldly pleasures. Some pleasures might not be pleasure but we project it as pleasure, we think it is pleasure and try to hold it, we would die for it. This is our problem. So again we have to recognize that we do this.

You hear a lot about being mindful. The true *mindfulness* is to *be aware of what your true situation is*, to be aware of your delusions. Mindfulness is not that you just sit there and watch and say, "I am watching," sit there and breathe and say, "I am breathing," walk and say, "I am walking." These are the training-step towards actual mindfulness. What you really actually have to watch are your delusions. What you have to be aware of are your delusions. Awareness is so important! Once you can do that, then it is not difficult to build the determination to be free. It will be just like when somebody is nauseated and wants to throw up: if you show that person all sort of food, different cakes and pies and steaks and fish, that will just make them want to throw up all the more.

Our deluded mind really thinks that our aim is to have a good life, meaning a comfortable life, with a house to live in, a car to drive and maybe even a plane to fly. Now watch your reaction. When I said "a house to live in, a car to drive," none of you paid attention, you just heard it. When I said "a plane to fly" you started laughing, because you think it is too much. If I tell this to a group of Asian people, "your own house to live in, a car to drive," they'll laugh there. This is how our mind works. We project something of that type as our aim, our achievement in life. Yes, it is true, you need a house to live in, you need a car to drive, I don't deny that, you can have it if you can afford it and you have to work to afford it. True. However, it is not an achievement for our life. It makes life so cheap. When I say "cheap" the American mind will definitely measure it in terms of money, right? I am not measuring in terms of money at all. The moment you measure happiness in terms of money, your life becomes cheap. Your life is worth so much more than money or gold, so much more.

So our dualistic, deluded mind produced wealth and health as aims or goals, some kind of achievement on a fingertip. Yet, no matter how wealthy you may be, how healthy you may be, when you have to die you have to die. So this is delusion again. Can you see it?

You need the necessities of life, that is true. You have to work for them, you have to use them, they are definitely necessary. But going beyond that is making yourself a slave. I do remember, when I was in Hong Kong giving a talk in the evening about this *samsara* and how attachment binds us here, a gentleman from the back said, "Rinpoche what should I do with my Rolls Royce?" My answer to him was, "As long as you are driving the Rolls Royce it is okay, but the moment the Rolls Royce starts driving you then you are in trouble." For a lot of people the Rolls Royce starts driving you, right? And this is how this whole circle has been produced. Particularly in America. In the East it is different; you don't buy something you can't afford. Here you buy even if you can't afford it, you just pay monthly, so the bills come up and you have to work more and drive yourself a little crazy. It really drives you. That is what is happening.

So, to recognize that is important, recognize that everything in this life that we consider as a great achievement is unsatisfactory in the end. Different people have different ideas. A lot of people desire wealth, others have only health as an aim, others want mainly a companion, *etc.* A thousand different

people will have a thousand different desires, aspirations, and achievements they are seeking. As long as that one does not bring pain to you, it is okay, but as it is based on the false presumption, it is trouble eventually. The moment you recognize that, then your determination to be free will come.

### **THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLE: DETERMINATION TO BE FREE**

The determination to be free is something that you have to work for, much more than for the ordinary life that we see. We have to look a bit beyond our ordinary life and see what we are aiming for, see what we aspire to. Some people will only have health as their determination, their aspiration is to be healthy. And that is also false, truly. I am sure a lot of you do not agree, say, "How can that be?" But health will go, the most healthy man dies, so it is the clear sign it is false aim. Again that does not mean you should not be healthy. Do not misunderstand.

The shortest conclusion, the strongest reason *why* we need to become free, is because we want happiness. If I want happiness, I should be free from all this. We know how important freedom is for Americans, but I don't think Americans are really fighting for true freedom; you are fighting for a false freedom (laughs). When you really fight for true freedom, this is what it is, freedom from being trapped in this sort of existence. The first step in moving towards that freedom is the determination to be free. That is what you need.

As long as you don't have this determination, you don't have any power or force to move you. "I don't care whatever happens, I'll just stay here and there, doesn't matter, I'm feeling pretty good." You may go on and on like that, because you don't recognize the situation you are in. I told you, some people who are in jail think it is great, because there is free food, free medical care, free shelter and nobody chases you for bills, so they never want to get out of jail, they think it is a nice place to be. Right? But when you are outside and you look at it you know that it is wrong. Similarly, when we are confused by the delusions, all these wrong thoughts, we think it is great here, wonderful, but in reality it is not.

### **Sign of having developed the determination to be free or love for yourself**

The fifth verse gives you the criterion for having gained the determination to be free. So, the sign that you have gained this is that you look at the samsaric or the worldly pleasures differently; you see them as different from the way we normally picture them.

Whether it is money or wealth or health or something else you long for, you have some beautiful picture built up, and you go for that. No matter whatever beautiful picture you have, the moment you see that it is not true happiness, and that it is the source of pain, you gain a bit of determination to be free.

When I say beautiful picture do not misunderstand. If you have a picture of true enlightenment or getting out of samsara, or of nirvana or something like that, it is a true picture, and is not actually a samsaric aspiration. But that is different from longing for a beautiful life, a comfortable life, a beautiful companion, an ideal companion, whatever. Some people build up a lot of different things, different castles in the air. The moment you realize it is a castle in the air then you are getting in good shape spiritually. As long as you don't realize it is a castle in the air, you have a big problem.

So this line tells you: the determination to be free is built when all samsaric, all worldly castles in the air, when you really look at them give you a feeling of disgust or distaste. That is the real sign. So you have to develop that in yourself. Okay? If you do this, we have established the first principle.

Why is that necessary? If we don't have that, all our attractions will be drawing us right and left, so we won't really have a strong mind to push through. Our attractions will go here and go there, so the mind will do this and will do that; doing all this we are going on a wild goose chase. That is what I saw on television. You chase the geese round and you gain nothing.

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:

- Did I gain a little determination to be free?
- On what?
- Where do I have to work most?

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On delusions:

Gelek Rinpoche, *Transforming Negativities into Positive Living*.

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, pg. 25-80: Working effectively with emotions

K. McDonald, *How to Meditate*, pg. 97-108: Dealing with negative energy

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, pg. 123-132: Mindfulness of Attitudes and Emotional States.

On circling in samsara: Mindfulness of Attitudes and Emotional States.

Denma Locho Rinpoche, *The Wheel of Life*

On the conclusion of the first principle:

Tsongkapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 88-90

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*, pg. 79-84



## **SECOND PRINCIPLE: ALTRUISM THE WISH TO ACHIEVE ENLIGHTENMENT FOR EVERY LIVING BEING**

### **17. WHY DEVELOP THE ALTRUISTIC ATTITUDE**

Vs. 6     *Transcendence without the spirit of enlightenment (bodhicitta)  
Cannot generate the supreme bliss  
Of unexcelled enlightenment; therefore,  
The Bodhisattva conceives the supreme spirit of enlightenment.*

If you have the determination to free yourself, will that be enough? No. Why? That would be enough for *me*; if I am only worried about myself, it is enough for *me*. But what about the people that I care about?

#### **Spiritual demands and society's demands**

Through great good fortune I have had the opportunity to realize how my delusions affect me, that my projections are wrong and I also have learned the skill how to be with them but not to be held by them. If you don't have the skill, you may go to extremes. You may go wild, "I don't care for anything in samsara! I'll shut my door and practice! I don't want to work! I'll go into the forest and meditate!" All this sort of thing. But after some time you have to come out of the forest and when you come out, the bill collectors are waiting for you! Right? So that won't do.

You have to develop the skill to handle both together, to be a good citizen living according to society's demands along with being a good spiritual person. You have to develop this skill. If you cannot be a good citizen according to the society's demands, is it possible for you to be a good spiritual person according to the spiritual community's demands? The answer is no. Why? That last one is much harder to handle than the first one. When you can't handle the easy thing, how can you handle the hard thing? That's common sense. You may say, "I don't want to have to deal with society's demands." Then what makes you think you'll be able to deal with the spiritual path? When you find something you don't want there, something you don't like, something that isn't so easy, you'll probably say, "Hey, I don't want that either!" Then you will be neither here nor there, so you will be nowhere.

I tell you this from my own experience. I have seen so many people go to extremes, and that is not good. Some people who would like to go into the spiritual field say, "Oh, this is the path I have to travel, wow!" And they are running around, "Once a week is not enough, I need twice a week; not enough, I want every day, six times a day!" and they run, run, run. And about a month or two or a year later they are a little bit slowed down and gone, "Well, I did that and nothing happened." I tell them, "Actually you did nothing. You did nothing because even if you put hours a day in the spiritual field, out of the whole of our life together, you have really put in almost nothing, because we waste our time."

We waste a tremendous amount of time. You know that, don't you? No matter how busy you may claim to be, you always find time to gossip, you always find time to do the things you want to do.

And the person who claims to be the most busy person, you see out and about everywhere anyway. That is a clear sign we don't put our energy in the spiritual field properly. If I add up all the time that I have put into the spiritual field since childhood, since the age of four, it is five years maybe. That is it, so never enough.

Being too much driven is not good and if I tell you, "Too much driven-ness is not good, you have to slow down," too much slowing down is also not good because you'll fade away completely. Your efforts have to be constant, not too strong and not too slow, a very smooth continuation. Keep doing whatever you are doing in your life, go on and put time into your spiritual path constantly and consistently. If you put in half an hour, put in half an hour every day. Sometimes you can put two hours, that is fine, okay, but try to put in that *half an hour everyday*. Putting three hours today and forgetting tomorrow doesn't work. Why? Then the continuation is cut, so you'll lose the touch, you'll lose what you were building up.

If you are saying the *Ganden Lha Gyema*<sup>25</sup> or short Odyssey prayers<sup>26</sup> in your house and meditating on it, you have to do it every day. That helps, that is remaining in touch, that builds up. If you say the *Food offering*<sup>27</sup> before you eat, you build up. It is very simple, but when you keep on making those offerings day by day – you eat every day, right? – how much you build up!

If you take an empty bucket and put a drop of water into it everyday, one day it will be filled up, unless it has a hole. That is how you move in the spiritual field. Too strong a drive is not good. Too small a drive is also not good, so you have to be very, very careful. Okay?

### **The person I care about the most**

Now let us presume that this determination to be free has been built. When you meditate on the things I have told you, you *will* get it, you will definitely get it. Why not? And when you get it, you'll start to think, "That is good enough for *me*, but what about the person that I care about the most?"

When you try to build up love and compassion for *all* sentient beings at once, the way we traditionally say it in the initial meditation-period, "I am surrounded by all sentient beings.....," it doesn't have that much feeling-effect. In the real deep bottom of your heart you don't feel that much. What we produce is like watching television. It doesn't give us any pain here; we don't feel it in our hearts.

If you say, "I am going to be okay, but what about the person I care about the most?" you get a pinch in your heart. That is how you develop love and compassion for others, "If I can walk away and be free that is fine, but what about the person I care about the most? What about her? What about him? Oh no, I can't go away by myself, I have to bring her or him. But then what about the other hims and hers?"

You have to develop it like that. Ultimately, you find that there is nobody you can throw away; everyone is somehow connected to you at some time or another. This is how you develop love and compassion for all other sentient beings, for all other people. Just by saying the words with your mouth, no. Just by reading books, no. Just by praying to Buddha, no. Only when it pinches at your heart does it work. The best way to pinch your heart is to think about the person you care for most at that moment. That will pinch your heart. That is one of the ways in which attachment can be used for a better purpose.

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<sup>25</sup> See page 178.

<sup>26</sup> See Gelek Rinpoche, *Odyssey to Freedom*.

<sup>27</sup> *Food offering*:

OM AH HUNG OM AH HUNG OM AH HUNG

I and my circle, throughout all of our lives,

May we never be separated from the Three Precious Jewels.

By continuously making offerings to the Three Precious Jewels,

May their blessings be obtained.

Buddha, the peerless Master,

Dharma, the peerless Protector,

Sangha, the peerless Helper,

We make these offerings to the three Precious Protectors.

OM AH HUNG OM AH HUNG OM AH HUNG

We can say words about love-compassion, helping all sentient beings, *etc.*, but talk is talk, it doesn't affect us. Simply to say, "Love-compassion for all sentient beings..... blah blah blah" doesn't necessarily mean anything. Even a parrot can say that. If you have very good nuts or crackers, go and tell the parrot "Love and compassion for all sentient beings," and if he says it, you give him nuts, and if he doesn't say it you don't give nuts, then after some time the moment the parrot sees you or the nuts, he'll say, "Love and compassion for all sentient beings."

We are human beings, we need something different from parrot-behavior. We want to build love and compassion for all others. Who doesn't want love and compassion for others? Everybody here in this room will want to give love and compassion and be of service to others, to help others. For every one of you, helping is the inspiration and motivation, for everybody. Who doesn't have it? If there is somebody here raise your hand (laughs) I can raise it - two of us, good. You may have that not wanting sometimes, but some other times you want it; so you do actually want it, you know. I don't think there is anybody who has that desire all the time, again. Again, if you raise hands for wanting to help all the time, there won't be hands up, because our mind is not developed, that is why. Yet we do have the desire for love, compassion and helping others, at least from time to time.

This tradition of Buddhism is really great for developing love and compassion. The first thing to develop it is the pinch in your heart. It has to be from your heart, not by words alone, not by thinking alone, as I said before.

So first the question is raised, "Who is the most important in my heart?" And you say, "What about that one?" This is the key, the doorway where you start. The moment we think with our ordinary mind, "All sentient beings fill up the whole ground, all enlightened beings fill the whole space..." it becomes superficial. The superficial way of doing it will not give us a result. The heart-pinching doorway to compassion is the person you care for most deeply.

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on care**

I would like you to meditate. Now we can meditate in the positive way, okay?

The positive way to meditate is: *Do I care for myself?* Think. You will say, "I do care for myself." If you don't care for yourself you wouldn't be here.

Even people who commit suicide also care for themselves; that is why they commit suicide. If they didn't care for themselves they wouldn't do it. The delusion thinks suicide will end the problems; that is why they do it. So, there is not a single human being who will not care for him- or herself.

Please think and meditate: *How do I care for myself?* Am I doing the right thing for myself or not? Am I aiming for true happiness?

There is not a single human being who doesn't want happiness. There is not a single living being who doesn't want happiness. We in our room are seeking happiness, the ants under the tree are seeking happiness, the cockroach running in the kitchen is seeking happiness, the fish in the water are seeking happiness, the birds in the air are seeking happiness. There is nobody who is not seeking happiness. But are we seeking it in the right direction? Am I seeking happiness in the right direction?

These two points are very important and very easy. You can definitely draw a strong conclusion, "I care for myself" and, "I seek happiness." You can easily draw that conclusion, there is no problem, but you have to put in a little effort thinking about it.

Once you are able to draw that conclusion, you meditate and *concentrate* on that, remind yourself, "I care for myself!" Try to gain the realization of, "I care about myself." Try to gain the realization of, "I seek happiness for myself."

If you still have time then you raise the question: *What about the person I care about the most?*

Next time we are going to move onto: how to develop love and compassion. But in order to move onto that, *please meditate on this every day!* Thank you.



### **Expand your scope**

Today we begin to actually work to develop love and compassion. Therefore we should have a good motivation. Up to now in this book our motivation always has been limited to our own liberation. From today onwards we should have an unlimited motivation including every living being.

*Did you gain a little different view on life?* In the text we are at verse six. Up to now we tried to develop a determination to be free. We gave various reasons why we are not free, why we have problems and also we tried to remind people to recognize that you are not free. With everything we have talked about ourselves. If you remember correctly, we did mention our life, the pains, miseries, problems, joys, happinesses; we talked about the whole melodrama of life.

Therefore you are now supposed to have a little different view on life. When you look at your problems, when you start to get angry, can you find any difference in your outlook on life or not? You are the best judge, I cannot judge for you. I can simply talk to you. My way of getting it to you is only talking and communicating to you and trying to influence your thoughts. I cannot enter into your body and *do* anything. Right? That is my limit. So we have done this.

What I expect as effect on you is at least a slightly different way of looking at your life. When you are happy, slightly different; when you are miserable, all these emotional problems coming up, also a slight difference. There should be a slight difference between before and now.

We have been talking about your emotional problems. These are the results of the delusions. What I expect from you is a different acknowledgment when those things come up in you. When you have a different acknowledgment you handle it a different way. There should be at least a slight difference between before and after. Even if you cannot handle it at the time it is coming up, even if you cannot handle it at the time it is there, when it is gone you should acknowledge it. Then, at a later time, the acknowledgment should be during the time that it is there and then, next time, before it comes up. That is how you improve the quality of your life. So I hope it has had a little effect on you. You know best, I don't know what is going on in your head.

*The 'Big Boss' inside.* When I look at myself, all these things make me to build a determination to be free, to make myself free, because I see I have been tied and trapped, first by *karma* – or whatever you call it – and secondly by *samsara*, the circle of life. One life-experience after another is constantly going on, running without any control like a huge current or river stream going with the wind blowing and pushing the water up in one direction. With whatever happens in our life, this force continues. That is all because we have no control. We are not free yet and that is our problem. So we should acknowledge that.

Sometimes we think we are acknowledging it but at the same time we put ourselves under the control of attachment in the form of a belief, in the form of a savior, companions, security, all sorts of pictures. It is like thousand different slides come up and project different things. We put ourselves more and more under that control and then when we calculate it at the end, the total sum will show, "It is because I want something, I am not satisfied." It totally builds up, no matter how much people may say, "It is not for me, it is for this and that." You know, we bring up a hundred different excuses, but when you put the final conclusions together as the grand figure at the end of the budget sheet you really will see, "I am not satisfied, because I want this, I am not satisfied, because I wanted that but she didn't want it, so I cannot have it blah blah blah."

And that creates emotional problems, right? You cry, you fight, you do all sorts of things. For what? To fulfill my own satisfaction, what else? You may say, "It is for him or for her," but the moment it comes to the point, it is actually for *me*. I am not happy, that is why this is going on. So the real enemy, the real killer of my happiness, is the enemy that is inside me. It is the inside *me* which I hold as the supreme *I* or *me*. And that person is not happy. And when that person is not happy I get affected, because he or she is my dictator and the supreme *me*. That supreme *me* is my big boss and when my boss is not happy I am not happy, because my boss gives me trouble.

Can that boss be happy at all? No! That boss has unlimited desire, that boss has unlimited anger and that boss has unlimited pride. Pride is another one we must not forget. So this boss has unlimited pride, unlimited desire, is very hard to satisfy. No matter what happens it will not be satisfied. It'll say, "Good, *but* it should be blah, blah." No matter whatever worldly gain we get, our desires are so strong that no matter whatever happens, we are never satisfied. If I win the Nobel prize today, will I be happy? That would not satisfy me. The boss inside will be happy, but will say, "*But* it should have been two years before," or, "It should have been something else." There is a *but* there, which is a clear indication there is unlimited desire inside. If you have nothing you will think nothing to desire, but if you have something you want more. If you win the lottery today, your boss will be happy, right? But he definitely will have a "but". He will not be satisfied, he will want to win another lottery, too or get the money all at once, which is a clear indication there is an unlimited desire.

As long as we have that big boss inside, it is very hard to get balanced. That one very easily pushes us to the extreme of dissatisfaction, to a high or low state, to emotional problems, even to the extent of mental disability or to the extreme of committing suicide. It is only my boss inside me who is not happy; that is why I have these problems. When your boss is not satisfied, you do all sorts of things in order to try to satisfy him and as a result you get unhappiness. This is my situation, so therefore I must get free from that. Who doesn't want to be free from that? Anyone? I don't believe so, I certainly hope not! So that is the strong reason why the determination to be free has to be build up.

### Love-compassion

"Determination to be free is my part, but what about the others? What about the person I care about the most?" I raised this question last week. Have you thought about it? Have you drawn any conclusions? Hopefully you did. Your conclusion has to be, unless you are crazy, "I cannot walk out with satisfaction for myself alone, saying, 'I am okay, bye'. I can't go away, because of the person I care about. I have to do something!"

Isn't that an indication of caring? Otherwise when you say, "I care for you, I love you, I do this, I do that," it is a total lie. When you care for someone you have to do something. If you don't want to do anything, it is a clear sign you don't care. Right or wrong? I hope I am right. If you care for somebody you want to do something to help them. Here we say we care for everybody, so we have to do something for everybody. Right or wrong? How can I do something for everybody, when I can't do anything for myself? An old Indian story says:

Where could I possibly find enough leather  
With which to cover the surface of the earth?  
But wearing leather just on the soles of my shoes  
Is equivalent to covering the earth with it.

Shantideva's *The bodhisattva's way of life*. ch.5 vs.13

We need a simple method which should be able to be effective for everybody. We cannot go and just do things; there are billions of sentient beings and most of them have one or another problem. There are no problem-free people. It is nature. We have to find a simple method which can cover everybody. What is that simple method? Developing an *altruistic attitude that aspires to enlightenment for their sake*: caring for others, dedicating yourself to the service of others, helping others, all sentient beings.

Now the question rises: How can I develop that? Can I look at everybody as a one-blanket type of thing? It depends on the individual. If you can, great! Do not pretend you can if you cannot; you will be the loser at the end. Here you have to ask yourself. "Can I look at everybody equally?" No, mostly not.

Somebody I will see as distant or terrible or bad. Somebody I see as close, wonderful, precious. For some, I feel, “Oh I couldn’t care less.”

One most important thing I have to tell you here. *If you do not have bodhimind, which we are here calling an altruistic mind, all the good work you do will never be a cause for enlightenment, never.* It will always be at best a cause for obtaining the arhat-level or nirvana, *i.e.* to be out of samsara, to be free. It never goes as the cause of enlightenment, as a cause of becoming a buddha, because it is the power of the mind that you have which determines the result. Every virtue, every good work here, that is done with the mind of a bodhisattva, even giving a little piece of food to a bird, will be a direct cause for enlightenment; this *is* the altruistic mind. Without that, anything whatsoever that you do will be limited as a spiritual path. For other purposes, yes, sure it works, but not to become an enlightened being. To become an enlightened being, to get ultimate development, you *have* to have this specific cause.

Some teachings, which don’t introduce you to ultimate buddhahood as a result, will not talk about the altruistic mind, because it is not necessary at that level where becoming an arhat or being free from suffering is the goal. However, that is not the ultimate goal. Even if you have obtained the arhat-level, free from samsara, you cannot remain there for a very long time, for a couple of eons at the most. When that time has passed, some sort of notice will come to you and you have to move.

Even the most selfish human beings after some time have to become a little unselfish. People are made to, because the whole environment moves people that way. It is similar here for spiritually developed persons who go in the selfish way of “I am going to be free myself and I couldn’t care less for others.” I mentioned earlier that I hoped that was not your decision. If you make the decision, “I couldn’t care less for others, I am just going to go and walk away myself,” and you become an arhat, after a couple of eons or years or centuries you will be notified by the other enlightened beings, “Hey, you are selfish,” and then you have to move.

Therefore it is recommended from the beginning, from our level here, to develop love-compassion, the altruistic attitude, rather than just seeking nirvana for myself alone. If you have that, then even saying OM MANI PADME HUM once or you even just saying OM alone will go as a cause for enlightenment; it will not be wasted.

So this is one of the most beneficial actions one can do for oneself, though we say it is for others. This is a very, very important point. There are also a lot of other benefits; if you want to know what they are, please read the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* chapter 1, with the commentary<sup>28</sup>. It is not compulsory, you know, but helpful to know the benefits.

### **Practice: nearness and distance**

Let me give you something to meditate on. Just now, when you watch your mind you have your closest and dearest only, those touching your heart. And when you look at somebody else, “O I hate him or her, grr,” or something. So you see people as good and bad, almost in black and white terms. When you watch your mind, you’ll see that, definitely. We say friend and enemy and so forth. Most of us may not have an actual enemy, however, there are always irritating people, those who always bothering us. Even if you think you don’t have any enemies, somebody irritating is there all the time. So see the difference in your mind when you think about them, and when you think about someone dear to you.

Care and hate will also change around from time to time. It is very funny when you keep on watching your mind. Someone you care about the most, you also hate the most sometimes. And sometimes the one you hate the most switches into the one you care for the most. You watch what is at the moment in your mind, what balance. Picture it. When you picture the one you care for, watch your mind: you smile, you are happy. When you raise in your mind the irritating person, watch your mind; the mind will acknowledge being irritated and all this. That is what I call: black and white. When you have that much black and white within the persons you associate with, how are you going to think of all living beings with equal love and compassion? Don’t you think that’s a little bit crazy?

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<sup>28</sup> Gelek Rinpoche, *Shantideva’s Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*, chapter 1

We have to work it out here, on this level. Why is this so much black? Why is this so much white? Again the ultimate answer is: my boss is not happy. It will come back to, "I am not happy with this one because this one has: abcdefg...tatatatata." And the moment you will start running the "tatata," all these 'reasons' will run continuously, there are a hundred and one things to say, all of them again because *I* am not satisfied. And when you look at this beautiful 'white' smiling one you are happy. Look at your mind, you are smiling. Why? That person fulfills my boss' desire; that is the simple reason.

If that is not my dualistic mind, what is? It is simply my projection that paints the one poor fellow black and the other one white. I am the one perceiving in that manner; it is actually my problem. To know that, to recognize that however is very difficult. So you have to go on and meditate and think. Think to the extent that you start to worry.

1. I hope that from the last week's thinking you will have drawn a conclusion: *If I do care I should do something.*
2. Now this time you work on: *If I am going to do something, I have this problem of nearness and distance; how I am going to handle that?* This is your subject.

### **A short guided meditation on the four immeasurables**

Do kindly relax.

Throw unwanted energies or unwanted air out of the body.

Just let it go each time you breathe out.

Relax totally.

1

Bring your Supreme Field of Merit to your crown and concentrate for a little while.

Now bring your Supreme Field of Merit down in light-form:

from your crown, through your head, it lands straightway at your heart level.

It blesses your heart.

Your heart becomes full of love, compassion.

The light starts radiating from the center of your heart.

It is in the nature of love and in the form of light.

The light completely fills up your body from crown to toe.

As the light fills up your body you are also filled with compassion and joy.

2

The light radiates from your body, fills up the room with light of love and compassion.

It fills up the town, the country, multiplies, fills the whole universe, goes beyond this universe,

fills up the multi-galaxies.

The moment the light touches all these areas, it purifies all the faults of the universes and the moment it reaches the inhabitants, the living beings, it purifies all their non-virtues, solves their problems, sufferings and pains and all become happy and joyful.

Every sentient being everywhere has been touched by the light from my heart and just by the touch of the light all their bad karmas are purified.

Their bodies are filled with *joy*, their minds become pure.

They remain in great *equanimity*.

All remain in *happiness*.

All living beings are *without any pains and miseries*.  
All are happy.

3

Your light has completed its work.

Now the light gradually dissolves back from all universes to this universe, to this country, this area, this house.

Finally it dissolves into your body and from all parts of the body into the heart-level.

It remains in your heart, in your pure nature of mind, your buddha-nature, the nature of love, the nature of compassion, in the form of light.

This light at your heart level remains there as a cause of buddhahood, as a cause of spiritual development, of happiness.

It always remains.

Last time I suggested that you meditate on equanimity. I have to presume you did it. Okay? Otherwise I cannot go beyond it. Equanimity is so important because we have to talk about the great altruistic mind. If you want to say it the romantic way, it is *bodhicitta*, bodhimind, the mind of a bodhisattva, or the awakening mind. *Bodhicitta* is a Sanskrit word and that sounds a little more romantic than the usual English, but you can call it the altruistic attitude.<sup>29</sup>

#### **HOW THE ALTRUISTIC ATTITUDE IS BENEFICIAL**

Altruism in this sense is very, very important! It is really one of the major, most important practices that one can do, because it is so beneficial. I suggest that you read the first chapter of Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. I hope some of you read it and understand what it is talking about. To make it short, I am not going into the fancy benefits like "from now on you will be called a child of the buddhas," and so forth, but what I like to say here is:

If you stir the milk butter arises  
Likewise, if you stir the teachings  
its essence, bodhimind, arises.

Shantideva, *The Bodhisattva's way of life*, ch. 3 vs. 32

The Buddhist practices are like an ocean of milk; when you stir the milk properly you really get the essence out of it, the butter. This bodhimind or altruistic-attitude practice is like the butter from a huge amount of milk. It is the real essence of the practice. One reason is because altruism is one of the best methods to purify any bad karma.

Like entrusting myself to a brave man when greatly afraid  
By entrusting myself to this (Awakening Mind) I shall be swiftly liberated  
Even if I have committed extremely unbearable wrongs.  
Why do the conscientious not devote themselves to this?

Shantideva, *The Bodhisattva's way of life*, ch. 1 vs. 13

The bodhisattva mind can destroy all strong bad karmas that you created for years and years, lives and lives, that cannot be destroyed by any other powerful antidote. No other virtue can really overpower non-virtues as much as this one does. That is one of the strong benefits. Another one is:

The moment an awakening mind arises  
In those fettered and weak in the jail of cyclic existence,  
They will be named a Child of the Sugatas  
And they will be revered by both men and gods of the world.

Shantideva, *The Bodhisattva's way of life*, ch. 1 vs. 9

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<sup>29</sup> The attitude of aspiring to become fully enlightened to benefit others.

Whoever develops this bodhimind, whether in a human or even an animal body, is a person who is worthy of respect and prostrations even by great worldly gods like Indra and Brahma.

Ultimately, the most important reason for developing this mind is that *this* is the way to the total awakened state. It is the bodhisattva way. That is why they call someone who has it a child of the buddhas. That person is categorized in the caste or family of the buddha.

So this puts it very clearly that the buddha state or the awakened state is something that you can obtain. How? Through the way of the bodhisattva. That is why bodhimind is called: the gateway to enter Mahayana practice. I am talking from the Mahayana viewpoint, okay? It is the gate through which you enter the direct path to the awakening state. This is another reason why the altruistic attitude or bodhimind is important.

The Theravadin or *Hinayana*, the way of individual liberation, is an excellent tradition, which you *have* to follow to a certain extent in order to develop *bodhicitta*, but that tradition takes the *arhat*-level as its ultimate achievement: the level where you go beyond *samsara*. In that tradition, nobody suggests that you can become a buddha. So what have we been doing up to this point? We have been practicing, looking into the most important teachings that are pre-*Mahayana*: the *Theravada* essence of the determination to be free, self-discipline and overpowering the delusions. Up until now, we have been talking about all of this. It is the prerequisite for this altruistic attitude or bodhimind.

### **How altruism relates to me**

How does *bodhicitta*, the awakening state, affect me? How do I relate to this? What happens to me? This is an important issue we have to deal with. We all somehow seem to know or take for granted that love-compassion is something great. With or without thinking we acknowledge: love is great, compassion is wonderful. Why? That question you have to ask yourself. Why is love important? Why is it wonderful? Why is compassion important? It seems to me that people just accept that love-compassion is great; they buy that straightway. I am not saying that is wrong. It is great that you are buying it, but I do not know why you are buying it. You have to ask yourself the reason. Why is it important?

Some will come out with the answer, “I am sure, because I *feel* it is the right thing to do.” That is not a good reason. Murderers will think, “This is the right thing for me to do, so I kill.” “I feel it is good to do,” is not a good enough reason. “I feel it is great,” is not good enough. We have to find something more than what I felt about it or what my intuition told me or what so and so told me or what the book has written about it. Those reasons are not relevant to me.

What reason is relevant to me? I am sure if you think properly you can get an answer, “Because if somebody loves me I like it, if somebody hates me I don’t like it.” That is very simple. If somebody loves me I like it, if somebody hates me I don’t like it. Right or wrong?

For others, it is exactly the same. Shift yourself from this position to that position and say, “Like me, every living creature, every creature that exists likes being loved by somebody; everybody hates being hated by somebody.” Does that make sense? It is more than what I just felt as the right thing to do. I actually know this by experience and so does every other person. Everybody wants the same thing; it is a sort of unanimous. That is why it is great.

It is easy for me to develop love for this or that person, but it is not easy for me to develop love for everybody. From the mouth we can say, “I love everybody,” but that doesn’t mean that from the bottom of my heart I love them. A lot of people will say, “Yeah, I love everybody!” but in reality you may love only yourself. In addition to that: you may love someone too much and someone else you may not love at all. That is another problem we have. That shows we don’t have equanimity towards different people.

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on equanimity**

Visualize all human beings in front of you, then look at each person’s face and watch your mind. You look with your mind’s eye and you watch your reaction. The reactions you’ll get

are: love, hate, and couldn't care less. You get either loving too much, or hating too much, or "So and so, what do I care, good-bye!" These three are our reactions: this is our attitude.

We will have to change that attitude: in order to develop what we call great love and great compassion we need equanimity. Equanimity towards all sentient beings is a very big thing.

Let's have a close look at people nearest and dearest to us. Just focus on them. Watch it. We will have a lot of tremendously rough energy on this.

Now you debate with yourself. Why do I love this one so much? How did this other person do something wrong? Who is this unknown person? What is the difference between my friend and my enemy, the person I feel happy with and the one who irritates me?

Use all your background of development, experience or education or at least the information that you had before on impermanence and changing; bring it all back before your mind and try to materialize it here again. See how it affects you. This is analytical meditation. In that we always debate with ourselves.

In true reality there is no enemy and there is no friend. There is no absolute friend, there is no absolute enemy, because enemies change, friends change. There is no one who remains an enemy forever. No friend remains a friend forever. A very close friend of a few years before will become the strongest enemy today. If they hadn't been a strong friend, they can never be a big enemy.

How do people become your enemy? You have something secret you share with them, they know how to take advantage of it and then you are hurt. You expect too much and you don't get it, so you are hurt. You see a person as so-called enemy because hate comes up. Right? The hate now will not develop unless you had dealings with that person. How could there be hate otherwise?

If a wild man just goes round and starts shooting and you get wounded, you are not going to hate him that much. You'll say, "That is a crazy man and he shot me." That is all. But when some friend turns out not to like you and comes and tries to hurt you, then that person really becomes an enemy. So the friend can become an enemy. Likewise, an enemy can become a very close friend later.

There is no permanent friend or permanent enemy. My delusions or my dualistic mind influences my perception. I perceive someone as enemy or friend because of temporary reasons alone. These temporary reasons are shaky, not strong enough to solidly stand. When a reason is shaky, I cannot rely on it.

These are some suggestions for arguments that you can have with yourself. From now on upwards you have to have a strong dialogue between you and yourself within you, between you and your opponent; then you develop. That is the real analytical meditation. When you realize that the reasons you are giving are really shaky, then it shakes you a little bit and it gives you a little hope of seeing what equanimity is and moving towards it.

### **Why bodhicitta or the altruistic attitude is so important**

Fortunately or unfortunately, this is a very important path one has to go through. The bodhisattva path is the *most* important in this development. People may think, "Well, I can do a *Vajrayana* practice, a *tantric* practice, which is an instant practice and then I don't have to bother about this." No way! I have to say here, "No way, Jose!" Really, no way.

Once, in a dialogue between Buddha Vajradhara<sup>30</sup>, Vajrapani<sup>31</sup> and Manjushri<sup>32</sup> that question was raised. Buddha Vajradhara asked Vajrapani, “To whom can you show the great mandala, which is the profound, secret, deep, effective and quick path?” Manjushri intervened and said, “It can only be shown to those who have developed perfect bodhimind.” Vajrapani went on and said, “To those who have not developed that, it cannot be shown and it cannot be talked about.” One of them said, “Why?” He said, “Because it will work in the reverse way. Instead of helping them go forward, it can push the person backward badly; it can go terribly backward and then it becomes very, very hard to bring the practitioner up again, to help him.”

From the beginning, you need bodhimind. The *Vajrayana* door is totally locked if you don't have this. The simple reason is that, without bodhimind, no bodhisattva-mind influence, any *Vajrayana* practice like using the channels and collecting energy in the central channel will give you the physical and mental effects, but it will not give you spiritual development at all! You may become almost like a helium balloon – that is the example given. These exercises of air and energy can make you get filled up with air and be lifted up, which means you can levitate. You may levitate, but spiritually you have not developed at all. You may mentally build up stability, but spiritually you don't develop at all.

That is why this bodhicitta is the key. It is really the doorway to get in, the key to Mahayana spiritual development. If you have the influence of bodhimind, then even if you just sit for a minute and say this OM MANI PADME HUM half concentrated and half not-concentrated, half looking right and half looking left, half correct and half not-correct, it doesn't matter, even then it becomes a perfect cause for the development of a perfect awakened state of mind. It is because of the influence of *bodhicitta*. This is the doorway; there is no other door if you are following the Mahayana path.

Another question will rise. Some people may say, “Well, the most important thing is wisdom and I want to develop wisdom. I want to see the true nature of reality, and that is enough. I couldn't care less about bodhimind.” Some people say, “What I need is wisdom, great wisdom. I want to know the nature of phenomena, that is all I need. Why should I bother about this *bodhicitta* business?”

In that discussion I mentioned earlier, Buddha Vajradhara gave the answer for that. He said, “If you want a baby you need a father as well as a mother. You can't have a baby without having a father. The true wisdom, true understanding will act like a mother: it gives birth – as a matter of fact, great wisdom is called the great mother – and *bodhicitta* will act like a father. Therefore, to develop the awakened buddha state within you it is absolutely necessary to have both wisdom and the altruistic attitude.” Chandrakirti gave this example:

If a bird has to fly across the ocean it needs two wings to fly.

Not only that. In Maitreya's *Abhisamaya-alamkara* you find something very interesting:

In order to reach the awakened state you have to be away  
not only from *samsara* but also from *nirvana*.

This is very strange, right? Until now you have been told that nirvana is absolutely great and that *samsara* is the bad one. Now here they tell you that nirvana is also not so great, that you have to get away from it.

What makes you escape from *samsara* is wisdom; what makes you escape from *nirvana* is *bodhicitta*, the bodhisattva mind. Why? Nirvana is so totally happy and joyful, no pains, no problems, I am totally okay, and so I can just shut the door and be fine by myself. But this *bodhicitta*, this mind of compassion and love, makes you open the door and do whatever you can to help others. It pushes you out, and that is how you are even made to move from nirvana (if you decided to seek that attainment in the first place).

So the awakened state of a buddha is not only away from *samsara* but also away from the peaceful nirvana state. Because you care for others, you have to move and act; you can't sit there or lie on

<sup>30</sup> The Vajrayana form of the Buddha, Tib. *Dorje Chang*.

<sup>31</sup> The embodiment of power. Tib. *Chagna Dorje*

<sup>32</sup> The embodiment of wisdom, Tib. *Jampelyang*

your bed all the time. Whether you get two hours sleep or three or six or seven or a million eons, you have to get away, because buddhahood is the awakened state and not the sleeping state.

Maitreya, the Buddha of love,<sup>33</sup> describes even a broken, totally improper, imperfect, copycat bodhisattva activity as a damaged diamond ornament. Even a damaged diamond ornament is much more valuable than any other ordinary ornament or jewelry. No matter how bad it may be, it is still a diamond. Likewise a copycat of a bodhisattva is considered more important and valuable to all living beings than a perfect arhat. That is what Maitreya said. Being an arhat is no joke, it is a very great achievement, but a copycat of a bodhisattva is considered more important, because Bodhisattvas care and love for others. Not just for A, B, C, but for everyone from A to Z. That makes the difference. Many are capable of caring and loving A or B or A, B and C, but it is very difficult to do it from A to Z. That makes the difference. Get it?

### **Compassion and great compassion**

Now the next question rises: what is compassion? Before we talk about great compassion, what is compassion? That is very important. If we don't know what compassion is, we cannot talk about it or try to develop it.

If you remember, in the meditation we did at the beginning I introduced to you: wishing everybody, including yourself, to have happiness and wishing everybody to be separated from all pains and miseries. If I had a little more time I could have talked about it more in detail, in a sort of dramatized way, but since there isn't time, I am going to make it short, and give you the essence.

Pay attention and listen carefully: compassion is nothing more than wishing separation from pain. My compassion towards myself is: I want to be separated from the pains that hurt me. I don't want to get sick, I want to be well. I don't want to have any suffering, whether physical or mental. Mental pains are harder to bear than physical pains as we all know. So wishing to be separated from pain is a short sentence, but it has a perfect meaning. "I myself wish to get away from the pain, to be free from suffering." Similarly, we can understand compassion for the others, A, B and C. Now when you talk about *great* compassion it is for everyone, A to Z; you have the same feeling for, the same caring, the same love for every living creature. You have the same wish that they be separated from their suffering, from anything which causes pain to them, physically, mentally, or spiritually. That is great compassion.

The other way round, wishing them well, wanting them to be happy, is love. Love-compassion is like one piece of paper, turned this way or that way. One side is the desire for someone to be happy and the other is the desire for them to be separated from pains. I have tried to make it short and simple in one sentence. This is really the essence of it.

When you try to look in that way towards everybody, it becomes very difficult. Think about how hard it is to feel that even for three people, even in our head. Looking at all creatures in that way is even much harder.

Love and compassion make all non-virtues stop, totally and automatically. How? Because when you care so much, how can you kill any creature? How can you lie to anybody, how can you cheat anybody when you care for the person? You are not going to lie to a person you care about, you are not going to cheat a person you care about. So it makes all non-virtuous acts stop automatically.

Great compassion is the root of *bodhicitta* or bodhimind. *Bodhicitta* has to grow out of great compassion. When we talk about caring equally for all sentient beings just now, we are talking over our heads; that's one hundred percent sure. Very few people can relate to that at all. It may be okay if you can say all human beings. People can at least relate to that. But when you talk about all creatures, it is very hard and over our heads. Actually, even all human beings is very hard.

There was a great yogi in Tibet, a great spiritually developed person, who belonged to a group of monks of a monastery and their neighbor monastery was Zhedhe. Both monasteries were in the northern part of Lhasa, almost within the city. This yogi always shouted, "I take refuge to Buddha, I take refuge to Dharma, I take refuge to all the Sanghas except to the monks of Muru Zhedhe!"

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<sup>33</sup> Tibetan *Jampa*. He is the next official Buddha of this eon.

This has become the example. You cannot have love and compassion towards every sentient being except A, B and C. It is very easy to say, “Yes I love everybody.” But, “What about so and so?” “Ah wait a minute, that is something different, that is a different story altogether.” So that becomes “except Muru Zhedhe.” Except this and that won’t work; there is no room for that in great compassion. So we have to work within ourselves until we make no exceptions.

So, great compassion is more than compassion. Compassion can be individualized but great compassion cannot be compartmentalized at all; it has to be equal towards all living creatures, towards every creature that has a soul or buddha nature, from human beings to pigs and cockroaches. I purposely did not mention cats and dogs because people often love them; nobody seems to love pigs and cockroaches, so I use them as an example, okay? That is great compassion.

In order to develop that, at first forget about trying to have compassion towards all other creatures totally, because we would be talking about something we simply cannot do. So leave all other creatures out, just start with all human beings.

How do we work to develop this compassion and bodhimind? Through equanimity and the seven stages of development of bodhicitta.<sup>34</sup>

### **Importance of great compassion at the beginning, in between and at the end**

The seven stages method for developing bodhimind goes through seven steps, each of which brings the next one automatically. Great compassion is step number five, so four stages are the cause of great compassion and two others are the result of great compassion. But though great compassion comes in the middle of this method, it is actually the root. It is said:

Great compassion is important at the beginning,  
important in between, important at the end.

It is important in the beginning. It is like a seed. When you try to grow crops or food you need seed, right? If you don’t have seed, you can’t have a crop; no corn, no wheat, no rice. Great compassion is important like a seed, because without it, no bodhimind will come at all.

It is important in between, while we are working. In order to grow a good crop, you need water; if you have dry weather you won’t get good corn. So like water and fertilizers, great compassion is so important in between, because the work is hard and people give up easily; when you go and work hard and don’t get anything quickly, you may give up. Compassion helps you not to give up, and pushes you to go further. It works like water and fertilizer in the in between stage.

Great compassion is also important at the end, when you really come to the awakened state. Otherwise the Buddha would become a nirvana fellow again. In nirvana, they are happy, they have no suffering, so, without compassion, why should they care about others? But great compassion makes them move and come out to help and do whatever they can. So it is so important at the end.

Great compassion is the motivation which makes you first start out, it is the motivation which pushes you through, and it is the motivation which makes you work when you could simply avoid doing anything. So it is so important in the beginning, in the in between period and at the end.

### **What is bodhimind [Skt. *bodhicitta*] and why do you need it?**

What is this *bodhicitta* or this bodhisattva altruistic mind? What does this mind do that is so important from the beginning, so important in between and so important at the end? It is a very, very simple mind. When you talk about it, it is very simple; when you try to develop it, it is very hard. *It is mind or intention totally dedicated to helping or serving all others, that seeks to gain the highest spiritual development in order to do that.* It is like a double-headed bird; it has two faces. One is totally dedicated for others; the other seeks total spiritual development for oneself in order to serve, in order to render service, in order to help. It seeks ultimate spiritual development in order to be able to devote oneself and be capable of serving others. That is the simple description of this mind.

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<sup>34</sup> Discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Now, please look into your *Three Principles* root text for the reason why you need this altruistic mind.

Carried away on the currents of four mighty streams,  
Tightly bound by the near-inescapable chain of evolution,  
Trapped and imprisoned in the iron cage of self-concern,  
Totally wrapped in the darkness of misknowledge,  
Born and born again and again in endless life cycles,  
Uninterruptedly tormented by the three miseries,  
Such is the state of all beings, all just your mothers.  
From your natural feelings, conceive the highest spirit!

**Four currents.** This is the reason why you need it. All the other people that you care for are conditioned and trapped. They are being helplessly carried away by four powerful currents.

What are they? The four cause-currants are: the current of *attachment*, the current of *wrong view*, the current of *ignorance* and the current of *desire*.<sup>35</sup> Then there are four result currents also: birth, sickness, old age, and death.

You see that all the people you care about are being carried away by those currents. If they were simply swept away by a river or current, maybe they could do something, maybe they could swim a little and they might be able to get out. But unfortunately, they are tied by the rope of karma. If someone is tied hand and foot and thrown into the water, getting out is a bit hard, right? Even if they were just tied up, they might be able to float around and hope somebody would see them and come and pick them up. But that is not possible because they are put in an iron cage produced by ignorance. Ignorance is like an iron cage; it is some place where you cannot move, you don't know what it is. Even if they were in the iron cage in the daylight they could scream and hope somebody would see them, but it is dark. The darkness of ignorance clouds everything, everywhere. So it is almost a hopeless situation.

This is my condition and this is the condition of everyone that I care about the most. It is the condition of all the sentient beings who have been mothers to me. So would I please consider moving and helping? That is what it is, really. Will you consider taking action? Will you consider developing *bodhicitta*? Move a little bit; don't sit idle! That is what it is. This is the reason why you need to develop an awakened state or bodhimind, to begin to move, to do something.

*Four additional reasons why you seek bodhicitta, the awakening state.*

1. Your own seeing, your own experience. You may get a glimpse of experience, a little more than what we experience every day, a little glimpse of development, a little glimpse outside your usual way of experiencing and thinking. People can experience this, and it is one of the reasons to get motivated.
2. You can develop this motivation by hearing about the qualities of the enlightened beings, and wanting to be like them.
3. If you are not the intelligent type, you can simply develop faith and go through.
4. It is very hard and painful to see other beings suffering. They are swept away and would like to hold on a little longer. One would like to have a method which will help all sentient beings; one would like to render service. That is another reason why you get motivated.

There is much more here, but I don't have time to talk about it. However, this mind is really something very powerful and very positive and it puts you straight on the path. It is also like a strong antidote you can apply easily to any mental delusion, anytime, anywhere.

### **Practice: spiritual support**

Bodhicitta will only develop though effort. Analytical and concentrated meditation is your major effort, but in meditation by itself will not work, because you also need the spiritual support of enlightened beings. To develop great compassion in particular it is recommended to meditate Lama Tsongkhapa inseparable from Avalokiteshvara and say the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM in the *Ganden Lha Gyema* practice. You could also do prostrations for purifying non-virtuous karma, or do the fasting practice of *nyung ne* for puri-

<sup>35</sup> See Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*, pg. 87-88.

fication, or take *Mahayana* precepts for this purpose.<sup>36</sup> When you put in all those efforts together the result is guaranteed.

PRACTICE/QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

- Do I need *bodhicitta* – the altruistic mind? Why?
- Practice repeatedly the suggested meditation on equanimity.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On love-compassion, altruism

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path* pg. 85-89

Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate*, pg. 89-93: Equilibrium Meditation, pg. 94-96: Meditation on Love, pg. 121-125: Meditation on Compassion

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, pg. 150-158: Nurturing altruism

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, pg. 79-89: Love

On the way of the bodhisattva:

Shantideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* ch. 1.

Gelek Rinpoche, *Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way*, ch. 1

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<sup>36</sup> See Kathleen McDonald, *How to meditate*, pg. 187-195.



## 18. HOW TO DEVELOP THE ALTRUISTIC ATTITUDE

Vs. 7-8 *Carried away on the currents of four mighty streams,  
Tightly bound by the near-inescapable chain of evolution,  
Trapped and imprisoned in the iron cage of self-concern,  
Totally wrapped in the darkness of misknowledge,  
  
Born and born again and again in endless life-cycles,  
Uninterruptedly tormented by the three miseries,  
Such is the state of all beings, all just your mothers.  
From your natural feelings, conceive the highest spirit!*

Please generate the following thought:

For the benefit of all sentient beings I would like to attain the full development of Buddhahood. In order to attain Buddhahood, I would like to listen to the teaching, discuss it, go home and practice it and achieve something. For that reason I would like to hear this or read this and think about it.

This way, whatever we do here will become good and pure and virtuous. Without that motivation, it will be an ordinary action. What makes the action extraordinary is the thought the individual puts into it. The motivation makes the difference.

Once again I want to make clear to you that I am giving you here material to think about. I am talking to you about love-compassion, the great altruistic mind, the bodhisattva mind. I throw a lot of information at you, but I am not trying to build your intellectual knowledge. I am trying to give you material to meditate on.

When you go home you are supposed to meditate, not just tonight but every day, whether in the morning or in the evening, for my sake and for the sake of others. Whatever you read here, think it over, play with it, chew on it, tear it to bits, raise questions, talk about it, discuss it among yourselves, read and get more information to it, get yourself acquainted with the subject, think and rethink. In other words: soak yourself into the subject. And meditate on, concentrate on whatever you get out of it. That is important.

Then see whether it helps you or not. When you look back, you can see how much it helps you. That is only possible when you meditate!

### LOVE AND COMPASSION

The subject today is love and compassion. Every one of us has some compassion. When we see somebody suffering, we see, "Oh, too bad, I wish that person didn't have that pain and suffering!" We feel that both for ourselves and others. Every one of us has that. Is here anybody who doesn't have that

feeling? No. When you see somebody who is suffering and feeling miserable, there will be nobody who isn't moved. Somebody who isn't, has to ask him or herself, "What kind of a person am I?"

This natural feeling of compassion that we have is the *seed* of great compassion. This is your seed; this is my seed. What you have to do is develop that seed, because now you know what the seed is.

I am not talking in the open space, nor am I telling a fairy tale; I am telling something that you yourself can experience when you see people suffering. When you see a rabbit on the road, hit by your car and suffering pain, you feel it, don't you? When we see people suffering, we feel it within our hearts. We all have this within us. You can experience it, I can experience it, and every one of us does experience this. This is the thing that needs to be developed. This *is* the seed of real compassion. It is not developed or full grown now, so we have to develop it.

What does that mean, develop? When it develops it will be stronger and more lasting than what we have now. We want it to be strong and everlasting, but we don't have that. We have a short-period feeling in which we will try to do something, but after some time, when we realize we tried this and that but it didn't work, we say, "Well, what can I do? I am so busy, I have to go, I wasted half an hour here, I have to go," and we forget about it. That is the clear sign that we don't have strong enough compassion.

If you have strong enough compassion, you will go all the way out to help and do whatever you can. Since it is not strong enough now, our other priorities can overpower it. Even though somebody is losing his life, my appointment or whatever I think I have to do becomes more important to me, so I can quit. How can I quit? Because I don't have enough compassion. If I have enough compassion, I cannot quit. Buddha gave a very interesting example here. He said:

Suppose a loving, beautiful little child whom everybody likes falls into a huge pit filled up with liquid manure. The people around will yell and scream, "Help, help the child!" but do nothing. If the child's mother is there, she will without any hesitation jump and try to pull the child out.

Similarly people who are not fully developed sit there and yell and scream, "Hey, people are suffering, there is pain, they need to be helped!" We ourselves hesitate to jump into it. If we have a strong compassion, we will not hesitate to jump and try to save the other one. That is the sign of how strong our compassion is.

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on acknowledging one's obstacles to compassion**

Imagine now a very close and dear best friend. When you see that person suffering, what do you feel? How much desire do you have free that person from their pain? How strongly do you feel it? Look within yourself.

Then think about another person with whom you don't have much connection. When you see that one suffering, what do you feel? How does your compassion towards this compare with your compassion to the first one? Compare. Is it an equal balance? That is one point to be noticed.

Now see an 'enemy', someone who irritates you all the time, tries to insult you, tries to throw you out of your job, tries all sorts of things. When suddenly you see that he or she has a problem, what do you feel? "Well, he deserves it," or, "Well, she actually deserves more, but God is kind and loving, didn't punish her enough!" We have these kinds of attitudes now.

After that, look back again at the feeling that came up for the person that you care about most, when you saw their suffering. The balance goes again totally upside down. But is this feeling compassion? What is it?

That feeling you have particularly for the person you care about the most is some kind of compassion, but not pure compassion. It has a mixture of passion or attachment, rather than pure

compassion. The feeling of being pleased, on the other hand, when you see your enemy suffer is hatred.<sup>37</sup>

### **Obstacles to real compassion**

What are the obstacles to developing pure, proper compassion? On the one hand, *attachment* will transform all your compassion into a sort of passion, and on the other hand, *hatred* is almost the opposite of compassion. These are the two delusions that stand in the way of us developing proper compassion. These are the two obstacles that will throw us off balance. We cannot balance ourselves because of these two: sometimes attachment, sometimes hatred. We have to overcome them.

How can you do this? Only through training your mind, educating your heart. You have to train your mind; that is what meditation is all about. Meditation does not mean just sitting there doing nothing. Meditation is training your mind. To be able to train your mind properly you need spiritual force behind you. Saying mantras as in the opening practice is a way to try to bring in the spiritual force to back us up.

The actual method we are going to talk about here is the training of your mind. To do this, you need to recognize both the object you are heading for and the obstacles to getting there. Our object is to develop great compassion. We have two obstacles that are block us from doing that, that throw us off balance: attachment on one side and hatred on the other side.

When these obstacles throw us off balance, they then can take us over and all sorts of emotional problems come as a result. Emotional problems come out of attachment and hatred and the dissatisfaction these bring. Emotional problems are the imprints, the leftovers from these forces going through and taking us over. This is what makes our minds impure, unusable, unserviceable. We become either too sad, we feel doomed, or else we are too high, and over-excited.

The actual hatred is gone, the actual anger is gone, the strong part of the actual attachment is gone, but the mind is influenced as though your body had been beaten up by a stick. When you are beaten up you still will have the bruises and pains on your body after the beating. Similarly when your mind has been beaten up by anger or attachment, the bruises you have left are the emotional swings and moods, being too much down or too much up. That really is their impact, the influence they leave. These are our obstacles which get in the way whatever we want to do. In developing compassion, these are also the obstacles. How are we going to overcome this problem?

### **GREAT COMPASSION**

When you really have great compassion, you will be equally compassionate towards every sentient being. Great compassion will give you the feeling of wanting to serve and remove the pain from every living being, equally. *Equally*. Underline the word *equally*! That is great compassion.

### **How to develop great compassion**

How are you going to develop that? Shall we try to develop it together, sit and visualize everybody and then just say, "Well, everybody is equal to me and I want to develop great compassion to everybody." No; that won't work. As a good thought, a good gesture, a good motivation, like we generate at the beginning of the evening, that's fine. But it is practically possible this way? No. We can say the words; our mind is kind enough to allow us to imagine it for a couple of seconds, but the mind is not going to go for that, is not going to buy that. You have to sell this to your mind; you have to really convince yourself.

As a good salesman, where do you start? You have to make that compassion seed, whatever you have, begin to grow. You have the seed in your own mind. It *is* in your hand, it is there! You don't have to look for it outside, it is within you. You don't have to think about it and check; it is there. You can see it and feel it yourself.

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<sup>37</sup> Wishing someone to suffer, or being happy when they suffer.

Keeping that in mind, how can we make it strong and everlasting? There is no other way except by developing **love** for all beings. If you have love, then you will automatically have the feeling of unbearable sorrow when that person is suffering. It is love which makes that possible. It *is!* If you don't love, you don't care. There is no question about it! So you have to develop love for all beings. This is what you need to develop compassion.

How to develop love for all sentient beings? Do I try to develop love for all my enemies? Your mind will simply reject this. Without any consideration, it will probably say, "Bah! Get out!" So don't try that; it won't work. First you develop love for people you care about, your friends, your nearest and dearest ones. You have to develop love for them first.

You may raise the question, "Am I then not developing attachment rather than compassion?" No, you are not. Because you are going to change your focus now. First you try your closest, your nearest and dearest persons. Then you have to try to develop the same feelings towards a neutral type of person. Then finally you also develop it for your enemies also, which is possible if you work at it.

How is that possible? You have to see every living being as your *ultimate friend*, the person dearest to you. That is very hard in the beginning.

**Methods for developing the altruistic attitude.** There are the *seven stages of development* method described in detail by Maitreya/Asanga and the *Abhisamayalamkara* tradition, and there is *exchange stage of development*, taught by Manjushri, Nagarjuna and Shantideva in his *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. If you follow either method, bodhimind develops. But this tradition I follow<sup>38</sup> combines both these methods in the *eleven stages of development*, which we discuss in detail in the *Lamrim* teachings.<sup>39</sup>

## SEVENSTEPS FOR DEVELOPING THE ALTRUISTIC ATTITUDE

### PRE-STEP: EQUANIMITY

The first step is equanimity, which I have already discussed.<sup>40</sup> In developing equanimity it is at first recommended to not even look at the enemy.

First you look at a friend and check your feelings. Then you think about a neutral person, check your feelings and you try to bring the feelings for the neutral person to an equal level with your feelings for your friend. The way to do so is to think, "There is no certain identity of neutral person, enemy, or friend. Everything is changing, every being and every relationship is changing. The friend of my childhood may be my enemy today. Someone who is my enemy today may be my friend in the future."

One important point. When you look at and concentrate on an enemy or irritating figure, just imagine their face and straightway watch your own mind. Immediately the feeling of the mind is not anymore as pure as it was. Some kind of spot has already been produced, uneasiness, roughness, unwillingness. Something has been produced just by imagining the face of somebody you hate. It immediately leaves an imprint on your mind. This is our problem. You have to recognize that as a problem and handle it.

### Practice: guidelines for meditation; three ways of handling obstructions to equanimity

1. *Perception-projection.* I'll tell you in a funny way. Imagine the following:

I am walking in the middle of a lot of people and suddenly somebody appears, comes up to me and slaps me in the face and says, "Hey you thief!" I am going to be very angry with that person, saying, "Hey, how can he do that to me?!"

Anger builds up more and more and after some time I feel that person is dirty, filthy, undesirable, ungrateful, a liar, a cheater, whatever I can think of. Because I feel hurt.

In such circumstances what can I do? Ask myself, "Why do I hate this person so much?"

<sup>38</sup> The Gelug tradition, based on the teachings of Je Tsongkhapa, Lozang Dragpa.

<sup>39</sup> Gelek Rinpoche, *Lam Rim Teachings*, The bodhimind: the eleven stages of development

<sup>40</sup> See the meditation guidelines in the previous chapter and earlier in this chapter.

What answer will you get? “Naturally I hate this person, because he/she did this to *me!* To *me* who is totally pure, faultless, wonderful! *I* have been disgraced in public by this dirty one!” This is *my* imagination, my projection of the person.

When this has happened recently, I will get a strong feeling. When somebody did something similar or even worse a couple of years ago, I try to balance that in my mind. So I feel stronger about recent events than about what happened a couple of years ago. Time makes a difference. In reality, somebody harming me in that manner ten or thirty years ago and somebody who did it yesterday is the same, but I don’t feel it the same way. That is *my* problem.

When I look at from the perspective of my many lives, the life before, and the life before, and before, *etc.*, there is nobody who hasn’t some time or another been my enemy; neither is there anybody who hasn’t been my friend. So it is only *my* shortsightedness that makes the distinction now. In reality, all have been everything to me at different times.

You can use the same technique for when you develop a lot of attachment to people. I feel attachment now, but I have also been your enemy, killed you a number of times, cut your head a number of times, how can I fall for you now?

We are talking about the great bodhisattva way. It looks and sounds impossible, but it is true reality and a perfectly possible working thing. This is one method to handle the obstacles.

2. *The hand – the person – the anger.* Another way to handle it. I am going to make a very foolish statement here. It is an example.

Yeah, he hit me on the face. Should I be angry with him or with his hand? Naturally I say, “How stupid, how can I get angry at a hand? Nobody gets angry at a hand. A person may use his hand, but it is actually the person that hits, not the hand. If the person doesn’t move, the hand won’t move. Stupid.”

You think that, I think that, everybody agrees to that. You think further: “That is true, the person uses his hand, so I cannot get angry at the hand, I have to get angry with the person. That is true, I accept it.” You argue with yourself.

But I am not sure whether the person that hit me at that time was really himself. Wasn’t that person being used by something else? No question about it, he was being used or controlled by anger. If the person hadn’t been so angry, he would never have hit me like that. No way. One has to be really angry to hit somebody. People who kill, got angry and lost control and when they realized their mistake it was too late. That is how anger uses the individual. Similarly this person who hit me was used by his or her anger and not by him- or herself. So I cannot get angry at him or her, I should get angry at his or her anger. Just as I cannot get angry at his or her hand, but have to get angry at the person, similarly I cannot get angry at the person, because he or she has been used by the anger. I am shortsighted. I can see the action, but I don’t look beyond that. This is my fault, my shortsightedness.

If you can produce one single example of someone really hitting somebody without anger being involved, then you can give up all these arguments because they will be invalid. You cannot. There will not be a single example. Except a mother may try to hit the child or the dog with a newspaper, but that is different. So anger is involved, the action is anger-controlled, the individual has no control, is out of control, so how can I hate that individual? Then I would have to equally hate the hand, too. You have to apply these sorts of arguments to yourself and your own situation.

In addition to this do kindly read the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, chapter 6,<sup>41</sup> which is very helpful for challenging your anger as well as overcoming the problems of looking at enemies and friends unequally.

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<sup>41</sup> Shantideva, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara, Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life.*

We are now discussing bodhisattva practice, so it is time for you to read this work. Also you can read a commentary to it.<sup>42</sup>

### 3. *Change of viewpoint.* Another very important method.

From my side it is only the passing of time and my shortsighted view that makes people to appear unequal to me. If I look from the point of view of all the different persons, enemies and friends are actually equal. They are equal because everybody seeks happiness. They are seeking their own happiness, but they got angry about something they couldn't complete, they got disturbed about something they couldn't achieve. My enemy is seeking happiness, my friend is seeking happiness. From their point of view, they are equal in seeking happiness.

From my point of view they are equal, too, because, in different lives, each one of them has been my friend a number of times, and each one has been my enemy a number of times. And from their point of view they are also equal. So I have to develop great equanimity here.

That is the first step: trying to make it equal. You have to. The black and white feelings of the rough mind have to be smoothed by looking at the differences between feelings of attachment and feelings of anger.

Your rough, unsmooth mind has to be ironed. That is the fundamental base. If you want to make a drawing and you have a rough ground you can't draw properly. Artists will agree, you need a smooth base. If you want to build great compassion, you first need to smooth the base. The smooth base is a smooth mind and that is only provided by equanimity. If you are unable to produce equanimity, you cannot build anything. So the first step is to meditate as much as possible on this equanimity.

If you have problems, this is the place to discuss it. This is an informal gathering, so you can really bring in your problems and see how you can handle them. This is the first and foremost step, actually the pre-step, to developing the altruistic mind.

#### **STEP ONE: LOOKING AT EVERY BEING AS A MOTHER-BEING OR ULTIMATE FRIEND**

Not only should we look at beings as equal, but we should look at every sentient being as being our ultimate friend. Here the famous Buddhist 'mother-sentient-beings business' comes in: looking at every sentient being as a great mother. I do know a lot of people have problems with this because they don't like to say their mother is the great person in their life. A lot of people say, "No, that's bullshit!"

Because some of our Western friends have a problem with this, I tried to substitute the mother-being by using the father, a teacher, a girl- or boyfriend, but somehow that doesn't work. Why? Because in general the love and care and compassion that mothers give to their child cannot be substituted by anybody, not at any level. I am not talking about any particular mothers, that's a different matter, okay? There are a lot of examples of mothers caring. Also, I do believe those who are mothers now will know how much they care for their kids. Once you have been a mother, you know how much you care. But the same people fail to see that their mother did the same things for them. Again, that is their problem. So this is the famous 'mother-business' as we call it. I am going to talk about it in detail. You can find that in the *Lamrim*.

The advice here is not only to look at all the sentient beings as a close friend, but to realize that every sentient being has one time or another been a mother that cared for you, that really has been the closest, dearest mother that really cared for you greatly. You try to look at people that way. We can't look that way very much, because it is very hard for our minds. Already to see one's father as a mother is a problem, because of our identification and labeling. All sorts of funny things will stand in between. Looking at your father as a mother looks crazy. But he is a mother-being!

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<sup>42</sup> Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Meaningful to behold*, chapter 6. Dalai Lama, *Healing Anger; The Power of Patience from a Buddhist Perspective* and *A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night*, chapter 6.

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on mother beings**

Let's look simply at our life. This is not our only life. We have had a number of different lives, life after life.

Your mother in this life was not your mother in every past life. Sometimes this mother was your mother, at some time she was your grandmother, at some time she was your kid, your kid was your mother, your father was your mother, your mother was your father and so forth, through countless lives. It has been going on life after life, circling around and around, our lives being countless.

Someone who has been a mother doesn't stick to being a mother all the time. Sometimes children die before the mother and that is a clear sign it is changing. So in every lifetime I had a mother and in every life it is not the same mother.

In short, what do you really put into your mind? I cannot point to one single being and say, "This is not my mother." I cannot ever say that, unless I say that this is the one and only life and after death, one just disappears, that there is no previous and no future life. Unless I claim that, I cannot show anybody that definitely has *not* been my mother. When I cannot show it, what does it mean? That person might have been!

Even if you can't accept that it has definitely been so, you cannot rule it out. This is the point, my friends. You have to get to that first.

### **Practice: what points to meditate on**

What did we establish today?

1. In this love-and-compassion path we introduced first the *recognition of the problems in developing compassion*: anger/hatred and attachment/passion. To overcome that is to see all sentient beings as my closest friend, as ultimate mother-being.
2. In order to develop that you have to develop *equanimity* first; the meditation to develop the great equanimity by smoothing the unequal feelings.
3. *Looking at every being as a kind mother.*

These are the three points you have to practice, to meditate on and problems with them can be discussed next time. You cannot leave the compassion on the doorstep here. That is not right. You should take it home with you, practice, try to develop it, soak your mind in it, and it will become part and parcel of your mind, your attitude, your behavior. That is how you build up compassion.

Please meditate everyday on what we talked about. Give yourself at least twenty minutes in the morning. Take refuge and meditate. If you can't do it in the morning, do yourself the favor of doing it in the evening. Give a little rest to your mind and give yourself a little time for your spiritual development. And if you try to do that, you will face problems, like the questioners just now and all others do.<sup>43</sup> Problems should be brought in and be discussed, solved here. You are not the only one who is having problems. Everybody has them. If you don't have problems, you are not developing. Not having problems is not a good sign but a bad sign. Therefore bring your problems in; this is the place for them to be discussed.

Now at the end we dedicate all the good work that we did. With it we created good karma, and we can't afford to waste all this good karma by destroying it with anger. So, to protect and further it, we dedicate it to attaining enlightenment for ourselves for the benefit of all others. That is the bodhisattva-activity: for the benefit of all others. That is it. Best of luck to all of you. Thank you.



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<sup>43</sup> For the questions of each chapter see page 193.

**Motivation**

For the benefit of all mother sentient beings I would like to obtain ultimate buddhahood. For that purpose I'd like to listen, learn, study, think and meditate and develop the great *bodhicitta* or bodhimind, the great mind that the bodhisattvas possess.

**Origin of a buddha**

*Causes and conditions.* Where does a buddha, my future buddha, really come from? My future buddha is not going to appear without a cause. My future buddha is not going to fall on my head from the sky, nor will it grow out of the ground like a tree. My future buddha definitely will be the result of a cause. We cannot grow any fruit without a seed put in the ground and some water and warmth applied. Not only do you need the original cause, you need the conditional causes, too. Both *cause and conditions* are absolutely necessary in order to get any result. Similarly my future buddha is not going to come without any original cause and without any conditional cause. If that were possible, then buddhahood could fall from the sky one day on my head and I would just become a buddha. If that could happen, there would be an instant buddha. If there were a thing called instant buddha, then everybody either would have become a buddha already or would never become a buddha. That is not the case, so there has to be a cause.

The cause is not something that somebody else can create and I can enjoy the result of. I have to work for my future result, whatever result I am going to enjoy; nobody can bring it to me. That is a true fact; there is no question about that, but we have to make it clear to ourselves. A lot of people get confused and think that by praying and doing a little more good works they'll get it. It won't work that way at all. If that were so, it would become an easy enlightenment. You have to work for it, by developing the correct cause. The wrong cause will not bring the right fruit. Remember, we talked about that when we talked about karma: we can put a seed of a Jalapeno pepper down and hope a nice sweet peach will grow out of it, but that is not going to happen. Unless you have a *correct cause*, you cannot get a correct result.

You may get a lot of questions in your mind: What about praying, will that have no result? What about saying mantras? What about meditation? Will those have no result? Whatever cause you create, you get a similar result. If you have said mantras to create buddhahood, these mantras will contribute to obtaining buddhahood. If you have said mantras to get good health and wealth, the mantras will contribute to that. But they are not the real correct cause. Saying mantras alone, just producing the sound, is not going to give you enlightenment. Sitting and thinking nothing, or thinking on one thing alone, even if it is love-compassion or emptiness, is not going to give you buddhahood at all. So not only the result has to have the correct cause, but it also has to have the *complete cause*. Like we have been telling you: it is not enough just to have the seed alone, you have to have the water and warmth too; if one is missing it won't grow.

*The seed.* Out of all causes, the *seed* is the most important one. To become a buddha, the buddha-mind –*bodhicitta* or bodhimind – is the seed. That great bodhisattva-mind is the real seed, a father-like seed. Though the mother gives birth to the child, without a father you cannot produce kids. The father-like seed is the bodhisattva-mind. Where does this bodhisattva-mind come from? Chandrakirti has said:

Buddhas have grown out of the buddha-mind,  
The buddha-mind is grown out of great compassion.

Chandrakirti, *Guide to the Middle Way*, ch. 1, vs 1.

*Love and compassion.* The buddha-mind, or bodhimind, the great altruistic mind which seeks enlightenment, has to come out of certain particular causes and conditions, which has to be the compassion. That is why love-compassion becomes so important on the spiritual path! If you do not have love and compassion, your spiritual path is not going to be good; it will be useless to help you become a buddha. If your aim is to obtain enlightenment, without love and compassion your path will be totally useless.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that without love and compassion you won't have any result, I am not saying that, but if your aim is to become a buddha, it is useless because it won't give the

result of buddhahood, enlightenment. If you aim is just to gain some magical power to heal people, it will work, even without love-compassion. Why? Because when mantra, mudra - the right ritual - and material are completed, it works, like in the scientific field things work when you put things together correctly. But that doesn't mean you have achieved the spiritual result of buddhahood.

You won't go one inch closer to buddhahood if you don't have love-compassion. Even the *arhats* of the *Theravada* (or in plain language *Hinayana*) tradition, though they have freed themselves totally from the circle of existence and have gone beyond *samsara*, without love and compassion they haven't moved one inch closer to buddhahood. They have moved far away from it, even though they have achieved *nirvana*. Without love and compassion you can't get nearer to buddhahood in any way. This is so important!

Without love and compassion, anything you do will be sort of forceless, lifeless, meaningless, purposeless. That is why love and compassion is important. It makes you move, it boosts you, it forces you, it pushes you, it encourages you. When you talk about compassion, we are not talking about something outside, we are talking about something of our own mind which we can catch and feel and understand.

When we see people suffering what do we feel? We have plenty of examples: people who have a disease that can't be cured, people dying, people with AIDS, people suffering from cancer. When we see them getting worse, getting weaker day by day, what do we feel? We feel sorry for them; it pains us. That is what we are talking about. That is the experience of compassion we have. It is not great compassion. No, it is ordinary compassion, but we have it. Each one of us has it.

What we have to do is develop that and make it stronger and permanent. What happens to us when we see suffering for the first time, especially in somebody close to us? We feel really bad. When we see it a second and a third time, we don't feel it that much. Our compassion gets weaker and weaker, and after some time it just becomes everyday life. We should not do that.

Instead of that, we should develop it the other way round, try to develop that kind of feeling more and more strongly, try to develop it in a lasting way and try to develop it in a way that is effective. Our instant mind, our nature of good quality of being, gives us that feeling, but that feeling gets covered up by our usual activities. Our delusions will push that feeling out and after some time it will be nothing anymore and we become like a robot.

When an individual doesn't have love and compassion, he or she is no different from a robot that moves round; there is no human touch, there is no warmth, there is no heart to heart feeling. They become a robot or zombie. We have to make ourselves different from a walking zombie, different from a living robot. Love-compassion is the only thing which can make that happen. That is how we improve as a human being, by improving our love, improving our compassion.

We have it here at our hearts. Instead of losing it we have to develop it, make it stronger. It is so important for us, particularly these days. If we do not try to develop this, we may see and hear about the pains and sufferings everywhere, the homeless, the hungry, people with AIDS, people in war zones, but after some time, we don't want to hear about it anymore or it becomes like a movie on a screen. That becomes worse for us; it harms our spiritual growth, it will even prevent us from becoming a good person.

How do we overcome that? Meditate. Try to develop it the other way round. Instead of focusing outward, focus inward. That is why I have introduced to you the meditation on equanimity. As the next step we have introduced acknowledging everybody as beings most near and dear to ourselves. Buddha called it the great mother-sentient-beings business. We covered up to there last time.

I do not know whether you have meditated or not, whether you have simply listened and have gone home and forgot about it. Unless you speak about it, I have no way of knowing. I can't read your mind. So what do I do? I presume you have done it and if I don't get questions, I presume everybody knows everything without any problems. If that is the case, I have to presume is that you are all enlightened beings! They are the only ones without any problems!

We have introduced the second principle of the path up to the level of looking at every being as a mother sentient being. Why mother? Because our mother is our ultimate friend. A lot of people do not

like their mother, so I tried to substitute it by using all different things, but that doesn't work. The next step will tell you why it doesn't work.

If you cannot think of all living beings as a mother being, pick a few of those you can think of that way, people who are closer to you, and meditate on it. Think, "Well, all of them have been a sort of ultimate friend, have helped me, have been a kind mother."

### **STEP TWO: REMEMBERING THEIR KINDNESS**

Then, "What did they do for me when they were my ultimate closest one? What has a mother done for me?" We are in a bad habit of forgetting it. The Tibetan expression is, "When the knees have taken over from the belly, you forget." That means when you begin to crawl, walk, and so on, when you have become able to manage a little bit on your own, you forget what has been done for you before. That is a bad habit. Whenever we are able to manage ourselves a little bit, we don't want anybody to tell us what to do, whether with love or with hate. Whenever somebody tries to tell us what to do, we get angry, irritated. For a lot of people who don't like their mother, that is the reason; of course there are exceptions.

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on remembering the kindness of mother beings**

What did my mother do for me? First you have to think how long they kept you inside. I don't believe it is comfortable carrying a child. Those who have been a mother, will know. Not only it is uncomfortable, but every moment they have to take that little one inside into consideration. There will be no mother who hasn't taken some consideration of the child inside. If the mother wants to drink something too hot or too cold, or take medicines, she considers that it may not be suitable for the baby. And it is not for a few days, it is quite a long time, nine months. Meditate on this; it is important for us to acknowledge it.

No matter how bad you may think your mother is, she has done this. If she had not, if your mother had not carried you properly, you wouldn't be here. And then the love the mother has given, the pains she went through in giving birth. When within the pain she found the baby, how much love and happiness a mother shows. You may be a helpless and useless little creature that is born, however the mother treats you as though she has a wish-fulfilling jewel in hand. After that what do mothers do? They'd rather be sick themselves than have their child be sick. They choose to hurt themselves rather than hurting the little baby.

Look not only at the human beings but at other creatures too. Look at the little birds when they have a little nest in the tree and the eggs just hatched. I talk from my own experience. When you take a little stick and approach a bird, in usual cases the bird will fly away when you come near. But when you go nearby when there are little babies, the mothers will sit and remain there. The instinct will force them to fly up a little bit, but at the same time out of love-compassion for the little babies they cannot go away; they stay there. If you go near they try to fight you with their beak, their best weapon. The bird knows very well that if I hit with that stick, she will die. I know and she knows, but she chooses to fight until she dies rather than let the baby come to harm. That is the choice they make. That is one of the reasons you cannot substitute anybody else in this meditation on mother beings.

Every mother has done that for her own child, not only once, but a number of times. In every different lifetime, they have protected the child, even in our own lifetime. If they had not taken care of us, we would have fallen, we would have been left out in the open air, the crows would have poked our eyes out, anything could have happened. Even now you care about your own children: you cook for them, feed them, get a babysitter when you go out because you are afraid the baby might get hurt. This is the love and the kindness we received from a mother.

*The mare.* I tell you a story, from a great teacher, called Guntang Jampelyang, an eighteenth century Amdo lama from East Tibet. Right at the Chinese border there is Kumbum monastery, a big monastery,

which has served as a seat for that province and for the Mongol and Chinese Buddhists for centuries. Guntang Jampelyang traveled from that area to Central Tibet on yak or on horseback, which takes months. He was traveling with a group and there were robbers on the road, whose tactic was to throw their knives at the side or the group so that the mules would lose their load and the animals would run. There was a mare carrying a baby inside, and a robbers' knife cut her in the stomach and the baby fell out. The young Guntang Jampelyang was hiding behind a rock and watching. He gave an account of what he observed. The stomach was torn open by the knife and the baby fell out. The only concern of the mare was licking the baby. She was not concerned about her cut stomach, she stood there licking the baby until she fell down. Mind you, it is a tremendously cold and windy area up in the high mountains, yet she kept on licking the baby until she fell down.

That much love and compassion the mother has given. And I could have been that baby at that time. You cannot point out anybody *not* to have been that mother at that time. The example is very useful for this as well for equanimity, especially if you have an enemy. Who can tell you for sure that that mother was not your enemy of today?

From the point of sentient beings they have given that much love, that much care and that much compassion to us. How much mothers love their child, mothers know. But the mothers have to know that when you were a kid, you have received the same kind of love and compassion; as much as you are giving to your kids, you received when you were a kid. Not only in this life. In our previous lives we have received it. Between having received something in this life and in the previous lives there is no difference; I received it. Having received a gift yesterday and having received a gift today, makes no difference, you have received. I have received.

Whatever I received I am indebted to give back; I owe something in return. Whatever I owe yesterday and whatever I owe today makes no difference, I owe it. I have received that much love and that much compassion and that much care from each one of the beings around me.

That is what we have to meditate on. That will make our mind a little bit moved and make us take a little bit a longer breath. That will make us not to become a rotten chap. That will make us not to become a living robot. That will make us not to become a walking zombie. When your mind is becoming rough, when you are losing compassion, think and remember that you are becoming a walking zombie. Make sure you don't become that! So the conclusion is:

From every living being, from each one of them, from my friend, from my father, from my mother, from everybody I have received mother-like care. I can find no single sentient being that I can definitely say has *not* given that love-compassion to me.

*No one to rule out.* You cannot. If you try to do it, you are just deceiving yourself. You may say, "I accept that my mother has been kind to me, but not my father, my sister, my brother or my enemy. They haven't done it; it is not true. And if that were true, how come I didn't recognize them?" Naturally we have gone through the so-called death and birth repeatedly. We had the time-gap, the shocks, the changes, the physical mask that we wear here. This body is a mask that we wear. (Remember, I used to call this body a rented apartment.) Now I call it the mask we are wearing and we change the mask every lifetime. Sometimes we are tall, sometimes short, sometimes shiny, sometimes we don't shine that much, sometimes we are male, sometimes female, but we are we.

Every lifetime, we whenever we are born, we have a mother. This mother doesn't rush to die to keep ahead of us; we can see that, so it is not always the same being. The mother changes in each lifetime. And no additional being comes in; in the whole of *samsara* there is no real newborn being, everybody was there from the beginning, and will continue. So you start picking up the mothers one by one. We have been together; we do not recognize each other, but that doesn't mean we don't know each other. The time, the change of face makes us not recognize them. As much as the handful of mothers we can think of has been compassionate, that much everybody has been compassionate towards us. You cannot rule out a single one; everybody has.

### **STEP THREE: REPAYING THEIR KINDNESS**

#### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on repaying their kindness**

Having seen the kindness of all mother beings, what do I do now? I have somehow to pay their kindness back.

You have to return the kindness to somebody who has been good to you all the time. You cannot be the receiver all the time. You may think, “Yeah, I have received that much love and compassion from them and also I have been their mother and have given them the same thing; we owed the same thing and we have given the same thing, so it is zero, it is settled now.” I don’t believe it is settled that way; no.

People’s minds are such a thing that we can think that way. The spiritual method here, as I told you, is a dialogue between you and yourself, between me and me. That is what analytical meditation really is. It is true, in the same time we owed the same thing and we have given the same thing. That is why we have this helping business instantly in our mind. Like I mentioned the instant compassion, we have the instant “I owe something.” Everybody naturally likes to be giving and helping. We have it instantly, but when we can’t do it right then and there, we give up. Again, then, just as when we can’t carry on with compassion, we become a walking zombie. This is our delusion and problems starting to cover us, apart from that we have already. Again you should not let go; you should hold and develop that helping attitude. Compassion will keep that alive.

What can I give them? Well, I may give some medicine to the sick, a little bit of charity. (That is what you in the West do, a donation in the charity box.) That is a good thing to do; however it is not sufficient. It is a little temporary help; it is like giving a dollar to drug- or alcohol-addicts in the street. What will they do with it? Get some more stuff or alcohol.

From your point of view it is help, it is okay, it is a good action. Whatever he or she does with it is his or her business. Don’t stop giving! But you can give more than that.

I know it is a gift and that is okay, but it doesn’t serve much purpose. I should give more than that. What can I give more than that? What do they really want? Happiness.

They want happiness and they can’t find happiness, so they go and try to find happiness by drinking alcohol; they want happiness and can’t find it, so they use the drugs to get happiness.

And what do you and I want? We want happiness. That is why you come here, why you are reading this. Everybody from the presidential candidates to the drug-addicts in the streets wants happiness. Drug-addict wants happiness and the method known and available to them is drugs. Bush and Clinton think they will become happy when they become president; that is their method of seeking happiness. That is a little sophisticated, so everybody thinks it is great; and everybody thinks the poor little man in the street is terrible. But they all seek happiness and so do we. What do we meditate for? What do we want spirituality for? We are seeking happiness. Why are the ants crawling under the tree? Seeking happiness. Why do the cockroaches crawl in the kitchen? Seeking happiness. Seeking happiness, that is all. All beings want happiness.

If I want to help them, I should give them happiness. If I care for them, if I love them, I should give happiness. I should give physical, mental and spiritual happiness. I should give them not fairy-tale happiness, but real happiness.

Some think, “I should send them my good thoughts,” and think that they are giving it in that way. No. That is an illusion. You should really give them happiness, practical happiness. That is what we owe all living beings. How are we going to give it to them? That should be our next topic.

#### **How to know whether this practice is helping you**

When you have done a strong practice of meditation, of getting used to it, how does that influence you? Your anger will be shortened, you will become much more aware of things, you will become a much kinder person. And even when you lose control, it will be for a shorter period. The awareness comes back faster.

My friends, listen carefully. If that is happening to you, it is affecting your life. That is the sign. The time that you have come here and the time you spent in it has been helping you. If that is not happening, then it is not helping you. You have to review it and see where it has gone wrong. Just sitting and going on week by week and not knowing what is happening will be pointless. That should not be happening.

If what I mentioned is happening to us, it is helping us. Every effort you put in, coming here and so on, is affecting you, is working for you.

**Practice: advice on compassion practice**

What did we talk about today? A brief introduction of compassion within our mind. We did a little bit of the method to make ourselves better than walking zombies. We talked about looking at all sentient beings from a different window than we used to look from. We talked remembering their kindness, love, care and compassion. If there is no compassion, there cannot be caring; if there is no love there cannot be caring. Love and compassion grow almost simultaneously, help each other, complement each other. The deep caring will come out of that. We talked about looking from that window.

Watch your mind: do not let it be controlled by a selfish interest. What I try to get to you is reducing our selfish interest and developing more caring and love for others. Self-interest, selfish thoughts, is the object here to be destroyed. Putting *me* as the most important one and putting others secondary is our obstacle here as we work towards developing bodhimind. Every weapon that we produce here is focused in that direction: against narrow selfish interest, against narrow selfish thoughts. Try to utilize that, try to think on that, try to meditate on that.

Do *not* try to look at *every* sentient being in your meditation. Do not produce a whole picture like we do here normally during the formal meditation, that all beings surround us and we pray to the enlightened beings and then light will come and then we imagine everybody is developed. Do *not* do this on this particular point. Do *not*! That is so important. If you do, what will happen is that you will develop something superficial here. We do not want that. For that reason you have to concentrate on a handful of people that you care about. There is a purpose to that, which is to avoid doing it superficially.

Do *not* try to put in people you have a problem with. Not as a first step, you'll reach them later. You do need to have love-compassion towards them, but just now when you try to develop love-compassion, do *not* use them. These are the practical points or hints.

**STEP FOUR AND FIVE: DEVELOPING GREAT LOVE AND GREAT COMPASSION**

**Great compassion**

I did mention how important compassion is at the stage where we begin to practice, how important compassion is during our practice and how important compassion is when you have become a fully enlightened being. Compassion is what will really make me to go through, not very much for my own sake but for the sake of others who are depending on me, others who need tremendous help. Our commitment is to help others, so others will be the most important reason. That is why it is important in the beginning, during the practice, and at the end.

*In the beginning* it is like a seed. If you need a good crop, you need good seed. Without a seed you are not going to get it. Compassion is the seed.

*During the practice*, compassion is like the warmth and the water. When there is no water and no warmth, things will not grow. If you are a practitioner, interested in doing something to develop for yourself or for others, and you don't have compassion, you'll drop it on the way, you'll give it up. This practice is difficult, it is frustrating, you don't get instant results, it doesn't give instant enlightenment. So you start thinking, "Maybe this or that is better, maybe I better forget it." You get this because of the lack of compassion; lacking this makes it hard for the practitioner to get through the rough times. We have seen that many people do want to develop spiritually, but they cannot get through. Why don't they get through? No patience. Actually, you do have some patience, but no one has unlimited patience, so

you give up. Why do you give up? You don't have enough compassion; you don't have compassion for yourself, and you don't have compassion for others. Therefore it is difficult.

*At the end*, it is still important. Why? If you become a fully enlightened being, fully developed, and you don't have compassion you'll just enjoy yourself. You won't bother about others, "Why should I bother about others? I'm perfectly okay. I have developed so I can relax and enjoy myself. Why would I bother?" When there is compassion, you have to bother, "I can't simply enjoy myself and have no problems, I can see that others are suffering, so there is a problem. They need help, so it is my duty." It pushes you to act.

So the compassion first makes the person move into the spiritual path, then it makes you not drop out, go through it even when it is difficult, and, when you fully develop, it makes you help others. So it is very important at every stage.

When we talk about compassion, it is not a fairy-tale. We are talking about something within ourselves. Right now at this moment in our own minds we do have compassion. The problem, however, is that it is very brief. It will go away and we will be immediately occupied by other things that will overtake the compassion. Our compassion is weak; when it can be overtaken by other things, it is a sign of weakness. It is so important not only to recognize the compassion that we have, but to make it stronger and more lasting. This is what we have been talking the whole time. How can I make my compassion more lasting and stronger?

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on developing great compassion**

Meditate on the different people and finally on all living beings: how much they lack peace and happiness, how much they are enriched with pains, miseries and problems.

When you meditate on the pains and miseries and problems that people face, your feelings can develop. The longer and stronger you can meditate looking at sentient beings, the stronger the feelings become of desiring to separate them from their miseries and problems. That is real compassion.

When you go on and develop more, it becomes strong and solid, and when it becomes strong, solid, unshakable, it becomes everlasting love and compassion within ourselves.

In order to develop that, we talked about all sentient beings. Some we see as enemy, some we see as friend, but in reality at one time or another they have all been my ultimate friend.

I would like to repeat one important thing here: do *not* try to meditate compassion from the beginning on the enemy, because it may backfire on you. So do *not*.

Do kindly meditate compassion for individuals close to you, near and dear, suffering here and having pains and problems. All this you do, and then gradually you go on.

Also doing the following is not recommended. A lot of people just close their eyes, visualize many people, filling up the space like small black dots and then say, "Oh, they are all suffering, I would like them to be separated from the suffering." That again does not work. What is the problem? The moment you close your eyes and you visualize these little black dots around you, you have compassion. But when you have to deal with people on an individual level, your compassion is lost. This is a problem.

You find this problem more with spiritual practitioners than with outsiders. Spiritual practitioners can talk and – with their eyes closed – think of love and compassion the great way, but when they have to deal with them one by one, they have to give up. This fault comes from here: when meditating and trying to develop, they have these little dots filling up their meditation space, but when dealing with them, not facing them as dots, but of equal size, then the compassion is gone. Therefore one should not do that.

In prayer-form you can wish all beings to be completely separated from pain; that is great, wonderful. But when you really meditate on compassion you have to think about individual

people, individual pains, and generate individual compassion. That individual compassion you will develop from one to two, from two to four, from four to eight, *etcetera*. It will increase.

When you do it this way, you won't have that problem of getting shocked when a faceless dot talks back to you!

### **Sign of having developed great compassion**

What does the compassionate mind look at? It looks at all living beings. What does it seek? It seeks their separation from pain. The example is this. If a mother sees a child fallen in a big pit with a fire or snake in it, the mother will not have peace in her mind, she will be strongly determined to do something. She has to do everything to try to get that child out as quickly as possible. When you get that strong mind when looking at all different people individually, it is the sign of having developed the full great compassion. Until you have that, you have to work.

At every step we have to tell you the sign, otherwise you can just sit there and think everything is moving. You have to keep these signs in mind, thinking and checking, "Do I have that sign, have I reached that level?" If you have reached that sign-level with one person, fine; two, good; three, then four.... Like that you go up.

### **Great love**

What does love do? It looks at all sentient beings and wants to help them be happy. Remember, we went through it last time, looking at them as mother-beings, remembering how kind they have been and wanting to repay their kindness. This is very important. These are the causes we produced. We created the cause and conditions for developing this love. If you lost or forgot about what we talked about earlier, if you lost the cause and conditions, you're not going to develop love. You may develop passion, attachment, but you are not going to develop great love at all.

### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on developing great love**

Look at all beings as mother beings, how much kindness they have given. Remember the examples given. Then look at them. Look at each one of those sentient beings, what do they really want? Each one of them is seeking happiness. There is nobody who is not seeking happiness.

What they want and they get is different; they are not getting happiness. Even the things we consider to be happiness are not really bringing happiness. They bring more pains and miseries. That is a true fact. Why? If something goes slightly wrong or a little bit of time passes, the happiness we enjoy transforms into pain and problems. That is a clear sign it is not bringing true happiness, but bringing pain.

What we think of as giving happiness does not really giving true lasting happiness. A lot of people do that, "I do this just to please him. I feel sorry for him or her so I have to indulge in that." These sorts of things are not giving help, not giving happiness, they create more pain and problems. Though in the beginning, it looks like help, gives a little bit of pleasant feeling, for example if somebody has a lot of itching and you start scratching, in reality it makes it worse. I don't really think that trying to help in the wrong way brings happiness; it brings more misery, like giving a thirsty person salty water. The earlier ancient masters gave the example throwing salt on somebody's open wound.

What does love really do? Just like compassion, the object is all sentient beings. The desire is to make them happy, in peace and full of everlasting joy. You keep on looking and meditating on the beings, how much they lack joy. That includes *me*. You don't have to look always outside, you can look in and out, both ways. Look how much I lack peace, how much I lack harmony. Keep on meditating it.

Everybody has a desire to give, to develop joy, to develop happiness in oneself and others. That desire *is* the seed of great love. Just like compassion desires to help remove the pains, love desires to bring happiness, to make things joyful. That seed of love I have, everybody has. If I develop that seed in the proper direction, and towards all beings, it becomes great love.

If you develop that seed in the proper direction, it becomes great love. If you develop that in the wrong direction, it becomes attachment. Both of them, attachment and great love, desire to bring happiness and pleasure. What difference is there? The difference is that it is personalized. Attachment has, “It is *my* property, *mine* only; nobody else can have it!” The ultimate one that has to be benefited is *me*. No matter whether the face you put up is, “It is for you, you, you!” the *you, you, you* is there because of *me, me, me*. In attachment, the reason I want to make him or her happy is that *I* want to be happy. Just to please myself, I have to please him or her. When I am not getting it, when I can’t please them the way I want, I get sad, I get terrible, depressed.

In the West, you have a jungle of emotions. Where does that all come from? Only from this: the ultimate result is *me*. You don’t see it, but you do it automatically, “I want to please her, because she makes me happy. I like to please him, because he is my source of happiness.” When something happens on that, it will not work, because these are samsaric words. It will work for some time but after some time it will go bad, because the real focus has been only *my* benefit and when I don’t get that I feel punched or let down, the *me* in deep in my heart is poked and offended. That is the problem. All this we create. We write the script for the play in which we and the others are the actors.

Actually it is very easy to say all this, but difficult to do. I know that. Still we have to make a distinction between ourselves and those that do not have any understanding of spirituality; we have to be better than that. How come? When you are working spiritually and you see the life beyond death and before birth, you see this here is a tiny little situation going on, a television-show for one evening. As a spiritual person, we should be able to separate ourselves from that little thing, that little episode, we should be able to recognize that this is the melodrama of so-called *samsara*, and not get caught in it. *Don’t get caught in it*. If you get caught in it, what is the use of your spiritual practice? Sitting may look great, but if when you do one step outside you are no longer any better than anybody else, what is the use?

Life is painful, it is hard, and that is reality. It is the face of *samsara*. Every living being faces this. If that reality is not *samsara*, there is no reason why we have to say that *samsara* is bad, there is no reason why Buddha has to say to go beyond it. There is no reason for the enlightened beings to say that *nirvana* is great. When you are caught in that, you have to get out of it. Look at it as a show going on over there and don’t get into it, don’t let yourself be caught. If you are in there, get out of it and watch it. That benefits ourselves. We don’t suffer as much. As a spiritual practitioner, recognize it as a problem, acknowledge it and remember, “I am not to be caught in it. I know it is the melodrama of *samsara*. Let me sit and watch it.” Don’t let it affect you.

But, at the same time, do I give up on relationships then? No. You don’t give up anybody. If you give up, it is terrible; it is giving up of a living being. That is terrible. You don’t give up, but you don’t force yourself in it either. You keep your limits. A lot of people can’t keep the limits. They say, “Oh then I am giving up, I have to get in there.” No, that is going beyond your limit. You have to keep your limit, but you cannot give up. Did you get it? This is a very tricky thing. You must know your limits *and* you must not give up anybody. When within your limits you can’t do it, you can simply pray and watch, and when the opportunity to help comes, you get into it. Don’t force it. If you force it, you yourself get more problems and you create more problems for the other side too. You *must* know your limits. You don’t have to worry, you don’t give up, but you don’t go beyond your limit. As much as you can help, you should. And when you see you can’t help, don’t get yourself involved directly, but remember and pray.

### **Sign of having developed great love**

So love-compassion is the fundamental basis. If you care for somebody very much and it happens you are losing that person out of your life – I don’t necessarily mean by death – and you get the feeling of losing something, it is the sign of love. You know, the pinch. When you develop that for all sentient beings, it is the sign of great love. It is not impossible. It is possible. In love-compassion, you not only feel closeness and dearness but also you cannot let the person go. It is a feeling of if you lose them, it is too much of a waste. It is a feeling of preciousness. Not only of dearness, but also precious, you can’t

afford to lose them, you have to carefully hold them, cherish them. When you have that towards everyone, you really have great love.

This is our aim. So when you meditate on that, you have to look in that direction and try to develop it. Don't practice it on everybody from the beginning; you have to take steps. Practice it on a one-to-one level first, then one to two, one to ten, one to hundred and as person to person rather than on visualized dots. Again, just as with compassion, when you sit with your eyes closed, you will have a lot of love towards everybody, but when you have to deal with people person to person, there is no love but hatred. That is a problem. So the methods of working on love and compassion are very similar, and the problems are also similar.

When you develop a strong love, then you feel the preciousness. Losing someone you love will be like losing a piece of your heart. You can feel it. Every one of us has experience of this, though unfortunately on an individual basis only for now; but it is there.

These are really the qualities of Mahayana. They are supposed to have an everlasting effect on the individual. This is the backbone of the Mahayana practice. It is very easy to say, "I am a Mahayana practitioner," but whether you really practice Mahayana or not is whether this lasting love and compassion is there or not. This is it. If you don't have it, no matter how many bodhisattva vow ceremonies with seal and name you attended, it doesn't mean anything. But if you have it, then even if you are a little dog in the street, you have the backbone.

#### **STEP SIX: DEVELOPING THE SPECIAL COMMITTED MIND**

##### **Practice: guidelines for a meditation on developing the special committed mind**

When I have the great compassion, what will I do? It immediately will force me to help, "I can't do it, but I really have got to do it! Each one of them has paid great kindness to me, done so much, they are my greatest, dearest one, I can't let them go! I don't care whether I can or not, I have to help! I *will* help all sentient beings!"

The moment you get, "I have to help," you have taken one step above the love and compassion; "I have to do it; I don't care whether I can or not, I have to do it!" Without thinking whether you can or not, "I have to do it, I *must* do it!" The moment that thought comes, you have taken one step higher. I call that: the special mind. This commitment of, "I *will* help all sentient beings," this committed mind is not available except for Mahayana practitioners, so that is why I call it the special mind.

Others may have tremendous love and compassion, but even with love and compassion, they watch it, they will not commit themselves to it. You commit, saying, "I must do it, I will do it!" That doesn't mean you have to jump into the water, that doesn't mean you have to commit a crime for the sake of somebody. No. You commit yourself.

Then immediately you raise the question, "I have committed myself, but do I have the capability? Do I have the capacity to help all sentient beings out? Do I have the capacity to help even one single person out? Do I have the capacity to help myself out?" No. Unless I am an enlightened being, I don't have that capability.

Whatever capability you have, you have to know. If you don't know it, you don't have it. If you don't know whether you have the capacity or not, it is clear you are not an enlightened being. We have a saying in Tibet:

If you have a great quality, no matter how much it is covered with dust, its light will shine in the sky.

When you have the capacity gradually developed, it will show and when it doesn't show year after year, it means something is wrong there.

The point rises: Do I have the capacity to help all? Do I have the capacity to help one? Do I have the capacity to help myself at this moment with all the powers I have? No, I can only try.

If you are a fully enlightened being, you don't have to try, you automatically have the capacity even without putting thoughts on it.

When I realize I have to do it, and I see I don't have to capability, what do I do? I must seek the capability. Therefore it is necessary for me to have the ultimate achievement rather than settle for an in-between achievement. I need the ultimate buddha-level, the fully enlightened position, because that is the place where all the capacity is. All the know-how is there, therefore I need that. I cannot settle for a second level, for second best, I have to have first-class. Not for me alone, but I am committed to do it for everyone, because everybody is looking to me to help.

That is how you meditate. I am not just talking about it here, I am giving you the material to meditate on. This is how you correct your mind. That is how you develop.

#### **STEP SEVEN: THE RESULT: THE BODHISATTVA MIND**

The moment you seek the ultimate, buddhahood, not for me but for the benefit of all others, it is what is called *bodhicitta* or bodhimind. The moment you develop that mind: seeking the ultimate buddhahood on the basis of committing yourself to helping all being it is bodhimind. There is no other bodhimind than that; that *is* bodhimind. The moment you develop that you become a *bodhisattva*. That is the true bodhisattva.

The moment that mind develops, the benefits you get are beyond imagination. Buddha told stories about it. If you develop *bodhicitta*, what does it mean? He said, "All the buddhas will bow to that young bodhisattva." Why do they do that? For a lot of reasons. When you try to grow a nice flower, and the flower is just a seedling, it is very small and very fragile and needs tremendous care. Therefore, when a person's bodhimind has just sprouted, it is in a very fragile position, and it is the duty of all the buddhas to take care of it. That sprout is the cause for a buddha.

All the buddhas came out of bodhisattvas.  
The bodhisattvas come out of bodhimind.  
Bodhimind comes out of love and compassion.

Chandrakirti, *Guide to the Middle Way*, ch. 1, vs 1.

All these are interlinked. The sutras give the example:

If the young bodhisattva is playing horse cart and there is no horse,  
the fully enlightened buddhas will not hesitate to pull the horse cart.

That is an example from two thousand five hundred years ago. In other words, whatever the needs of this young bodhisattva are, the fully enlightened buddhas will automatically try to meet them. The major need is spiritual development, rather than pulling the horse cart. But if the buddhas are willing to pull the horse cart, they surely will help push the spiritual development!

Enlightened beings have the capability and the opportunity to come and help. Also the funny rule of buddhas is this, that even young, new bodhisattvas are considered more important than highly developed senior great *arhats*, those who have already cut samsara and have reached the position of *nirvana*. The young bodhisattva who has done nothing but develop this mind is considered more important. Someone raised a question to the Buddha, "How come you consider this young little one so precious and more important than these old monks who have done so much their whole life and have achieved the arhat-level?" Remember, Buddha's answer was given two thousand five hundred years ago, was:

If the ruler of the country gives birth to a child, that son, no matter how young and how immature he may be, is called prince and he will outrank from that time on all the learned, experienced, matured ministers.

The ministers may be more learned or more mature, but by virtue of being a prince, he automatically outranks the learned ministers. Buddha gave another example on this. If you have a diamond ornament,

it may not be of good quality, but just by virtue of being a diamond, it will overpower or outrank all other precious stones.

That is what love-compassion does. That is why we call love-compassion the backbone and the seed. If we work, it is not difficult; it is very simple. It is within us. Work with whatever we already have; we have the glimpse of it, we have the feeling of it, we know it ourselves. It is simply a matter of developing it, making it stronger, making it a little lasting. That simple. I am sure every one of us can do it. Try!

**Practice: some questions to check oneself on the path**

The way to do it is only through *meditation*. Meditation alone cannot do it, you need *purification*, and you need *spiritual support*. If you lose one of those, you won't get it, forget it. People may think that meditation alone will do. No. It is the major source, but you need purification and accumulation of merit, too, as well as support of enlightened beings and sangha members. All three have to go side by side. Meditation is the main thing, but if you have only the meditation and nothing else, you will not get that far. If all three are combined together, then even if you don't think it is going to happen, it will happen.

What are we trying to do? We are trying to stop running round in samsara.

What did I achieve? As knowledge, what did I gain? As spiritual development, what did I gain? As personal benefit, as something we'll be able to carry into future life, what did I achieve?

These are the questions one has to ask oneself. Find an answer to that. If you don't have an answer, the second question you have to ask is:

Am I more or less confused than before?

You can use this occasion as a mark to see how much you have gained and how much benefit you have obtained. Another thing you have to see is:

What habits make a difference in my life? Did this change my life? Did it change my way of living? Did it change anything? Am I better than before? That is very important. If so, how? If not, why not?

I think it is very important occasion to ask oneself these questions. That is all I have to say tonight.



**COMPASSION IN ACTION**

What have we done up to now? We talked about the determination to be free and about love and compassion. When we talked about love and compassion, I emphasized very clearly that we are not telling a fairy-tale, we are talking about something that each one of us feels, that each one of us carries a glimpse of, that each one of us experiences. That is the basis of love and compassion. We talked about how from there to make it stronger, how to make it a little longer lasting, how to make myself, my rather harsh mind, a little softer.

Now the next question rises, whether that sort of compassion we talked about so far will remain as some kind of theoretical viewpoint. Is it going to remain knowledge stored in the notebooks, on the tape-recorders, or is it going to be translated, interpreted and practiced as action? These are questions I have.

The compassion you try to develop, you will develop if you practice. We have told you the method. If you don't practice it, if you don't do it day after day and year after year, it will go. The sun rises and

the sun sets until we go, one by one. If you don't do it, don't practice it, it will go. If you do it, it will develop. It is practical, it is within the person, we have the basic experience, we know what we are doing. We are not talking about some kind of very high level, buddhahood, we really talk about things here and now.

How are we going to translate that into action? Compassion in action is very important. If your compassion is going to remain as something you meditate on and when you act, you act differently, then, again, it is not right. When we see ourselves as a spiritual person, we should be very much a compassionate person. Sitting and thinking about somebody out there suffering, and repeatedly saying, "Poor thing, poor thing," will not help. How do we translate this compassion into action-oriented compassion? Should or should we not do it? These are totally individual questions.

I was very happy that the day we completed the compassion talk someone here mentioned to me she was going to have a soup-kitchen set-up on Christmas day. That is very nice and wonderful. That is one individual taking an interest and pushing it through. I was really happy to hear that; it was a sign of compassion showing up as action. We rejoice it; it is nice, wonderful, great. However, we need more than that.

We need much more than that. The sufferings and pains are tremendous. When we feel suffering in our body and our mind, when we experience it physically or mentally, we feel a lot. But when we look at it as an outside drama-show, then we don't feel that much. This compassion you have to translate. Translating it *is* a spiritual practice. Then every action you do will be a spiritual practice. I don't think there is a shortage of any way of translating it around here. Look at the homeless, at people with AIDS. Can we do anything for them?

When you say compassion translated into action, the question we really have to put to ourselves is, "What can I do, as individual, as a group, as organization?" With whatever capacity one has, one has to help and act. It doesn't matter whose name is on it; the work has to be done and one has to be involved individually. Whether you are involved as individual or as organization doesn't matter. This is very suitable for people like you, who come here week after week and try to do something. If you think the practice only lies in the meditation, you are mistaken. Definitely mistaken. Meditation, yes, that practice is needed, but you also definitely need action.

I did mention to you the other day: compassion will work on a one-to-one level. I also told you that if you meditate on nameless, faceless dots, if you sit here as a big person and all mother sentient beings are over there as little black dots, it is very easy to develop compassion, but it is empty. When you close your eyes and you think on the little dots, you'll have great compassion, but when you have to deal with each one individually, you have nothing. Many people take interest in Buddhism for their own personal benefit as well as for the benefit of everybody, but in reality it is for the benefit of the individual.

Everybody puts a lot of efforts into coming in here, but action-oriented practice will be very important. What about going out and try to help some of the homeless people? I am sure there must be ways and means of doing that. And help the people with AIDS? I can guarantee you on thing. If you go with a compassionate mind and try to touch and help, touching and helping is not going to make you sick, you don't have to worry about that. You could try to put everybody's energy together and try to do something. It is good to say that there is a lot of suffering in India or Ethiopia, but at the same time it is here, too. If you could think about that and do something, it would be great.<sup>44</sup>

Another thing. When I think about the people with AIDS, many of them are dying. They are really dying; you can't do anything at this moment medically. What you can do, is give them comfort; you can tell them that death is not the end.

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<sup>44</sup> For the Jewel Heart humanitarian projects in Tibet, see Website: <http://jewelheart.org/humanitarian.html>

Death is one of the natural phenomena; it is a process, not the end. Every one of us has died hundreds of thousands of times, we simply don't remember it. Dying is not the end. And it is not that terrible either. You people have heard about impermanence and death and dying for a year. Now you should know what you know about it. And if out of that you can pick out even a single little suggestion, that is helpful for those people who are really facing it. Every one of us is going to face death; who knows who is going to die first? However, those that are earmarked, labeled as dying, get a different feeling. How can we comfort them? How can we talk to them out of our own little mind and knowing? Utilize that. If you could do these sorts of things, your compassion is translated into action, is action-oriented.

Otherwise it will be lip service. Maybe a good mental exercise, yes. A lot of people like to say, "I send you my good thoughts." To tell you the truth, who cares whether you send them good thoughts or bad thoughts? I have to go through my karma. It is very kind of you to send good thoughts, wonderful, but how is it going to help me? I am not denying it totally, there is something there, but when you can do something by yourself it is hundred percent solid. When somebody sends you a little bit of thoughts, it is a contribution of one percent out of hundred: great, wonderful, but not enough. For a spiritual practice it is not at all enough. You have to be action-oriented.

### **Spiritual support: the sangha**

What I have been seeing here is a lack of integration of the people coming here regularly.<sup>45</sup> That is a big problem. As long as you don't have that, you are missing a tremendous support for your development, because you still will be lonely coming in and lonely going out. Integration is missing. I have been seeing it, but there is not much I can do about it, unless within yourself you start building up your own. This is sangha.

Sangha means: supporting each other in your spiritual problems, and any other part. This is the group where you can bring in the everyday problems, from marriage to the children; all problems can be discussed, confidentially. This is the place where we can discuss, try to give suggestions, try to give help, try to support. This is what it really is. All problems, from buddhahood problems to marriage problems and day-to-day problems, can be brought within the sangha. That is where you can discuss, find new ideas, think about it, analyze, how can one help the other. You have to build up companionship and good relations within the sangha and from there you can build up all these actions I have been talking about. People may think spirituality relies only on meditation. No. If you don't have any actions, you are not going to get much further.

The main points I was worrying about are the need of service as well as spiritual support. Spiritual support is really important. When you don't have it, then for many people it is very hard to move forward when obstacles come. I was fortunate enough to live in Tibet till the age of twenty, rolled up in the monastery and I went through nicely. I also later rebelled and changed completely which you can see now. Otherwise I still would be shaved and wearing a nice yellow and red robe. Still I was fortunate to have tremendous support, the best spiritual support. Here in the West, you live in a totally different environment, in a money-oriented society. The society is built up in such a way that you can't live without and at the same time you need spirituality. A tremendous pressure is there. If you don't have money problems, you go in for competition.

You need spiritual support, you need to interlink and interrelate, and you need a community to talk with. Not only does your spiritual practice need it, also you need it to cope with the pressure of society. You need support; that really is important.

#### **QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE:**

- Try each the different meditation suggestions Rinpoche gave.
- Go through the sequence of the seven steps until you know them clearly.

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<sup>45</sup> These teachings were given during open evenings.

- Then, try to experience how one step pushes the other in this sequence.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On the second path:

Tsongkapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 93-108

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*, pg. 85-106

On the development of equanimity, love-compassion, altruism

Gelek Rinpoche, *Love-compassion*.

Alfred Woll, *Lighting the Lamp*, pg. 79-89

Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate*, pg. 89-93: Equilibrium Meditation,

pg. 94-96: Meditation on Love, pg. 121-125: Meditation on Compassion

On the bodhisattva vow:

Ch. Trungpa, *The Heart of the Buddha*, pg. 108-131

On the way of the bodhisattva:

Shantideva, *A guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*

Gelek Rinpoche, *Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Meaningful to Behold*

Chögyam Trungpa, *The myth of Freedom*, pg. 106-124.

Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism*, pg. 167-184

## THIRD PRINCIPLE: WISDOM THE PERFECT VIEW

### 19. THE PERFECT VIEW AN UNBIASED OUTLOOK ON REALITY

Vs. 9-13 *Even though you experience transcendent renunciation  
And cultivate the spirit of enlightenment  
Without the wisdom from the realization of emptiness  
You cannot cut off the root of the life-cycle  
So, you should strive to understand relativity*

*Who sees the inexorable causality of all things  
Both of cyclic life and liberation  
And destroys any sort of conviction of objectivity  
Thereby enters the path pleasing to Victors.*

*Appearance as inevitable relative,  
And emptiness as free of all assertions;  
As long as these are understood apart,  
The Victor's intent is not yet known.*

*But when they are simultaneously without alternation,  
The mere sight of inevitable relativity  
Becomes sure knowledge rid of objective habit-patterns,  
And the investigation of authentic view is complete.*

*Further, while appearance eliminates absolutism,  
Emptiness eliminates nihilism,  
And you know emptiness manifest as cause and effect,  
Then you will not be deprived by extremist views.*

Welcome to the commentary on the third principle. Now we have to talk about **wisdom**. Wisdom relates to emptiness. The word empty means you are lacking something; it means that something is not there.

What does wisdom tell you? Wisdom will tell you that in reality there is nothing solid to hold on to. Whatever way you look into it and observe it, your ultimate conclusion will be zero. Zero is nothing. Some people may think, "Oh yeah, that is true because everybody has to go and everybody is impermanent." Impermanence and emptiness are two different things. Impermanence means changing and losing. But emptiness means: there is nothing to hold on to.

In the *Heart Sutra*, Buddha says there is no nose, there is no eye, there is no ear, there is nothing, because there is no self. When there is no self, there is no me, there is no *I*. So where can there be *my* nose and where can there be *my* ear, when *I* am not there? In the *Heart sutra* there is a long discussion between Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion in bodhisattva-form, and Shariputra, one of Buddha's monk-disciples. Many of you are familiar with the *Heart-sutra*. Many different teachers give many different explanations of this. It is very hard to say who is right and who is wrong, because it is really very difficult to

talk about it, until you experience it. Once you experience it, it is still very difficult to put it into words; that is why there are a lot of different explanations.<sup>46</sup>

As I mentioned a number of times, Buddhism is totally based on the experience of Buddha and of the disciples and followers up to the late great masters. The real basis of Buddhism is all their personal experience. We do have the collected words of the Buddha; the Tibetan word for it is *Kanjur*. For Buddhists, the *Kanjur* is almost like the bible for Christians. The *Kanjur*, vast in subjects, is mostly based on the teachings of the Buddha. It was given at the time when there were Listeners (*Sravakas* a type of Theravada practitioner), and it was adjusted to their ability. So you find that at some places it says yes and at some places it says no on the same question. A lot of people say that this is a contradiction in Buddha's words. Later great masters have said it is not a contradiction in Buddha's words; explanations were given according to the different levels of the students, the different feelings and experience of the disciples. That is why you have all these different answers.

Ultimately, when you are able to accept emptiness as the ultimate mode of being, there is room for every kind of movement, there is openness. If you cannot accept emptiness as ultimate, then everything is fixed and static. When something is fixed, when it is static, there is no room for change, no room development, relationship. (Am I talking to you or am I going over your heads? I am really afraid of that, because the moment we start talking about emptiness, there is going to be a lot of trouble.)

It is really the experience that each person experiences individually. I think that even the level of understanding of emptiness differs. From the beginning level, to the medium level, and to the ultimate level where you really face emptiness, it changes. That does not mean that the previous experience of emptiness is wrong compared with the ultimate experience. It is correct, but it is also not necessarily true that what *you* experience is what *I* will experience. Still, emptiness is emptiness; what is empty here, is empty there; there is no difference in that. The difference lies in the perception of the person that perceives that reality at the different levels.

### **The necessity of emptiness**

Now the question rises: what is this complicated emptiness business necessary? Why can't I simply sit down and meditate? Why can't I simply say sadhanas and mantras and pass my days? What is this complicated emptiness necessary for? Without the wisdom of emptiness, the root of *samsara* cannot be touched, let alone cut through. No matter how much love, how much compassion, how strong a determination to be free we may have, love-compassion will not touch the root of *samsara* at all. Not at all! Dharmakirti said:

Love-compassion is not a direct opponent to ignorance.  
Therefore it will destroy nothing of ignorance.

Love-compassion will make the person beautiful, kind, very compassionate, very eager to attain buddhahood, very much committed, however it will not at all shake the root of *samsara*, ignorance.

As I have been telling you earlier, we have problems. Our delusions are problems. Our anger is a problem, our hatred is a problem, our jealousy is a problem, all of them. For the time being, we have to keep on countering the direct strong attachment, the strong hatred, the strong anger. But we cannot counter each and every one of each of our hundred and thousand different delusions. If we keep on countering them and overcoming them one by one, there is not enough time for us to deal with all of them. So the solution commonly given here is to cut the root, to eliminate the basic cause or foundation.

The root of all delusions and even of the imprints of the delusions lies in what we call ignorance. This ignorance is *not* the ignorance of not knowing. When you don't know something you are ignorant, that is true, but they are not talking about that ignorance. This is a much deeper ignorance than what we normally refer to as ignorance. It is *not* simply not knowing. It is wrong knowing, wrong perception.

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<sup>46</sup> A very easy beautiful little commentary: Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of understanding*. (The explanation is according to the Cittamatra school, which differs from the explanations according to the Madhyamika or Middle Way school that the Gelugpa teach.)

### **The root of samsara: wrong perception, distorted view**

What do we perceive wrongly? The *I*, the *me*, the *my*, the *self*, the self-existence, the identity. That wrong perception creates every wrong action. People may tell you about inherent existence and all different terminologies, used by different learned professors; that is just terminology. When we ourselves think about what we perceive wrongly, it is the *I*-existence we perceive wrongly.

How can *I*-existence be a wrong perception? Don't I exist? If I pinch my ear, I feel pain. So how can I *not* exist? If I don't exist, I can't have my ear. If I don't have my ear, I can't pinch my ear, even if I can pinch my ear, I cannot feel the pain, but I feel the pain, so what is this? What is this talking about?

That *I* or self that does not exist does not necessarily mean what we normally refer to as the *I*, or self. We normally refer to *I* as the self, the *atma*, the person, the soul, the consciousness; we have all different names and terminologies. When it is said that the *I* doesn't exist, it is *not* talking about the *I* that has come from our previous life and is living in our present life and is going into our future life. It is not the consciousness, not the person they are talking about. They are talking about something else. They are talking about some separate *I*.

Is there a separate *I*? That is the object on which you have to find the *I*-lessness, the lack of this *I*. When I say separate *I*, don't think this *I* is left here and there is somebody else behind looking from the back. No, not that way. It is something we are constantly perceiving within ourselves, within most of our functioning without even realizing it.

We have to find whether that *I* is really there or not. We are told by the experience of the Buddha and all others: this *I* does not exist, *self* does not exist. Yet on the other hand we feel an *I* there. So, what do we have to do in order to clear our ignorance? We have to find and to recognize that *I* which we are 'less' of, which we are empty of, which does not actually exist even though we feel and believe that it does.

### **Finding the object to be negated**

Before finding the *I*-lessness, we have to know what we are looking for. If you don't know what you are looking for, you may go through all the garbage, but you are not going to find the thing, and you can't be sure it isn't there either. You have to find out what to recognize; at least you have to have some kind of idea, the picture of what you are looking for.

The first and foremost step here is to find the object to be refuted or negated. How are we going to find the object? This is very complicated. My dears, it is not easy at all. It is not like love and compassion, which is beautiful, which you can feel, experience and point the finger at, "Hey, here you are." This one is not like that. This is something different. We are totally talking in the air. It seems very abstract, but it is within us all the time, underlying all our thoughts and actions. Also, it is the solution to all our problems, so finding it is the key.

So the first step is to look for the object which one is 'less' of, the object which is not there even though we think it is. We have to find out whether it is there or not, therefore we have to see it first, we have to know what it would be like if it did exist. We really have to have an idea of the object. How are we going to find it? That is the most difficult thing, really. The way we look into it is to look from four different angles.<sup>47</sup> First we look into the actual *I* that we experience, that is here, that is talking, that is listening. What do we actually look at? Do we consider our body the *I* or do we consider our mind the *I* or do we consider the combination the *I*? This is the question.

Clever persons will say: It is not only a combination, it is pervasive throughout the body, a pervasive *I*. Then you have to go and see there is also a problem: what is the pervasive *I*? (I know it cannot be clear now, but don't give up. This, emptiness, is really an important point, it is the key to all!) You look through your body from the crown to the toe and start seeing where it is. Is it in the liver, in the toe, in the heart, in the thumb? If I lose a thumb, I just lose a thumb; I am not lost. If you lose one part of a combination, the combination is gone, so *I* should have gone; but *I* haven't gone. If from hundred

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<sup>47</sup>(1) looking for the object to be refuted. (2) looking for all possibilities. (3) seeing it is not the same as the aggregates [*skandhas*]. (4) seeing it is not different from the aggregates. These are called The Four Keys.

one part is gone, you lose the solid hundred; ninety-nine is not hundred. There are a lot of problems. This is the way to look whether and where the *I* really exists.

### **Two problems that occur in the practice of the perfect view**

Two important problems come when you look into this. (1) If we look too much, we will totally lose everything. That is a big problem, going to one extreme. (2) If you do not look enough, you will not be able to cover it. We have to do it not too much, not too little. We have to be very careful. These two are the two biggest problems in finding the self. They are called the nihilistic and the existentialist or eternalist approach.

How do we go through? It is very important to follow a certain, authoritative presentation of a certain authoritative recommended person. Buddha himself has said,

When you have to look into the problem of emptiness,  
it will be made clear by Nagarjuna who will come six hundred years after me.

Nagarjuna was a famous Indian saint and scholar from the first centuries CE. Some stories say that he lived 600 years, but I believe two or three Nagarjuna's came and they mixed them together. Anyway, Nagarjuna's viewpoint on emptiness is most strongly recommended. He presented six works on it. Nowadays everybody follows Nagarjuna's point of view and considers it the correct view, because this is the view that Buddha recommended. Otherwise, if we try to get into it with our own intellect, most probably, with a chance of ninety-nine point nine percent, we will go on the wrong path. And only one tenth of a percent of chance we would have of going correctly. Krishnamurti is definitely one of them, who without depending on Nagarjuna or any other book was able to see the real empty, the zero.

It is a very complicated and delicate matter. If we are wrong, then what? It is not like eating the wrong thing for breakfast. If we are wrong here, we are totally wrong, because we got the wrong key and so we will be opening all wrong doors instead of the right one. In other words, if we get the wrong view here, instead of clearing all the delusions, we will block all the opponents of the delusions and we open all our delusions up. Instead of going up, we will go down. So it is so important!

If you don't have this wisdom of emptiness, all other practices, a strong meditation, a strong compassion, and so forth, can take you up to a very high level, but then you get a total fallback; you backslide completely. That the Buddhist practice does not have a fallback on the spiritual path is only because of the wisdom of emptiness.

If you don't have this wisdom developed, every practice you do will do nothing more than just block the delusions. Like, "Attachment is not good, let me not do it, give it up; anger is not good, because it gives you a lot of misery and problems, these are the disadvantages, let's not do it." Like that, every other practice will help you to block, but doesn't tell you how to get rid of the delusions. It is simply hitting them on the head and pushing them down.

What does the wisdom that knows emptiness do? Wisdom cuts the delusions, make them totally unserviceable, unable to function. That is why it has no fallback. Every other practice will have a fallback. Of those six *paramitas* or perfections that bodhisattvas are recommended to do, the last one is the wisdom. Wisdom is like a guide. All other practices do not see clearly; this is the guide able to see inside *samsara*, able to see the actual nature of reality.

So, what we really have to do is observe where the *I* lies and how it functions. This is the simple idea of the wisdom that we are going to look in to.



## CONCENTRATION AND WISDOM

I somehow have a very big problem talking about this wisdom. The problem is that we haven't gone through the meditation part of it. When you don't have the meditation part, it is difficult to personalize the wisdom part. What I am going to do now is presume that we have gone through the meditation part, to talk as if we have. We have not, but since the subject wisdom is supposed to be covered here, we will presume we have gone through the meditation part.

We have to divide this into two different categories. The first category is the concentration-part; the second part is the wisdom or the perfect view.


### Concentration - calm abiding [Skt. *shamatha*, Tib. *zhiné*]

In order to develop this perfect wisdom, it is very important to develop concentration power first. We call it *zhiné*, which means remaining in peace. It is usually translated as mental abiding or mental equipoise. It's a meditative stage.

Meditative stage, what does that mean? It does not mean closing your eyes and sitting down for half an hour or an hour. That is not a meditative stage. Meditative stage is the stage where you are analyzing and concentrating combined, mixed, and you go beyond separation; the perceiving individual is absorbed in the object he is perceiving. In other words you almost become one - that is not exactly right, because I am using borrowed language - with the subject or object that you are concentrating on. That brings harmony and pleasure and peace in body and mind both.

One of my teachers who died a couple of years ago was a very famous philosopher in Tibet. When he was studying in the monastery he always got punishments. People accused him all the time of not obeying the monastery rules. He had developed that meditative stage. He could say, "I sit down till the sun sets." When he was young he had to do a lot of monastery duties and when you don't do them you get punished. He used to sit there and not wake up. Only two of his close friends and students knew that during that time he was in the meditative stage; the others thought he was sleeping!

In that meditative stage, you can concentrate as long as you want to. You can say, "I am going to sit here for eight hours" and you are there. At the end of the fixed time you automatically wake up, because you are motivated for that period of time. That is what I call the meditative stage. We, you and me, in our meditation can hardly concentrate for two seconds. Maybe I exaggerate; the Americans meditate a lot, so they may be able to sit much longer. When you reach that level, the delusions don't bother you so long as you are meditating.

The concentration power [when you keep on developing it]<sup>48</sup> will take you to the roof of *samsara*, the top of the circle of existence. However, that is not the spiritual answer, because that meditation power is not a permanent power. When it lessens, there is a fallback. As long as there is a fallback, it is not the answer. Why? Because the moment you fall back you will be on the same stage where you started. Why? Up to that level you have the power to suppress the delusions, the delusions will not bother you; the attachment will not bother you, the anger will not bother you. It is as though you have gained complete control over the delusions.  the delusions are only temporarily covered, so it is not the answer.

Then what is it? If even having achieved a very strong meditative stage - a stage where you are almost merged with the object - and you still have not been able to overpower the negative forces, then what is it? What is the fault? There is no wisdom.

### Wisdom - special insight [Skt. *vipashyana*, Tib. *lhagtong*]

The wisdom we are talking about here is not a general wisdom, but about a very specific wisdom, the wisdom which will be the real antidote to the delusions, the wisdom which really handles the delusions within ourselves, by attacking the root of the delusions, the wrong views and wrong thoughts, what we call ignorance. It is not the ignorance of not knowing, but the ignorance of wrong knowing, wrongly perceiving. Wisdom clears that. So we talk about the wisdom which clears the wrong way of thinking,

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<sup>48</sup> going into the four form- and four formless stages.

the wrong thoughts, the wrong perception; in Tibetan called *lhagton*, which means: special seeing or special insight. In Sanskrit it is called *vipasyana*. I would rather not call it by that name, because the *vipasyana* that is very popular in the US these days is of a different tradition and not necessarily the same so people may get them mixed up.

**Practice: guidelines for a meditation on developing the wisdom of emptiness**

In order to develop proper wisdom you have to see the reasons why you need wisdom. Without seeing the reasons it is very hard work and you can't do it. A strong motivation is needed. How do I get that strong motivation? By seeing the faults of *samsara*. From the beginning we talked about bad, bad, bad, pain, pain, pain, suffering, suffering, suffering. These are all reasons for this.

When you see the faults on the one side and you see the benefits on the other side you naturally choose the benefit-side. That will be the strong motivation to go for wisdom.

You see the faults in the circle of existence, "I have no control, karma controls me, I'll die and I have no idea where I am going to be reborn, my consciousness will be like a leaf in the autumn, taken by a strong wind and who knows where that will carry me? There are the hot and cold hells, the hungry ghost realm and the animal realm."

All these sort of samsaric faults, wherever you can see them, apply them here, meditate on them. Then you gain a strong desire to get away from the circle of existence.<sup>49</sup>

When you get that, you have to see how it functions. How does the circle of existence function? It does not come from somewhere, it is within ourselves, it circles within our life. How is it circling? It is functioning very well, because it has a very strong base.

How can I cut it? If you cut the circle in between, it is very good, however it takes a tremendous amount of efforts and if you have to cut all attachments one by one, all angers one by one, you have no time to do anything except keep on cutting attachment and anger. You will encounter countless attachments and angers, so it is almost like doing nothing.

So what is the solution? Go to the base, get to the root-level. Cutting the attachments and angers individually is like cutting the leaves and branches of the tree. If you reach to the root of the tree and you uproot the whole tree, the branches will stop growing. The way Buddha taught is going to the root.

What is the root? We are taught the root is *ignorance*. What is that ignorance? Not the ignorance of not knowing, but the ignorance of wrong knowing.

How to challenge this? What is the best way to get out? You have to see what this mind of wrong knowing is, what it perceives. Is this the same as what we call *I*? Is this the same as what we refer to as consciousness or form? Or is it something else?

That is an important question. If you are familiar with Buddhism, you know that certain teachings will tell you the self or I does exist, others will say the self or I does not exist. What does all this mean? In the *Heart sutra* it says,

No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;  
No color, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of touch;  
No eye, no world of eyes until we come to also no world of consciousness.

And when there is no eye, no world of eyes, there cannot be a body, there cannot be feeling etc., all these five *skandhas*<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> First one of the three principles].

<sup>50</sup> Five aspects of a person: form, feeling, discrimination, volition, consciousness. Also see Glossary.

Besides that people will say, “Emptiness is a great thing.” But if you look for the empty you are not going to find it. How can you find the empty? Empty is empty. If empty is empty, if there is nothing to look for, if there is nothing to be found, it must be something everybody must be knowing or it is not there at all. If it is not there at all, then it is not going to help me; If I find it because it is not there, how can it help? If it is there everybody should know it and everybody should be liberated. So it is clear that empty is not empty.

*Emptiness is full.* Emptiness is full of existence.

In verse nine of the root text Je Tsongkhapa says:

‘If you do not understand the emptiness properly  
and if you do not get the wisdom properly,  
no matter how much you devote yourself to the renunciation or the altruistic mind,  
you will never, never, never be able to cut the root of *samsara*; therefore...’

And he did not continue by: ‘try to understand the emptiness’, but

... ‘therefore try to understand the *dependent arising*’ [or *relativity*].

Tsongkhapa didn’t say not to try to understand emptiness, but he did not emphasize to understand emptiness. He emphasized to know the dependent arising. Buddha chose to call the logic of dependent arising the king-logic to the understanding of emptiness. Through proper, sensible, logical reasoning you gain understanding. Out of the hundreds of different logical ways Buddha chose the logic of dependent arising as the king-logic to understand emptiness. A sort of master-key it is.

Tsongkhapa emphasized that in order to cut the root of *samsara*, it is necessary to know emptiness and because of that you try to understand the dependent arise. So, he does not make us look into the empty side, but into the fullness-side. When you understand the fullness-side it becomes easy to understand the ‘empty’ side. If you look for the empty on the empty side alone, you won’t understand it at all and that way people get difficulties. The right angle to look into emptiness, is dependent-arising; looking from the fullness-side into the empty, not from the empty-side into the fullness. This is a point that should be clear.<sup>51</sup>

## **EMPTINESS – SELFLESSNESS**

The question is: what is emptiness empty of? That becomes very important. That question was raised a number of times. In India, in the earlier period from the Buddhist historical point of view, there were a lot of different viewpoints on emptiness. There are four different Buddhist schools of tenets<sup>52</sup> and each one of them also has a lot of divisions. Even in Tibet, after Buddhism came from India to Tibet, a lot of different viewpoints on this subject of emptiness came up.

All Buddhists will say the same things about the Buddha, they will say the same about dharma, they will tell the same about mantras, yidams, deities, but they will present emptiness differently. Whether we recognize it or not I do not know, but there are different ways of presentation.

Why? When we try to see emptiness within the capacity of our understanding, it is very likely that we will draw the wrong conclusions. And if you get the wrong conclusion, you get a problem. That is why it is recommended to follow what Nagarjuna said; almost everybody says so. But, Nagarjuna’s viewpoints have also been interpreted totally differently by his own disciples. They write different books, they write all these things, hundreds of different viewpoints there are. Even in Tibet also there are a lot of different views. But Je Tsongkhapa is the most outstanding saint and scholar in wisdom.

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<sup>51</sup> See Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of understanding*, ch. 2 and 3.

<sup>52</sup> Vaibashika, Sautratika, Cittamatra and Madyamika.

**Tsongkhapa and emptiness**

Tsongkhapa, who was just a poor monk, who had no title, no name, no throne, nothing, just a poor monk from eastern Tibet, who carried his load on the back and walked up to Central Tibet, began to study and developed very well. He had a number of disciples going with him wherever he went. People at that time had no time-pressure. Wherever Tsongkhapa went, all his friends and disciples would go together with him for months. Sometimes Tsongkhapa moved so fast, that when the rumor had spread and people reached the area he was supposed to be, he had left for another place already. Thousands of people were going round with him; he had that many disciples.

Tsongkhapa was fully satisfied with all the varieties of teachings that he had taken, but he was never satisfied with the explanations of emptiness. Never! He had 138 different teachers and none of them satisfied him with their explanation of emptiness. He had a lot of doubts and started asking questions which after some time they couldn't even answer. He had a big problem of understanding this. Finally he decided to go to India where he thought he might be able to find some great living person who really could explain it so that he could meditate and gain experience on it. He was looking for that and prepared to leave Tibet and go to India.

The next part of the story tells how Tsongkhapa was sent into retreat, meditated and got into face-to-face contact with Manjushri, the embodiment of wisdom.<sup>53</sup> When Tsongkhapa had a person-to-person contact with Manjushri he began to receive and understand the explanation on this emptiness.

**SELFLESSNESS - finding the object to be negated**

The existence of each and every thing depends on everything other than itself. An example is: if to get up I have to depend on somebody else or a walking stick to get me up, it means I cannot depend on myself. Likewise, things cannot stand by themselves alone. They require a lot of different parts and parcels to be put together. We call this: persons and everything else, all other phenomena, are self-less, I-less, identity-less.

When we say empty, the emptiness of persons is their selflessness, *I*-lessness. I cannot be *I*-less, because I am talking, I am listening. So the question rises: '-less' of what, empty of what? That is important.

In order to get to the wisdom of emptiness of the self, we have to see what is the existence of self (or what it would be if it did actually exist). How do I perceive self-existence? My mind definitely does perceive self-existence. This is a very important point. When you hit the self, when you say it does not exist, you are not hitting some kind of physical form, you are hitting a certain way the mind *perceives* self-existence. It is more how your mind perceives, projects, or grasps on the person, rather than that it is kicking the person or the self itself.

We are talking about self-lessness or emptiness. Actually when you are talking about emptiness, it is divided into two: (1) emptiness of the person and (2) emptiness of phenomena other than persons. Emptiness of the person is easier to understand than emptiness of other phenomena. But if you understand the emptiness on one, you will automatically understand emptiness on the others.

**Practice: guidelines for a meditation on finding the object to be negated**

Take the example of *I*-lessness. As the first step you have to see what we are '-less' of. It is not the person, but something else. There is nothing left except the way I perceive, the way I hold or how I grasp *me*. When I look at *me*, how am I going to grasp it? When I talk about, "I did this, I did that," what kind of projection do I have in my mind? What do I mean by, "I did it?" What do I project at that time? What do I perceive in my mind? Where does that *I* come from? What is the basis on which my thoughts go of what I did? What is that *I*? That is the real point here. How do I project the *I*?

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<sup>53</sup> See page 38

It is not the point just to ask, “Where is this *I*? Is it my body? Is it my mind?” Going deeper in that way is not the point. If that were the point, you could look at a chair and say, “Where is the chair? Is it on the arm? Is it on the seat? Is it on that back?” and you could start taking the back out, the arms out, the seat out and then you’d say, “Hey there is no chair. I see the emptiness of the chair.” That is *not* emptiness of the chair, you simply lost the chair. So that is not the point.

The point is: how do I perceive things? My mind projects. When I say, “I did something,” what do I think? When I say *I*, what picture do I get? Many people don’t think anything, just say, “I did it.” Which *I*? “Oh, just in here somewhere.” Whether you think or do not think, you had some kind of automatic instantaneous projection of *I*. Without thinking, without realizing we do have some kind of automatic instantaneous projection.

The moment you begin to look and say, “Which part is that *me*; the part that is the mind or the part that is the body?” The moment you start thinking and analyzing the projected, misapprehended *I*, it will lose its shape and clarity and begin to disappear. That thinking *can* overpower – not necessarily – the instantaneous projection of *I*. When we look for *self*-less or *I*-less, we are not looking for a separate *I*, we are not looking for a separate self, but we are looking for that instantaneous projection!

Without anybody informing, without your own mind making it up, you automatically from the beginning are used to some kind of projection of it. *That* is what you really have to look for!

Suppose you are walking with some people around you and somebody comes walking right towards you, looks you in the face and says, “Hey, you thief!” What do I feel straightway? “Wow, I didn’t steal anything! You call *me* a thief?!” The first moment you think he is wrong, the second moment, when you really realize he is really calling you a thief, you think, “How can I be a thief, I resist this! How dare he call *me* a thief!”

If you look at the moment you say, “I resist this, I am not a thief!” you will see that you grasp something called *I* which is neither on the mind nor on the body, just on the combination of the body and the mind somewhere ‘inside’, some kind of ‘lump’ that comes up and says, “I cannot tolerate your statement!”

The way your mind will grasp that *I*, which is some kind of ‘lump’ on the combination body-mind without seeing it either on body or mind, that is supposed to be the true way of perceiving that wrong perception of *I*.

Another example. If you are going to fall from a big mountain-cliff, you think, “I am going to fall!” You don’t think, ‘My body is going to fall,’ or, “My mind is going to fall,” but, “I am going to fall!” At that point the *I* grasps, once again

Normally the projected *I* is naturally hiding inside, totally hiding. It has a tremendous protection of shields. The moment you start concentrating, all the shields will go up and you are totally covered, you won’t encounter it. So the only way to encounter it is when you get a big shock, when you are insulted in a big way or when you are really afraid. These are the moments that that very thing comes up clearly for a second, very briefly. You can encounter it a little bit at that time. It is recommended to look into that deeply.

How to look? Not overlook it, not undercook either. When two people are walking in the street together, without realizing the one is adjusting to the other. That adjustment is done by ourselves without putting efforts in it. In that manner you go along with your *I*, how that is perceiving. That is how you look in. What you are going to encounter? Even then you do not perceive it. During the period that you are called a thief – something you don’t want to hear – something is hit. That is the real way the self-existence is perceived.

Once you begin to see that that big *I* doesn’t really exist, then *my* will loosen. *I* and *my* are the real causes of trouble. When that big *I* gets shaken, then *my* is very much shaken too.

The traditional Indian example of Chandrakirti is the horse-cart.

If, for example, the cart were burned, its parts would also cease to exist.  
Likewise, when the inherent existence of the part-possessor is burned away by the mental fire of wisdom, so is the inherent existence of the parts consumed.

Chandrakirti, *Guide to the Middle Way*, ch. 6, vs. 161<sup>54</sup>.

When the horse-cart catches fire and is burned, the question of the parts is not left. If the horse-cart is burned, the wheels are burned, the seat is burned, everything is burned. Therefore, if the horse-cart is burned, everything is gone, shaky, not useful, not serviceable. Similarly when *I* is shaken by wisdom, *my* will be shaken.

Where does the trouble come in? The trouble comes in because of *my*. *I* was hurt; this is *my* friend - attachment; *my* enemy - hatred. The black and white division begins there; it comes from *my*. Very strong. That makes me feel happy, makes me feel miserable, which makes me feel high, makes me feel low: my wish has been distorted, what I don't want I am getting. A lot of this *my* brings the direct encounter with the delusions. These delusions can work because of *I* and then work through because of the *my* and *mine* business.

What do you really look for in selflessness? Chandrakirti has said:

The yogi perceives that all the disturbing conceptions and negative aspects of existence arise from the view of the transitory composite (*jigta*), i.e. the disturbing conception of an inherently existent I and mine. Upon understanding the self to be an objective referent of this view, He proceeds to negate such an inherently existent self.

Chandrakirti, *Guide to the Middle Way*, ch. 6, vs. 120<sup>55</sup>

All the defilements and faults of things come from the wrong view. When you want to destroy the wrong view, you have to see:

How do I view it? How do I look at it? How do I perceive? How is what I perceive wrongly wrong? You need to see that. When you look at that, what is wrongly perceived is that big dictator *I* behind. When you know that, the practitioner should destroy that *I*.

That doesn't mean I should destroy the *I* which is the basis of functioning, the basis of karma, the *I* which comes from the previous life and which goes to the future life; that is not to be destroyed! But the *I* which is the way I perceive; *that* should be destroyed.

Is that a little clear? The moment you hear 'selflessness' it does not mean the self is not there; the self we wrongly perceive is not there. What do we perceive wrongly? We perceive an independent self, a self which does not depend on anything else, a self that really comes in. When Professor Thurman was here last year and gave a talk, he drew a large Sanskrit letter on the blackboard and said: A person who doesn't recognize that word, will when you ask him, say, "What is that?" But somebody who recognizes this, will say, "This is a big A coming out."<sup>56</sup>

That is what it really is; that is how you perceive things. We perceive something coming out from there. It is dependent, *dependent* on having the whole things put together. In other words an independent permanent self does not exist. What do we perceive? We perceive an independent *I*, which neither depends on the mind nor depends on the body; we just see (or project or think we see) self-inherent existence. The moment the inherent existence is shaken -you can't destroy it totally - a little bit, we begin to move.

This is *not* emptiness, I warn you! We simply are recognizing the -lessness, we are simply recognizing what is to be destroyed, our false perception and belief and what self is to be negated or refuted. The

<sup>54</sup> Translation: Geshe Rabten, *Echoes of Voidness*, pg. 81.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. pg. 74.

<sup>56</sup> For a similar explanation see Robert Thurman *Inner Revolution*, pg. 85-88.

negation has big problems. If you negate too much you lose everything and you become nihilistic, you hold the nihilistic view, you lose the fundament, you lose everything. If you don't cut it well enough, you get the problems of the view of 'existentialism' [absolutism or eternalism]. These are the two extreme views. This is a difficult point, a very difficult point. But that is what it is: nihilism on one side and eternalism on the other side.

A lot of people have a [another] problem, saying that things "neither exist nor do not exist." Especially in the Tibetan tradition we have that very strong, "it exists because it is the basis of all the fundamental functioning; it does not exist because the pure buddha-mind does not perceive it." This is a problem, a big problem. Why? Because it cuts both sides a little bit too much. There is no such thing as "neither existing nor not existing." If you exist you exist, if you don't exist, you don't exist. Full stop. The neither-nor business cannot be there at all.

The wisdom of emptiness has many stages. The first one is: seeing clearly the faults of the delusions and the results they give, and the qualities of positivity and the results it gives.

Don't just put knowledge on the tape or in the notebook, but put it together in your mind and analyze it. Analyze it till you are convinced that it is true, until you find truth in that, the true nature of the faults and the true nature of the good qualities. I am not talking about the emptiness truth-level. Even now we accept certain things like: delusions are bad. We will say, "Yes, yes, I am convinced." But it is a simple conviction because I was told delusions are bad. If somebody else comes and says, "Hey, attachment is wonderful, it gives you a good time." If you are told about the qualities of attachment your mind will say, "Oh, yes all this is not bad, there is something good in it." Why? Because you haven't analyzed it. You have to analyze it properly, seeing what is the truth in it, till you get properly convinced.

Seeing the truth of the faults and the qualities is the first stage of wisdom. It is not wisdom, it is the first step of the staircase leading towards wisdom. You should use here now all the subjects you have read about, like determination to be free, why you have to be free and so on. It is now the time to use the information of "bad, bad, bad and pain, pain, pain," to use it here, meditate on it, analyze it. Once you see that, you are touching the first step.

We have given points to meditate on for each of the subjects we covered, right? I hope everybody is doing it in their own homes. Rely on yourself to do the meditation in your own way, comfortably in your own house, your own room or under a tree or wherever. If you do not meditate, it is not me who is the loser, you are. I remind you of that, it makes no difference to me, but really, you have to if you want to benefit.

I think I should stop here. We've touched this subject just a little bit. We will come back to this a little later, and will go gradually. This emptiness is very important but you have to proceed very slowly, because you can get a lot of wrong ideas and getting the wrong ideas is not good. We will go very slowly on this and gradually go deeper into it. It is very important not to misunderstand!

#### **CONCLUDING VERSE**

Vs. 14 **When you realize the essentials  
Of the three principles of the path,  
Rely on solitude and powerful efforts,  
And swiftly achieve the eternal goal, my son!**

With this encouragement to put what is heard into practice, the commentary on the *Three Principles* ends.

QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE: :

Try to see the dependent origination in your daily life.  
Practice the meditation suggestions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING:

On concentration meditation:

Geshe Rabten, *Treasury of Dharma*, pg. 107-113

Rob Nairn, *Diamond Mind*

On dependent arising

Dalai Lama, *Ancient Wisdom, Modern World*, Ch. 3

On the wisdom of emptiness:

Gelek Rinpoche, *Self and Selflessness*.

Tsongkhapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 111-133

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principles Aspects of the Path*, pg. 107-126

Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism*, pg. 187-206: Shunyata

Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate*, pg. 58-62: Meditation on emptiness

Thubten Chödrön, *Open Heart, Clear Mind*, pg. 159-167: Wisdom realizing reality,  
pg. 168-175: Meditation, Developing concentration and insight

Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of understanding*.

A. Woll, 15: *Lighting the Lamp*, pg. 145-153: Selflessness

On the concluding verse:

Tsongkhapa, *The Principal Teachings of Buddhism*, pg. 137-140

Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principle Aspects of the Path*, pg. 126.-128

On Vajrayana:

Dayab Rinpoche, *Buddhismus im Westen*, pg. 53-62

Lama Yeshe, *Introduction in tantra*.

Chögyam Trungpa, *Journey without goal*.

## Appendices

Outlines	174
Preparing for meditation: the practice of the <i>Ganden Lha Gyema</i>	178
Overviewing meditation	188
Questions and answers and discussions	193

## OUTLINES OF THE ROOT TEXT

### 1. The Preliminaries

- 1.1 An offering of praise ‘ I bow down...’
- 1.2 A pledge to compose the work vers 1
- 1.3 Encouragement to study. vers 2

### 2. The Actual Teachings

- 2.1 FIRST PATH: DETERMINATION TO BE FREE OR RENUNCIATION
  - 2.1.1 Why you need renunciation/determination to be free vers 3
  - 2.1.2 Methods for developing renunciation/determination to be free:
    - 2.1.2.1 Stopping desire for this life vers 4a
    - 2.1.2.2 Stopping desire for future lives vers 4b
  - 2.1.3 How to know when you’ve found determination to be free vers 5
  
- 2.2 SECOND PATH: THE ALTRUISTIC ATTITUDE - BODHICITTA.
  - 2.2.1 Why you need the altruistic attitude vers 6
  - 2.2.2 Methods for developing the altruistic attitude vers 7-8
  - 2.2.3 How to know when you’ve found the altruistic attitude
  
- 2.3. THE PERFECT VIEW: AN UNBIASED OUTLOOK ON REALITY
  - 2.3.1 Why you need the perfect view vers 9
  - 2.3.2 What is the perfect view? vers 9-10
  - 2.3.3 How to know when your analysis is complete
    - 2.3.3.1 How to know when your analysis is not yet complete vers 11
    - 2.3.3.2 How to know when your analysis is complete vers 12
  - 2.3.4 A Unique teaching of the Prasangika Madhyamika School vers 13

### 3. Conclusion:

- Practice: Put into practice what you have learned vers 14

## THE ROOT OF THE THREE PRINCIPLE ASPECTS OF THE PATH

by Lama Tsongkhapa

Homage to the venerable gurus.

1. The quintessence of all the teachings of the Buddhas,  
The path praised by all supreme bodhisattvas,  
And the gateway for fortunate seekers of liberation:  
This I shall explain as well as I can.
2. You not addicted to samsaric indulgences,  
Who strive to make precious life meaningful  
And have focused your mind on the path pleasing to the Buddhas,  
O fortunate one, listen with a clear mind.
3. There is no way divorced of a stabilized mind  
By which addiction to the ocean of samsaric delights is calmed;  
And as it is this fixation that binds living beings (to suffering),  
First cultivate the spirit of a stabilized mind.
4. By contemplating how difficult a precious human life is to acquire  
And how our lifespan is not fixed,  
fantasies concerning this life are reversed;

And by thinking again and again about the infallibility of karma and its fruit,  
As well as about the unsatisfactory nature of cyclic existence,  
Fantasies concerning future lives are reversed.

5. By meditating in this way, eventually craving for samsaric indulgence  
Does not arise for even an instant; and  
The aspiration to liberation abides day and night without let.  
At that time the stabilized mind has been formed.
6. Yet if this stabilized mind is not conjoined  
With the pure bodhisattva aspiration, it does not serve  
As a cause of highest enlightenment's perfect bliss.  
The wise therefore cultivate this supreme bodhisattva mind.
7. Swept along by the currents of the four raging rivers (of suffering),  
Tightly bound by the karmic shackles hard to unlock,  
Caught in the iron web of ego-grasping,  
And lost in the thick fog of ignorance,
8. (The living beings) repeatedly take rebirth in limitless samsara  
And in an unbroken stream suffer the three types of pain.  
Contemplate this state in which mother sentient beings exist,

And give birth to the supreme bodhisattva mind.

9. Yet if one has aroused the stabilized mind and bodhisattva attitude  
But does not possess wisdom perceiving the final nature of being,  
One will not be able to sever the root of samsara.  
Hence apply yourself to the methods for understanding relativity.
10. The practitioner who perceives the ever-unfailing reality of  
The cause and effect nature of all in samsara and beyond  
And has utterly destroyed the habit of misapprehension,  
That being stands on the path pleasing to the Buddhas.
11. On the appearance side, the infallible relativity of dependent arising;  
On the emptiness side, an understanding of the lack of true existence:  
So long as these appear to the mind as separate,  
One still has not achieved the insight of the Masters.
12. When the two understandings occur as one, without imbalance,  
Then simply perceiving the unfailing (conventional reality) of dependent arising  
Destroys the misapprehension of the ultimate nature of things.  
At that time the sense of the view (of emptiness) is complete.
13. Moreover, the appearance of things eliminates the extreme of "is"  
And emptiness eliminates the extreme of "is not".  
One perceives the manner in which cause and effect occurs  
And no longer is caught in the mindset that grasps at extremes.
14. When in this way you have correctly understood  
The essential points of the three principal paths,  
Make solitude your foundation.  
O child, generate the strength of joyful energy  
And quickly accomplish the highest spiritual goal.

The colophon: This instruction was composed by the learned Buddhist monk Lozang Dragpa (i.e. Lama Tsongkhapa) for Tsakho Ponpo Nga wang Drakpa.

*Translation into English: Glenn H. Mullin*

## **PREPARING FOR MEDITATION: THE PRACTICE OF GANDEN LHA GYEMA**

### **GUIDED MEDITATION ON GANDEN LHA GYEMA**

First you sit properly and comfortably.  
If you have a problem sitting crossed-legged,  
sit in whatever position is comfortable for you.  
All unwanted energy you blow out from the nose.  
Then take three very soft breathings.

Concentrate at your heart level.  
When you are concentrated at your heart level, you watch your thoughts.  
At any thought that comes up, which is influenced by your day's activities or something bothering you, just try to change the focus back to your heart.  
Just relax. Let the mind be empty, totally. Let it be free of any different thoughts.  
And relax again. Relax.

### **TAKING REFUGE AND DEVELOPING A GOOD MOTIVATION**

Now generate a pure thought, a pure motivation:  
I would like to obtain the ultimate development, the ultimate buddhahood.  
Not for my sake, but for the benefit of all living beings.  
For that I would like to practice and meditate this great path.

I go for refuge to the triple gem.  
I shall liberate all sentient beings.  
To lead them to an enlightened state  
I generate purely an enlightened motive.

or:

I take refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha  
Until I obtain enlightenment.  
By practicing generosity and the other perfections  
May I be able to obtain enlightenment,  
for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Then light radiates from your heart, fills your body completely.  
The inside of your body is full of light.

Then light goes out from your body, shines out, radiating a huge aura.  
The light fills up the room, the city, the country, the universe and all other multi-galaxies; millions and millions of them are filled up by the light coming from your heart.  
This light wishes you happiness  
and wherever the light reaches it wishes all beings happiness and purity.

The light gradually dissolves back into this universe, then back to the country, to the city, to the house and finally into your body. It dissolves back into your heart level.

### **CREATION AND INVOCATION OF THE SUPREME FIELD OF MERIT**

Now you generate in front of you Tsongkhapa with his two disciples,  
representing all the enlightened beings.

Then from all the different pure lands and particularly from the pure land of Tushita, Tsongkhapa with his two disciples, coming from the heart of buddha Maitreya, appears in front of you and dissolves into your mentally created Tsongkhapa with the two disciples.

From the heart of the Protector of the hundreds of deities of the Land of Joy  
Comes a cloud that resembles a mass of fresh white curd.  
Omniscient Lozang Dragpa, King of the Dharma, together with your sons,  
I request you to come here on its tip.

## **THE SEVEN LIMB PRACTICE**

### *1. Request to remain*

You make a request to Tsongkhapa, who is representing all the enlightened beings: to help me, to support me to help all other sentient beings and I request them to remain with me for ever.

O venerable Gurus with white smiles of delight,  
Seated on lion-thrones, lotus and moon in the space before me,  
I request you to remain for hundreds of eons in order to spread the teachings  
And be the Supreme Field of Merit for my mind of faith.

By making this request from the bottom of my heart, they not only accepted my request but they are happy to remain with me forever. Visualize and imagine that strongly.

### *2. Praise*

Now in order to benefit me I would like to praise the enlightened beings.  
I like to praise them by saying their qualities of body, speech and mind.

Your minds have the intellect that comprehends  
the full extent of what can be known,  
Your speech, with its excellent explanations,  
becomes the ear-ornament for those of good fortune,  
Your bodies are radiantly handsome with glory renowned,  
I prostrate to you whom to behold, hear or recall is worthwhile.

### *3. Offering*

Also I would like to make offerings, offerings of flowers, incense etc, in short, the whole universe that I and others are in, the whole universe occupied or unoccupied and my body, my speech and my mind, I would like offer to my Supreme Field of Merit.

Not only I offer it, but my offerings are very happily accepted. Not only it has been accepted, with the acceptance it brought great bliss to the objects to whom I am making these offerings. Not only it developed great bliss to their body, mind and speech, this great bliss has acknowledged great wisdom and great compassion. So by acknowledging it, it becomes inseparable compassion and wisdom.

Not only this. By seeing this it established in me: my Supreme Field of Merit is the embodiment of compassion and wisdom.

Pleasing water offerings, various flowers,  
Fragrant incense, light, and scented water,  
This ocean of such cloud-like offerings,  
both actually arranged and mentally created,  
I present to you, O Supreme Field of Merit.

Not only we now made offerings, the offerings were accepted and we established our pure Supreme Field of Merit, who is inseparable from all enlightened beings.

#### *4. Purification*

Also in their presence I – and all sentient beings– would like to take this opportunity here to purify whatever bad karma we have accumulated from the limitless beginning.

Buddha has promised: if one purifies with the four powers, no matter how heavy the non-virtue may be, it can be purified. And as a buddha doesn't cheat his followers, I am here to remind you, Supreme Field of Merit, to help us to purify all the non-virtuous karmas that I and all mother sentient beings have created.

I would like to purify all the non-virtuous actions that I and the mother sentient beings have committed. In particular the bad things done that I remember as well as the things that I do not remember but might have created, I regret very strongly. I try not to repeat them. You, the Supreme Field of Merit, and my efforts combined together complete here the four powers.

Whatever non-virtues of body, speech and mind  
I have accumulated from beginningless time,  
And especially any transgressions of my three vows,  
I confess over and again with fervent regret from my heart.

By making this strong regret and repentance and by establishing these four powers I and the mother sentient beings have been purified and I have become pure now.  
I am pure. I am pure and free of all non-virtuous karmas. I am pure.

#### *5. Rejoice*

Just being pure will not be sufficient to develop the great mind and to obtain buddhahood. I would like to accumulate merit. One of the best methods the buddhas and bodhisattvas recommended to accumulate merit is rejoice.

I would like to rejoice the great activities done by all great people that have come and appeared from time to time; particularly the great work of my Supreme Field of Merit.

From the depths of our hearts we rejoice, O Protectors,  
In the great waves of your deeds,  
You who strove to learn and practice in this degenerate age  
And who made your fully endowed life worthwhile  
by abandoning the eight worldly feelings.

#### *6. Request for guidance*

I also request the Supreme Field of Merit to be my guidance, to be my friend, to be my spiritual friend, to be my spiritual guru, to be with me, to guide and help me.

You the great Masters, may your sky of Dharmakaya  
Develop the clouds of love and compassion;  
And shower the profound and deep teachings,  
As suitable, on the ground of your disciples.

#### *7. Dedication*

I would like to dedicate all the virtues which I have created here by doing this practice and all my other virtues to whatever the best that the enlightened beings recommend, that is to obtain, me and all mother sentient beings, the ultimate spiritual development, as well as I dedicate for the method or the path to remain forever. I dedicate all my virtues for these purposes.

I dedicate whatever virtues I have ever collected  
 For the sake of the teaching and of all sentient beings,  
 And in particular for the essential teachings  
 Of Venerable Lozang Dragpa to shine forever.

By doing this seven-branch practice my Supreme Field of Merit is very happy with my activity. So are the buddhas and bodhisattvas all over. They are happy with whatever I am trying to do.

**INVITATION** [optional]:

By this time I make a request to my spiritual guidance to remain on my crown and give me the strength and force and the power to carry out all the works that I would like to do.

O glorious and precious root Guru,  
 Come take your lotus- and moon seat placed here on my head.  
 And keep me safe in your great kindness.  
 Bestow on me please the powerful attainments of your body speech and mind.

Having made this request my Supreme Field of Merit now sits on my crown, facing the way I face.

**PRAYING AND REQUESTING**

**(1) Purification**

While I make the request [by saying the *Migtsema*-mantra] **white** light and liquid comes, strong tremendous powerful light and the light is followed by and filled up with the liquid. And it is so strong as though a whole ocean is falling on my head.

I am leading all sentient beings here and my Supreme Field of Merit throws light and liquid in a tremendous amount on me and all other sentient beings.

It fills up our body completely, sort of washes away all our non-virtuous works, all unwanted karmas, sicknesses, diseases, unwanted things, all.

Very powerful nectar and light combined comes from my crown and goes down through the eyes, nose, throat, chest as well as through the back.

Not only inside but also outside, in- and outside it washes my body completely, even from the back, the lower portion of the back to the legs and the toes. To the tip of the toes everything completely goes away, inside as well as outside, all the unwanted non-virtuous, bad karmas, miseries and all this. With this we say seven *Migtsema*.

*MIG-ME TZE-WE TER-CHEN CHEN-RE-ZIG*  
*DRI-ME KYEN-PE WANG-PO JAM-PEL-YANG*  
*DÜ-PUNG MA-LÜ JOM-DZE SANG-WE-DAG*  
*GANG-CHEN KE-PE TZUG-GYEN TSONG-KHA-PA*  
*LO-ZANG DRAG-PE ZHAB-LA SÖL-WA DEB.*

You are Avalokiteshvara, great treasure of compassion not aimed at true existence  
 And Manjushri, master of flawless wisdom,  
 As well as Vajrapani, destroyer of hordes of demons without exception.  
 O Tsongkhapa, crown jewel of the sages of the land of Snows  
 Lozang Dragpa, I make requests at your feet.

As I have been visualizing all the non-virtuous things, cause and result both have been totally washed away, pushed away, cleared away from our body and mind both.  
 And I have become pure.  
 My body is filled up with light and liquid and I have become pure, clean and clear.

**(2) Increasing life-energy**

I make a continuous request to my Supreme Field of Merit to rebuild and build my life, energy and strength and spiritual prosperity, all, while saying the *Migtsema* again 7 times.

You visualize the same light and liquid, nectar, but this time in a **yellow** color. Yellow is the essence of the earth and the color of the gold, therefore it represents the strength, energy and essence of the elements.

The yellow light and nectar fills up my body from the toes to the crown, completely. I receive light, energy, strength, and prosperity. And I and all mother sentient beings not only be pure but full of strength and all this.

*MIG-ME TZE-WE TER-CHEN CHEN-RE-ZIG....*

**(3) Increasing wisdom-power and capability**

Not only it rebuilds our strength, energy and longevity, but it builds our wisdom: the wisdom of clarity, of depth, and of quickness.

Visualize **red**-colored light and red nectar coming to you and filling up your body.

*MIG-ME TZE-WE TER-CHEN CHEN-RE-ZIG.....*

The wisdom of clarity clears off the ignorance;  
the quick wisdom overpowers the forgetfulness;  
the depth wisdom will make us to understand things deeper.  
All three qualities of wisdom have been developed.

**(4). Wrathful activities**

Not only we developed this wisdom-power, longevity, prosperity, strength and energy, we also develop power as well as the wrathful activities and other activities, to be able to utilize them if needed.

Visualize **dark-blue** light and nectar coming to you and filling up your body.

*MIG-ME TZE-WE TER-CHEN CHEN-RE-ZIG.....*

**Other mantras**

Then we say the mantra of emptiness, the mantra of the true reality, the true nature of existence, which protects you from disturbing obstacles.

*TAYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SOHA.*

You are not only by yourself alone, but surrounded by all mother sentient beings. Your Supreme Field of Merit – in whatever form you may visualize it – is inseparable from Buddha Shakyamuni who has been the greatest buddha for us in this eon, because buddha Shakyamuni is the one who has been showing us all these different paths.

We say the Buddha's mantra here by making the same request, the same prayer: 'Not for me but for all mother sentient beings I would like to obtain buddhahood.'

In other words, 'I would like to become a buddha like you, not for my sake, but in order to help all other sentient beings. For that I will say this mantra and meditate.

Your Supreme Field of Merit is in the form of **Buddha Sakyamuni**

By making this request Buddha multiplies and each sentient being has a buddha sitting on their crown. And light and liquid in nectar form carries out purification, rebuilding of the energy etc. of all sentient beings including myself. As usual we say the mantra 21 times.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNI YE SOHA.*

Your Supreme Field of Merit who has not only the form of the guru Tsongkhapa, but also of Buddha Shakyamuni, is also inseparable from the buddha of love and compassion **Avalokiteshvara**.

We make a strong request to Avalokiteshvara to develop love, compassion and the extra-ordinary altruistic mind within me and all mother sentient beings.

*OM MANI PADME HUM*

Your Supreme Field of Merit is also inseparable from **Tara**, the love and compassion of the buddhas in female form. She who has the proper method and the love to take us away from the circle of existence, samsara. She who protects us from all fears. We make a strong request to Tara to protect us, especially the fears of our delusions, like attachment, hatred and so on.

*OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA*

Many of you may think, ‘Hey, what is going on? When you reach the mantra *Mig-me tze-we ter-chen Chen-re-zig* you’re praying to Je Tsongkhapa. And then you say *Om muni muni maha muni ye soha* for Sakyamuni Buddha. And then you say *Om Mani Padme Hum* for Avalokiteshvara, the love-and-compassion buddha. You look as though you are seeing, visualizing, three different persons coming in, one after another. It looks like you are praying to Tsongkhapa, Je Rinpoche, -he is the figure representing all- and then you have a buddha figure coming in and you are praying to Buddha, then you have Avalokiteshvara coming in and you’re praying to him.... But did you get what it is really telling you?

What it is really telling you, is this: you may have those different manifestations there, but to whatever is comfortable to you, you adjust it and then you look at every manifestation as one. One represents all, all in one. Okay? One represents all, all in one. There is no separation. You have to see everything as inseparable, when you say the prayer. It is too early to talk to you on this line just now. However since you are saying these things, it is better you have some idea. Don’t think of all different figures: Buddha comes out here, Tara comes there, Avalokiteshvara comes there and Tsongkhapa comes there and zigzagzigzag; you don’t need. Whatever is comfortable. One represents all, all represent one. All in one, one is all. Like that, okay?

And you have even to adjust it yourself. Even your practice you will adjust, because what you are really practicing in meditation and practice, what you are really trying to do is: you try to obtain that stage. Whether it is the Buddha stage, the Avalokiteshvara stage, the Tsongkhapa stage, whatever the stage may be, you are seeking a total-enlightenment stage. And when that is *that* one, you are looking and aiming at this one. This is important and you have to take it as a fundamental basis before you play anything with it, okay? There is no joke, no trick, it is straightforward, plain. Otherwise one may think, ‘What is this, so many figures coming?’ and then you may have discomfort. And some people may even have problems with figures totally. And if you have that, that is also fine. You can have it figure-less. But it should not be nothing! Even the emptiness is full. So it should not be nothing. But you don’t need a figure; that is also okay. Whatever is comfortable to you, you have to adjust to accordingly. But you have to project that as a total enlightened being. We call it being, but that does not necessarily mean a separate being from you.

Now please relax for a minute. This is an important thing I would like to talk to you here. The combination of saying mantras and meditation together serves two purposes. If you meditate and say mantras separately then it takes two times. So the important technique, especially the *vajrayana* technique, is to utilize them together.

In vajrayana, meditation means to coordinate saying the *words* with concentrated thinking about their *meaning*, and doing the *visualization*. When you coordinate them, you are not only meditating, you are using the words; you are not only using the words, you are using samadhi, i.e. thought. And when you visualize too, then you have all three combined. That means: you have the physical or mental

gesture<sup>57</sup>, called mudra, you have the words which substitute as the mantra, and the concentration or meditation is the samadhi.<sup>58</sup>

This is the Vajrayana special technique, which make your mantra more powerful and your meditation more effective; one supports the other. So to learn this is very important. Then gradually I will put to you the meaning of *Om Mani Padme Hum* so that you can have more meditation done while saying the mantra. This is important.

Now whatever we did today we did quite good, quite good in the sense.... I might as well share it with you here. One of the highly developed spiritual persons that I rely on, in India, recently informed me that: how much the steps of the spiritual development are going to grow into you people, depends on how strong I pray as well as on how well *you* take it. That was the answer I got. Okay? So as far as I am concerned, I have prayed very strongly, as much as I could, all the time. And mind you, it is my character, somehow I always cooperate with everybody that comes in contact with me, especially more close and constant; for all those I pray all the time, they are always included and in things like this we pray more specially together. And how well *you* take it, depends on *you*. I can't do anything, right? The methods that we are giving you are the techniques of how to do it.

The *Migtsema* has very special techniques, particularly good to develop wisdom and if you have a problem of loosing memory, this is very, very good too; it helps to rebuild memories tremendously. This a very special recommended technique for that, developing wisdom and memory. Through the *Migtsema* you can do anything; there are one million different activities here, really, for anything you want to there are. You'll pick them up gradually.

The next two verses are actually a very important prayer; we now say just the words only.

May the wisdom  
which follows learning, thinking and meditation, increase;  
And may the wisdom of teaching, debate and composing increase.  
May I achieve ordinary and extra-ordinary accomplishments.  
Bless me to quickly become like you.

May the simultaneously born great bliss shine immediately  
And the delusion shadow of inherent existence be cleared.  
Cut the net of doubts of the true nature of mind.  
Bless me to quickly become like you.

*Moge de wijsheid inzake leren, denken en mediteren toenemen,  
alook de wijsheid nodig voor onderricht, schrijven en debat.  
Moge ik gewone en buitengewone vaardigheden verwerven.  
Zegen mij opdat ik weldra moge zijn als u.*

*Moge de wijsheid die samengaat met grote gelukzaligheid, schitteren  
en de wanen-sluier van onafhankelijk bestaan worden opgetrokken.  
Scheur het web van twijfels omtrent de ware aard van de geest.  
Zegen mij opdat ik weldra moge zijn als u.*

If you want to do your analytical-meditation practice within the practice of the *Ganden Lha Gyema*, you do it here. You may use the *The Foundation of All Perfections*, that follows here, or the *Overviewing meditation* on page 188

**The Foundation of All Perfections**  
by Je Tsongkhapa [1357-1419]

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<sup>57</sup> in this case the visualisation

<sup>58</sup> So your body, your speech and your mind are all fully engaged in the practice.

*The foundations of the path*

Following a kind master, foundation of all perfections,  
Is the very root and basis of the path.  
Empower me to see this clearly  
And to make every effort to follow well.

Precious human life, gained but once,  
Has great potential but is easily lost.  
Empower me to remember this constantly  
And to think day and night of taking its essence.

*The practice common to the lower level*

I must remember that death is quick to strike,  
For spirit quivers in flesh like a bubble in water  
And after death one's good and evil deeds  
Trail after one like the shadow trails the body.

Understanding that this most certainly is true,  
May I discard every level of wrong  
And generate an infinite mass of goodness.  
Empower me to be thus continually aware.

*The practice common to the medium level*

Sensual gluttony is a gate to suffering  
And is not worthy of a lucid mind.  
Empower me to realize the shortcomings of samsara  
And to give birth to the great wish for blissful freedom.

And empower me that with mindfulness and alertness  
Born from thoughts ultimately pure,  
I may live in accord with the holy Dharma,  
The way leading to personal liberation.

*The practice of the Mahayana level*

Just as I myself have fallen into samsara's waters,  
So have all other sentient beings.  
Empower me to see this and really to practice  
Bodhimind, that carries the weight of freeing them.

Yet without habituation in the three moralities,  
Thought-training accomplishes no enlightenment.  
Empower me to know this deeply, and intensely to train  
In the various ways of the great bodhisattvas.

And empower me to pacify distorted mental wanderings  
And to decipher the ultimate meaning of life.  
That I may give birth within my mindstream  
To the path combining concentration and wisdom.

*The practice of Vajrayana*

One who trains in these common Mahayana practices  
Becomes a vessel worthy of the supreme vehicle, Vajrayana.  
Empower me that I may quickly and easily  
Arrive at that portal of fortunate beings.

The foundation of what then produces the two powers,  
Is the guarding of the pledges and commitments  
of tantric initiation.

Bless me so that I may have uncontrived knowledge of this  
And guard my discipline as I do my very life.

And bless me so that I may gain realization of the main practices  
Of the two stages of Vajrayana, essence of the tantric path;  
And, by sitting relentlessly in four daily sessions of yoga,  
Actualize just what the sages have taught.

*The dedication*

Empower me that the masters  
who have unfolded the sublime path within me,  
And the spiritual friends who have inspired me, may live long;  
And that the myriads of inner and outer interferences  
Be completely and utterly calmed forever.

In all future lives may I never be parted  
From the perfect lamas or the pure ways of Dharma.  
May I gain every experience of the paths and stages  
And quickly attain the stage of Vajradhara.

*DISSOLVING*

Visualize again: Your Supreme Field of Merit, that was in the form of Buddha, of Avalokiteshvara, in reality all enlightened beings, is in one single solid shape of Tsongkhapa with his two disciples.

The disciples dissolve into the central figure of Tsongkhapa, into the two shoulders.  
My Supreme Field of Merit has become very happy with the work I did and I am very grateful that I could do this, I am really happy I am able to do this.

I am grateful to you, you are happy with me, I like to dissolve myself into you, you like to dissolve yourself into me and I am jumping up and the Supreme Field of Merit is jumping down and finally the Supreme Field of Merit becomes very small, of light nature, very small yet having the thrones and everything, and comes sitting on my crown facing the same way as I face.

At the first dissolving verse through the central channel of your body, which opens in the middle of your crown like a trumpet, the throne goes down through the crown chakra, through the throat chakra and finally lands at your heart center. The heart center should be open, like an eight-petalled lotus.

O glorious and precious root Guru,  
come take your lotus and moon seat at my heart  
And keep me safe in your great kindness.  
Bestow on me please the powerful attainments of your body speech and mind.

At the second dissolving verse the flower- and moon seat land.

O glorious and precious root Guru,  
Come take your lotus- and moon seat at my heart  
And keep me safe in your great kindness.  
Help me to achieve ordinary and extraordinary accomplishments.

At the third dissolving verse Tsongkhapa himself, small, the size of a bird's egg, very small and of light nature, goes down and settles at your heart level and after Tsongkhapa has come down the heart petals should close and he will remain there forever.

O glorious and precious root Guru,  
Come take your lotus and moon seat at my heart.

And keep me safe in your great kindness.  
Remain steadfast until I achieve Buddhahood.

After that all the activities you are doing are done through the influence of your great Supreme Field of Merit. Your doing the helping, particularly helping others, should be done through that.

*CONCLUDING VERSES*

In life after life, supreme master Tsongkhapa  
Please be my Mahayana spiritual guide.  
May I never be separated for even a minute  
From the stainless path praised by the buddhas.

In short, throughout all my lives  
My I be guided by the great spiritual friend Manjushri.  
May I always meet the superlative path  
Shown by Tsongkhapa.

*MANDALA OFFERING*

By directing to the Fields of Buddhas this offering of a mandala,  
Built on a base resplendent with flowers, saffron water and incense,  
Adorned with the axial mountain [Mount Meru] and the four continents,  
as well as with the sun and the moon,  
May all sentient beings be led to these fields.  
OM IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

*DEDICATION*

By this merit may I quickly obtain  
The state of a Guru Buddha.  
And may I lead unto that state  
Every being without exception.

## OVERVIEWING MEDITATION

*taught as preliminary to the longevity blessing of White Tara, Nijmegen, April 1996*

Do kindly generate the thought that:

For the benefit of the countless mother sentient beings I would like to obtain the state of Buddha Arya Tara, for which I would like to have a long and healthy life. For that I would like to receive this initiation and then practice.

### *Embracing life*

The life I have got now is an important life. It has the qualities of time, opportunities, capabilities, perfections.

One side of my mind will tell me I am extremely busy, I've got a lot of things to do. But on the other hand I have time for everything I want to. I have time for gossip, time for running around, for sitting, for going to a movie, all of them. So why can't I have time to practice? Simply because I don't provide it. That is the mistake.

Now I would now like to provide time for myself to practice, because there *is* time, I have that leisure. I must take the opportunity.

Life is also rich, rich with capabilities, rich with the teachings of the Buddha, rich with the guidance of the Buddha, the experiences of the Buddha, available for me to follow. Also I have friends who are following the same path, too.

So this life of mine is rich with possibilities, opportunities and capabilities. Therefore I now resolve to utilize that opportunity.

If I fail to do so, if I keep looking for another opportunity like this, I won't get it. It will be nearly impossible, because the cause for such a life is quite rare within me.

The fundamental cause is perfect morality, which is a little shaky within me. The second cause is generosity, [morality, patience, enthusiasm, concentration and wisdom], the six paramita activities, which are also a little weak in me. Therefore, judging from the causal point of view the hope for next similar opportunity is a little bit shaky.

So, while I am having this life's opportunity I must make best use of it, rather than hoping to be able to do something better in future.

### *Being mindful of death*

Although I have such a life precious, difficult to find with me, I take life for granted.

However it is very fragile, very impermanent, one never knows when it is going to be interrupted or ended.

It is definite *that* it is going to be ended, sooner or later. No one lived for ever. So how can I expect and hope to live for ever? It is not possible. Buddha's, bodhisattva's, other great teachers, powerful kings, ministers, generals, all our historical events — in reality all are gone. Nobody is living today; no Napoleon, no Caesar, no emperors, no one. They are all gone, so I will also go.

Therefore I here pass a resolution: I always have to remember that I am also going. Therefore, while I am alive I must make best use of it.

When am I going to go? Who knows? I hope to live long, but we see people around us going. Without completing their work, without finishing their writing, without finishing their eating, without finishing their cup of coffee, without finishing smoking their cigarette, without finishing their going up the steps, they suddenly go when the time has come.

That also can happen to me. It can happen to me right now. There is no fixed time when I am supposed to go. Therefore, right now while I am alive, while I am well, while I am capable, I must make best use of my life!

If I'll continue to live for a few months I want to make sure that my future life is good. If I'll live a few years, I'd like to assure that my ultimate achievement of permanent freedom has been obtained.

If I've failed to get a solid achievement when death comes, what will happen to me? I'll have no control. I'll be swept away in the misery of a huge, open space — like an astronaut lost in the space — with no idea where I am going. I'll be pulled by my karma and land in the bardo of a next life, just not knowing how I am going to look like, just not knowing how I am going to feel, just not even knowing whether it is going to be a dark or a light space.

What can I do at that moment? What will help? No wealth can help, no health can help, even the strength of the body can't help. What will I have with me? Only the karma, the negative and the positive karma.

### *Seeking refuge*

If negative karma is connected I'll take a lower rebirth. That can be in hell, it can be at the hungry ghost level, it can be an animal, either in the deep sea or in the human land. Whatever life I'll take in the lower realms, it'll have miserable consequences: no knowledge of a spiritual path, no understanding, no way to help myself.

Therefore as I am alive right now, as I have the opportunity right now, as I have the protectors in front of me right now, I must seek protection from Buddha, from Dharma, from Sangha.

Why Buddha? Because Buddha himself had the same experiences and the same conditions as I have now. He has freed himself from all these fears, the fear of falling into the lower levels, the fear of dying, the fear of the bardo. Because he has freed himself, I would like to follow him.

Buddha also knows the method to help others. Buddha has all the compassion that is needed, Buddha helps everyone, whether one does anything for him or not, whether one is a Buddha's follower or not.

Your teaching, Buddha, your sharing of life experience is still living, which is a great opportunity for me right now. So I am here with all sentient beings to seek refuge in you, the Buddha, inseparable from the guru.

From now on till I obtain enlightenment, I and all sentient beings seek refuge in you, Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

NAMO GURUBHYE

NAMO BUDDHAYA, NAMO DHARMAYA, NAMO SANGHAYA

NAMO BUDDHA, NAMO DHARMA, NAMO SANGHA (.....x)

By taking refuge in Buddha, in Dharma, in Sangha, light and the liquid comes. It comes from the body of the Buddha, which is sangha, from the kindness and compassion of the all-knowing mind of the Buddha, which is buddha, from the sharing of his experience and the development followed thereby, which is the speech of the Buddha as well as the Dharma.

From the combination of all these qualities together, which has taken the physical form of Guru Buddha Sakyamuni, light and liquid comes, washes away all negativities, in particularly the negativities causing rebirth in the lower realms. All of them are washed away from our system completely, going out in the form of undesirable energy in an undesirable color.

Not only they are washed away inside, but also outside the body, in between the skin and the flesh, everywhere. In, out and in between they get completely washed away; from the crown downwards, down to the throat, down to the heart, the chest, from the shoulders down to the back, the spine, everywhere the light and liquid push them down, down to the navel level, inside the chakra's, to the kidney-area, further down to the point of the secret chakra, down to the knees, down to below the soles and toes. In and out all the undesirable energies and the negative actions are washed away, are gone out of our system completely.

And I become pure, clean, clear, like a crystal. I remain under the protection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When I seek refuge to the Buddha, Buddha accepts my refuge.

### *Actions and their consequences*

The acceptance of the Buddha's refuge depends on following the teachings. The essence of the teachings of the Buddha is the karmic system. Positive karma brings positive results, negative karma brings suffering. This is true, this is sure.

A characteristic of karma is that it is definite. Knowing this, may I be able to develop positive virtuous karma all the time. Any negative karma that comes, may I be able to purify it. By doing that I secure my future life. May I be able to do that, may I be blessed to do that. May I have the awareness of the negative and the positive karma's that I am indulging in through body, mind and speech.

Buddha also stated that karma not only is definite, but also fast growing. He gave the example of how a small seed can grow into a huge tree. This is external, internal it grows triple the rate. If I leave negative actions unpurified, they grow tremendously. May I be aware of that. I resolve that I'll purify all my negativities every day.

Buddha himself has stated that every negativity is impermanent. So, every negativity can be purified. There is no reason why I should not purify my negativities, knowing that negativities give terrible results and knowing that application of the four powers can purify all negativities.

I must take every opportunity that is available to purify all negativities. Particularly I must do it once every day, simply by taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, simply by generating love-compassion for all beings, simply by regretting the negativities that I have committed — whether I remember or do not remember them —, simply by engaging in meditation on love and compassion or meditation on emptiness, or generating a Buddha Sakyamuni in the form of Vajrasattva and reciting the 100-syllable mantra.

OM VAJSASATTVA SAMAYA

MANU PALAYA

VAJRASATTVA DENOPA

TISHTA DRIDO ME BHAWA

SUTO KAYO ME BHAWA

SUPO KAYO ME BHAWA

ANU RAKTO ME BHAWA

SARWA SIDDHI ME PRAYATCHA

SARWA KARMA SUTSA ME

TSITAM SHRIYAM KURU HUNG

HA HA HA HA HO

O great courageous one whose holy mind is the lotus nature of all buddhas, and who holds the samaya pledge, lead me along the path you took to enlightenment, to be closer to the vajra holy mind.

Please, remain firm in me.

Please, be pleased with me.

May I be in the nature of the highly developed great bliss.

Please, be loving towards me.

Please, grant me all the actual attainments.

Please, grant me all the virtuous actions.

Please, grant me your glorious qualities.

[Hung is the seed syllable of vajra mind. Ha ha ha ho symbolizes the 5 transcendent wisdoms, the 4 immeasurables, the 4 empowerments, the 4 joys, the 4 kayas]

O blessed one, who has destroyed every obscuration,

BHAGAWAN  
 SARWA TATHAGATA  
 VAJRAMA ME MUCHA  
 VAJRABHAWA  
 MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA  
 AH HUNG PHAT.

attained all realizations and passed beyond suffering,  
 all those who have gone in the space of emptiness 'just as it is', do  
 not abandon me.  
 Grant me realization of the lotus nature.  
 O great courageous one holding the pledge, the samaya-vow,  
 make me one with you.

Powerful purification light comes from the body of Lama Buddha Vajrasattva. It reaches me and all sentient beings. The powerful light is like a sunshine in the morning, which waves away all the darkness of the night.

Likewise, just the touch of the light from Lama Vajrasattva's body, mind and speech waves away completely the darkness of negativities of our body, mind and speech. I also pray and resolve that I'll be aware of the negative actions, always. May I be blessed to be able to do that.

### *Seeking freedom*

By purifying all our negativities, by remaining pure, we'll secure our future lives. However, if we take rebirth as a human being like ourselves, we have no guarantee that we'll be freed from all the sufferings. Not only from all the sufferings but particularly from falling into the low realms again. Besides that we also have a general suffering of birth, death, aging and rebirth.

Also samsara's joys will not satisfy us. Dissatisfaction, desire to have more and more is the nature of samsara. This very desire to have more is the doorway to suffering. Also this next rebirth is not permanent. It will have a tremendous amount of limitations. That is the nature of samsara.

Buddha found that samsara is the truth of suffering. Samsara *is* suffering. Seeing this clearly, knowing this properly, may I develop the desire to be free from samsara. Buddha said nirvana is peace. Knowing that the nature of samsara is contaminated, I like to seek freedom. I like to move from the contaminated state of samsara to the uncontaminated state of nirvana.

The way and how we can achieve nirvana is by engaging in awareness and remembrance, disciplining myself not to follow the negative emotions, restraining myself from falling into the traps of attachment, disciplining myself not to get influenced by anger, bringing awareness not to indulge in ignorance by taking the vows of refuge, restraining myself from the influence of negativities by taking the vows of self-liberation, restraining myself from the negativities by taking the vows of the bodhisattva, restraining myself from the influence of selfishness by taking the vows of Vajrayana, transforming all negativities into positive actions, transforming them into the path.

May I be able to achieve total freedom by these paths; the path of self-liberation, the path of the bodhisattva, the path of Vajrayana.

### *Seeking the awakening mind*

If I would find my way, if I can get myself free from samsara, may I be able to share my experience and path with those I care for, with those I love, with those I cherish and hold dear, because they are also in the same position as I was. How can I walk away myself, all by myself, without even caring for those dear ones, and near ones and loved ones? I could not, because I care, because I love them.

My love and care, right now, is limited to those I really care for, because I recognize some of them as close, some others as distant, some as enemies. This is my wrong view.

At this moment these sentient beings have projected me in that way, but in my countless lives, somehow, sometime, all of them have occupied the same position as the dear ones and loved ones do now. I simply could not recognize them, because of the death and because of the birth. All have been near and dear. May I have the wisdom of knowing that, and may I develop equanimity for all beings.

Not only they have been near and dear, in different lifetimes I have been depending for my total survival on each and every one of them. They have been so kind to me, helped me, protected me, guided me. They were providing me with life, providing me with strength, providing me with energy. Today, right now, they are providing me with a basis of compassion. So all beings have been extremely kind to me. I must remember that.

Remembering that, may I be able to develop equal respect for all beings. May I remain grateful to all beings forever. May I be able to repay their kindness one time or another, one way or another.

I must, I should. Not only I should and I must, I must do it right now. Because I have the opportunity. Many of them are in a helpless position; no understanding, no knowledge, no awareness. I have the opportunity, I have the knowledge, I have the understanding. I like to, I should, I must.

I like to resolve here that I will repay, I am going to repay. I am repaying their kindness right now. Not only do I remember their kindness. Each and every sentient being has been so dear to me. I simply forgot them, so I don't recognize them. Here I meet the long lost friends of mine. I must cherish them. I must hold them dear.

I wish I make them happy. I want to make them happy, happy forever. Right now. I wish I can free them of their sufferings. I wish I could remove their sufferings. I care, I love them, I must help. I must remove their sufferings, whatever it may take.

I should. I should do that right now! I must do it all by myself, because their sufferings are too heavy. It is unbearable. I must remove their suffering right now. I commit myself to do this, without any hesitation, without any doubt, without any second thought.

But I don't have the capacity. The capability lies at the level of ultimate buddhahood. So I need to become fully enlightened. I need a state of total awakenedness. I need the state of unlimited power. So, I must obtain buddhahood for helping all these sentient beings that I care for.

May I develop the bodhimind right at this moment.

I request Lama Avalokiteshvara to develop love, compassion, unlimited, unconditional love and compassion, and seeking buddhahood, all together in my mind, right at this moment.

OM MANI PADME HUM (...x)

### *Seeking wisdom*

This great mind, bodhimind, alone can not deliver the total state of enlightenment. This mind must be joined by or be in union with wisdom, the wisdom of understanding the true nature, the wisdom that is free of dualistic conceptions and conceptualizations.

For that it is necessary for me to develop analytical and concentrated meditative power. May Lama Manjushri please give me the power to develop this great wisdom and understanding of reality.

OM A RA PA ZA NA DHI (...x)

DHI DHI DHI DHI DHI DHI (...x)

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Chapter 3: What are our real problems

Audience: (about putting aside all that is suffering)

Rinpoche: Here it is institutionalized. You don't see them around very much, only when you go in certain areas you only see that type. It is one way of hiding it. You are really making it clear. Sufferings and pains are not exposed, we don't see it much. It is not purposely done, but it is the sort of way it happens, it is a sort of cultural way. So we don't really draw the attention on that. But in reality we are all subject. Anything can happen to anybody any moment. We have a saying in Tibetan, 'As long as we are in *samsara* we are living on the needlepoint'. I am sorry I make life so uncomfortable, but it is. You know, like on the needlepoint anything can happen. We make plans, but in reality anything can go wrong, anything, any way. So it is sitting on the needlepoint. On the needlepoint how comfortable can it be? It can't, right? That is what it is. And to make it comfortable you hide everything.

Audience: (about how to start a spiritual practice)

Rinpoche: Begin with watching your own mind. And also begin learning. Both ways. The first step is watching your mind, for sure. Watching your mind does not necessarily mean you have to sit there, you can do it when you walk, when you think, when you do anything. The mind is very, very tricky. Many times in the Buddhist hagiography they draw it as a monkey, a mischievous monkey. If you let a monkey go in a room where there are a lot of machines the monkey will go and play and mess them all up. Similarly the mind does that, always. So it is very unstable, very unprotectable, that is why it needs taking care of. That is where it really begins.

Audience: (about the necessity of learning, study)

Rinpoche: When there is no knowledge how can you meditate? Sakya Pandita, a great master of the eleventh century said, 'If you try to do something without learning, you are like an armless man trying to climb a rock.'

### Chapter 4: The root text: preliminary remarks

Rinpoche: Let me talk to you a little bit about what this *Three Principles* is going to be. We call it the *Three Principles of the Path*. Path is road. Road to where?

Audience: road to enlightenment.

Rinpoche: What is enlightenment?

Audience: spiritual growth, harmony, peace with yourself.

Rinpoche: That does not answer me. These are all words you are giving me: spiritual growth, enlightenment, harmony, peace. What is enlightenment?

Audience: A source of light.

Rinpoche: Well, the sun gives a lot of light, is may be the source of light. What do you mean by light, you mean literally light or something else?

I have a question, Shirley MacLane and a lot of New-Age practitioners say, 'I am a God'. Why? Do you think it is wrong or right? I hear something in between the lines. May be it is the Buddhist influence I have, but the moment I hear, especially the New Age, saying, 'I am a God', surely it does not mean that to me. What is meant: I have the potential, the seed, the capability to be it. I hear that in between. That is how the hindu theory goes, and surely how the Buddhist theory goes. If you say, 'I have a part in me that will be God', I don't think that is right. To me that seems very complicated. If you say, 'I have a part which is God, it is not right'. And if you say, 'I am a God', surely it does not mean that literally. If it is taken literally there are a lot of problems, like when you are sick, the God is

sick. Yah. If you are sick and you are supposed to be God, the God is sick, unless you say, 'The part of the God is not sick, the part of the human is sick'. And that means you have to have two personalities in one person. All this is going to be complicated.

I don't think they are wrong either. I think they are right, according to what I hear. Why they are right? Because there is a potential, there is a capability, there is a seed. Do you get me? And when we say 'the path to it' it means that seed can grow. Even some of the Buddhist texts, if you read it directly, may tell you: individuals are God. Yes. But it does not mean that. It means: there is a possibility, there is a seed and you have possibility and capability. And that very possibility and capability, the capacity what we have, if we are able to utilize that through a proper channel or through a proper method, through a proper way, then that very capability, that very seed will become a real wonder, a real one. And that is what is: the path to enlightenment. Do you understand?

I did not ask you, 'Do you agree or not?'. Sure some of you do and some of you don't. If everybody agrees then everybody is not thinking properly.

Audience: How does the idea of all the I's fastened onto one entity relate to the idea of a seed-potential that develops?

Rinpoche: I don't see any difficulty. What will happen when you become enlightened? What happens to the individual? There are two distinct, very outstanding viewpoints on this in buddhism. One view says: the moment you become fully enlightened you absorb yourself into the total huge enlightened being. In other words you merge into the sea of enlightened beings and it will be one sea. The other view says: yes, you do, however, you also have your own separate identity; the particular this and that of the enlightened being yet will remain. So we call it , 'In nature it is the same but in appearance it is separate'. You can perceive and proceed separately, but in reality, in absolute reality, it will be the same nature. So, with that background it will become the same. I don't see any problem. I see the problem of presentation and talking, but I don't have a problem with the total idea behind.

The reason why I raised this question is: I saw something going on on television saying how terrible the new-age religions are, how a disgrace, how it went to the extend of saying, 'Hallo Mr. God, are you there?'. When you really look in detail how this whole enlightenment works, how people develop, I don't think the people are wrong, but the way they talk 'I am a God' is not right. We have the potential, the capability of becoming it. And when you become that, when the capability has developed, you come in that sort of group, that sort of category, that energy level, whatever you call it. It will merge into that. Even the tantric buddhism accepts that. If you yourself become a Heruka or Kalachackra or something, your energy is merged into the general Heruka energy, yet you have your own identity of Heruka established and your own mandala, your own retinue, and so forth. It is inseparable from of the general Heruka thing, yet you have a separate identity. So I don't think there is any problem in that at all. Did you understand what we are talking about? Are we talking the same things?

Audience: Yes.

Audience: Could you say a little more about our connection to that seed?

Rinpoche: Well, it is within us, the seed is sown, buried under the mud, under the dirt. So the question is: will it grow or not grow? It wants to grow but it needs heat, it needs moisture. The seed is there, the dirt is there, that is our mind. And what we need is heat and moisture. If heat or moisture is not provided it won't grow. If heat and moisture is provided it will grow. What else do you want?

Audience: How did the seed get there?

Rinpoche: You planted it, you buried it under there.

Audience: (about the story of Pegye or Shrijati, who had a seed that could not be seen.)

Rinpoche: That seed was so subtle in that person; even the ordinary arhats were unable to see it, so small. It required Buddha to see it.

Audience: Is there anyone who does not have that seed?

Rinpoche: None. If anyone does not have that seed how could we obtain the human level? If he would not have that seed how could he be a human being and how could he have such a fortune to become an arhat?

This story is not to be taken literally. No. It is just to show something. A lot of Buddhist teachings, particularly when you are quoting from the *sutras*, are only examples to emphasize certain viewpoints. You cannot take them literally. E.g. In order to emphasize the gap between an arhat and a buddha - there are certain things a buddha can see and arhats cannot see- just to emphasize that they have a story. You can't take it literally.

It happened all, it is no lie, it is a true story, it happened for a purpose and it was done and was relayed. Properly thinking you say: how can that be, a human being without a proper seed? And how can there be a stupid arhat who can't even see the human being has that much capability? This comes under the topic of karma, you might have heard the story there. There are other funny stories which normally are taught but I sort of avoid that; it does not make much sense to the western mind.

Audience: (...on the difference between compassion and pity)

Rinpoche: Pity a little bit touches your heart, you feel a little bit, but compassion is more than pity. You really go out, really care for it and wish that one will not suffer, you wish that the undesirable thing is not on that particular someone. That strong wish is compassion. Great compassion comes up after that; you say, 'Really I am going to do what is necessary. Under any circumstances I make sure this one is going to be separated from his misery, from what is not wanted'. So compassion will be more strong than pity. I guess that is what it is, I don't know english properly.

Audience: (...)

Rinpoche: Compassion can be compassion to one person, compassion can be to all other people. Great compassion looks at all living beings. Ordinary compassion not necessarily has to look at everybody, you can have compassion on an individual one or even on oneself. The object of ordinary compassion can be one or more or many and that either includes self or does not include self. The actual shape of the thought will be the desire to separate the person from whatever is unwanted, pain, misery, problems, anything. In my understanding the question rises more: what is the difference between love and compassion? There is a little more to think on that. I am sure we'll discuss in that direction in the second principle.

Anybody else has any thoughts to share? Don't feel bad. Say anything you want to say. If you were enlightened you would not come here, right? So don't feel bad, don't feel bad. Especially today we use for discussion in order to prepare the next step. So you should really say it. And don't feel, 'If I say this I'll be a disgrace'. Don't think about it that way.

Audience: (...)

Rinpoche: Ego is such a thing; it is to be destroyed as well as to be preserved. Very delicately you have to know where you need it and where you don't need it. For example: for positive thinking you do need a lot of ego, you do. I do not yet see across any other path than Tibetan *Vajrayana* Buddhism, which has so much of positive thinking and which has so much of ego building; positive thinking, positive ego building. But that at the same time I have also not seen any other religion -really I have very limitedly seen but I have seen a lot of different things too- than Tibetan *Vajrayana* buddhism who destroys the ego simultaneously. Builds and destroys. It is not build and destroy; it is: destroys and builds. You destroy it first and then you build it later. First you let it go and secondly you rebuild it. That is what it all comes to. By the time when you are approaching enlightenment your ordinary ego almost disappears; the ego we think of, particularly the pride-connected ego, has gone quite far away then. You're building an ego which is ego-less. You build up an egoless ego, a very strong one. Don't ask me to explain that now. I am glad you think that way.

Audience: I heard about practices referred to as vehicles. Could you explain that?

Rinpoche: You have a car, haven't you? What do you do with that?

Audience: Drive it.

Rinpoche: Drive it to where?

Audience: To the destination.

Rinpoche: Yah. So, similarly, the practice takes you there. And if you have a good practice it takes you very fast, if you have a medium practice it will take you a little longer time, if you have a bad one it will take you a long time to reach, but it will take you there. That is what a vehicle is. After all, why do people do it? Why do you meditate? Why do you take the trouble of coming here? Why do you take the trouble of meditating, sitting, all this? What for? You want to go somewhere. You try to use the vehicle. Whether you can or cannot. That is what it. The whole purpose of doing this is just to get somewhere else. Right or wrong? That is what it is, using it. So if you have a good vehicle you can go; by plane or car or bull-cart. That is why the practice is referred to as vehicle or path or road or stage. All these are reaching to a certain aim. There is a possibility that one can go. But go up to where? That is a totally different question. Go up to where and to what level? That is a choice of yours as an individual and a different question also. The Tibetan *Vajrayana* buddhism says: You can go to the ultimate highest position which according to buddhism is called buddhahood and according to hinduism is the god stage. There are different levels. Everybody does not have to go to the highest level.

### **Chapter 6: Why you need a determination to be free**

Audience: Is the goal to be free or to have a determination?

Rinpoche: In order to get free, the goal established, first you have to have the determination built up, you have to be determined to go. If you are not determined to go you will come back, no matter what ever happens. So somebody has to tell you: you have to be free, go.

Audience: The determination to be free is free from what?

Rinpoche: A very good question. Free from what? And then do what? I think that is really a good question. We will keep things here on a practical level. In other words: what we say we have to feel. That is the main thing here. Something which affects our thoughts and mind, let me say something which really affects our heart, is what we want. That is most important. We have to keep ourselves within that effective level here rather than pouring a lot of intellectual points.

So freedom from what? What is freedom? I think that is really a big question one has to deal with and think about. We talk about spiritual; this is based on that. What is the need of spiritual development, what is the need of the spiritual benefit for me? Really you have to ask that question. What is enjoyment? What does that mean? What is my happiness? Where does my happiness lie? Is it to have somebody whom I like, have a good companion, have plenty of money, two cars, two houses or whatever the american goal is; is all this my happiness? Or what is my happiness? I am sure each one of us is capable of answering that intellectually. But answering yourself from the bottom of your own heart what answer would you give? What would you answer to yourself from the bottom of your heart? Really this is important. You know what this will determine? This will determine whether you need a spiritual path or not. So it is so important to first see it.

Audience: (...about happiness being only personal. What about others?)

Rinpoche: Forget about it just now. We are only talking about my happiness, that is you, that is me and my happiness. I know spiritually you have to worry about other people, selfish is bad and this and that, but before we say selfish is bad, before we talk about other people, first you have to find out things on your own nose. If you can't help yourself there is no way you can help others, I guarantee you that. If you can't take care of yourself how can you take care of others? Out of the question. If you cannot love yourself you cannot love others. So first I have to put the question on my own nose and keep on asking that question. That is what we mean with: look inside. If you worry about the other side and talk about it with nice beautiful words, 'All living beings, mother sentient beings, the whole of human beings and this and that' and have the whole focus outside, and you leave yourself, the individual you have to take care of, back.

## Chapter 7 'Leisure and opportunity are hard to get': embracing life

Rinpoche: Last week I gave you people one point to think on. I wonder whether there is any answer for it. The point you were supposed to be concentrating and meditating on, is: leisure and opportunity.

Audience: [Some discussion.]

Rinpoche: So you found: there is leisure and there is opportunity or there is no opportunity, there is no leisure. Both ways. In one way there is a tremendous time in which you can keep on thinking. In another way there is no time, because life changes. Very good ideas. As a matter of fact my understanding is: there is leisure and there is opportunity.

There is **leisure**, because as many of us mentioned and I think I mentioned it last week too: we always *pretend* to be very busy. Whether it is the american system or whether you think you're going to be fired by your boss, whatever the reason may be, people always like to pretend to be very busy and say, 'I don't have time, I have to do this and that, there is a million things to handle'. However, wherever you want to have time, you always find the time. I think I did say that. People who like to go to the bar always have time to go to the bar, no matter how busy they are. That goes for whatever. People who would like to go dancing will find the opportunity and people who would like to go for a swim, always have time to go swimming.

These are all things you have to interlink. If you throw out the earlier talks and you start picking up every tuesday's new talk, it will be meaningless. I tell you it will be meaningless. The more and more you go down here the lesser and lesser meaningful it will be. If you keep on whatever you had earlier -you have to keep them under consideration- then you go ahead and it makes sense everywhere; otherwise, if you start throwing out the earlier ones and picking up the later ones it will be meaningless.

Audience: (about the meaning of morality)

Rinpoche: The concept of this morality we are talking about, is -very briefly- honoring your commitments, whatever the commitment may be. Say you have vows. As a matter of fact the other day I was talking to someone and we mentioned the word celibacy. In english that happens to be a very small concept. What I understand of celibacy and what the english language expresses, is different. And so does the morality here. We are borrowing the language to express certain things, but when you try to use that in another tradition, the same word gets a different meaning. The moment you say celibacy I don't think of sex at all. [Monkshood or tasking lay-vows] is honoring all your vows. For example, you are not supposed to kill, you are determined to totally refrain from killing, stealing, lying and so forth. Abstinence from sex is included in the monks' or nun's vows. Right? So it has a totally different meaning from the English. When I think of celibacy I think of 364 different things [nun's vows], not one; one thing is too poor. So does morality. Actually, general morality briefly means: honoring your own commitments. When you go on it in detail there are 120 different ways of explaining it. You don't have to be very rigid. No. The fundamental cause to produce this life is the morality, honoring your own commitments, like for example refraining from killing. Anyway, my understanding of celibacy is really morality. It does not have to be being a monk, it does not have to be 'married to God'.

There is no time for life today. Is there time for life? No. What do you know? Give me the reasons why there is no time.

Audience: (discussion on life is speeding up).

Rinpoche: This afternoon, when I came home about 5.30 p.m. I found a message left at the answering-machine, so I wanted to call back but they were gone. I tried to remember the Crazy-Wisdom-bookshop number.. I have a watch which has all these numbers in it, so I tried to get the number. I saw the time, and by trying a sort of 'zjimm' came and everything disappeared. Thereafter I saw neither the time nor the numbers, all was gone. It did not take me a minute; I was just watching it and suddenly it was lost. That was my experience this early evening.

That little experience reminded me: when you look at the people, human beings, when we look at each other we see people talking, we see people doing everything and suddenly, the next moment... gone. It happens a lot. And I am sure this is not something we don't know. We experience it every

day. May be not personally, but we see it here and there. That is what is happening and we don't have any doubts about that at all. Nobody has doubts, we all know it, right? Some people say, 'When the time comes we go, okay that is it'. That is true, when the time comes, people go. But, will the time come to *me*? Is the time coming to *me*? Normally we never think about it. Some people don't even want to think about it. Most of the time we are too busy doing something and won't even think about it. Then suddenly it goes like I was pressing that watch buttons. Sort of 'chipchipchip' and suddenly it disappears. It is busy going. 'chipchipchip' and then... that is it.

We keep ourselves so busy and -excuse me I must say it here, forgive me- most of us are busy for nothing. Busy for nothing. You may say, 'That is not right, I am busy, I am making money and time is money and this and that, I am making money so I am a busy fellow'. It is not true. It is not true. If money would be our purpose then you would be busy for something. But if money is not the answer, you are probably busy for nothing. That does not mean you can't do it. We just don't think about ourselves. As I mentioned to you: a number of people don't want to think about it. They say, 'I have enough problems, I don't want additional problems to think about'. And I don't think that is right. If that were right, we could all forget about it and live for a long time.

Some people may say, 'Positive thinking is a very great thing and I don't want to have any negative thinking and this is negative thinking'. Again, positive thinking is great, no doubt. As I told you, Tibetan buddhism, particularly the *vajrayana* buddhism, is most important on that, that is really very, very positive thinking, beyond our imagination. It is very positive thinking. However, for this to happen, we have to have the thinking about death too. If we have positive thinking alone, if by keeping on to think, 'I am not going to die', we would avoid dying totally, we all could do it. But that is not the case. Death will come and we all know it will come. We all know about it, nobody will deny that, nobody, each one of us will say, 'Yes, it is definite, we have to go', yet we have a problem.

Audience: Will we in a next life be on this planet, or could we be on another planet?

Rinpoche: Sure. There are a multi-million of different planets around, we could be born anywhere.

### **Chapter 8: 'And there is no time to life': facing death realistically**

Audience (about Jesus living)

Rinpoche: Well, may I ask you: Is Jesus still living?

Audience: People believe yes, though not physically.

Rinpoche: That is called death, you have to accept that as death.

Audience: Can't you see it that other way?

Rinpoche: Well, that is again: what do you mean by death? I don't accept that death is totally disappearing either. When you have occupied a certain physical form with which you identify and with which you can no longer be identified now, it is called death. Even if you take the body with you or whatever may happen to you, it is called death. You cannot come back. You will not see that body again in the same physical way in which you can see it now nor touch it like a living body. You know, people may come back in visions -immediately you think of that, right?- coming in dreams, coming in visions. That is all totally different talk. When we say living here, it is physically living: here you can call it, talk to it, pull and push it, rub it down etc. That is what I call living. The moment you have gone beyond that level, we call it death. People don't disappear, for sure. If they would disappear totally, then you wouldn't have previous lives, you wouldn't have future lives. After all you do have previous lives, you do have future lives and you have to continue. However, that continuation should not deny death, then you become extreme. You understand what I am talking about?

This is framework; *this* is framework! There is a frame, a limit where you have to hold on to. That limit is called death, but that does not mean you are ended. You end in a certain way, in a particular way, a particular form, but you continue.

Audience: Then where is enlightenment, where is buddhahood?

Rinpoche: Great, this question should come up. Buddhahood does not mean having overcome death. Buddha died. I am telling you: Buddha died. We have the celebration of the *mahaparanirvana* of the

Buddha. If Buddha did not die, we would not celebrate his death. Right? Buddha died. That does not mean that he, the person or the soul -let me call it soul, Buddhists do not like to call it soul, they call it consciousness but it does not matter, it is the same thing-, or that consciousness is gone. That consciousness continues. Buddhahood is totally different. That particular consciousness is free of every pain and not only free from every pain; that consciousness is fully developed -if there is anything to be developed. That consciousness has built total knowledge. That consciousness or knowledge has been made equal to anything that can be known simultaneously: past, present and future and everything. The limitless past and present and future of every individual sentient being -and that includes little ants under the tree- is known, without mixing them up, simultaneously, at one time. And that consciousness has been totally freed from all the delusions and dualistic views and wrong acceptance of inherent existence. That is called enlightenment. I am glad you raised that question.

Audience: (about no individuality being left in buddhahood.)

Rinpoche: Why not? If there is no individuality left, why should we work for it? There is definitely individuality left. But I do not know how to express that in english. In Tibetan you call it: *ngowo chigla dhogpa thadhe*: in reality it can become in a sort of a big one thing, yet it has its individual quality. Like we are all human beings: you are a human being, I am a human being, he is a human being, everybody here is a human being. When you call it human being we are all together. But when you call it S. it is individuality. There is individual identification, individual responsibility, yet you are in the category of human beings. Buddhahood is slightly different. That is how I can get it to you in a simple way. It is not a perfect example; it is slightly different. It is a little more than that, but still similar to that; you become part of that society, however you have your individuality existing.

Audience: Do you say: Buddha knows of each individual ant or is in each individual ant?

Rinpoche: I said: total knowledge means simultaneously knowing every single thing there is to be known, for example the past and present and future of a million different insects and human beings, not only the past of yesterday, but millions of different lives and millions of future lives, simultaneously seeing it at the same time. For us it will be like crazy, but when you reach at that level it is no longer crazy. Each one of them you can compartmentalize, each one of them you can see, each one of them you can identify without any efforts. Think of how much a computer can do now, and buddhahood is much beyond that. When the computer is programmed, no matter how many things are there, the computer does not get mixed up, right? If you programmed wrongly, it may act wrong, but if you programmed right, everything is right there simultaneously together. The human capacity may not be able to perceive it, but the computer has the capacity to produce it. Buddhahood is much beyond that.

Audience: Is Buddha in a human form now?

Rinpoche: I pass on that question. If I get the answer, I'll call you back. Excuse me, I am just joking. Actually yes. In a human form, in various forms. But they don't wear a label on their chest, saying, 'Hey, I am a buddha'. When the buddha is labeled, it is what we call an official buddha. Really, I am not joking. In this eon one thousand buddhas will appear and this one, Sakyamuni, was the fourth one. These thousand buddhas are called official buddhas. They will come and claim themselves as a buddha, do have the label. And unofficially, sure there are buddhas around, but they don't have the label. I guess that is the answer.

Audience: (..about mother Theresa being an enlightened being.. and saying, 'You can't give what you don't have on understanding, compassion and love'.)

Rinpoche: Well, that is true, if you don't have it, you can't give it; that is very true, absolutely true. I can't say whether mother Theresa is an enlightened being or not. That is beyond my capacity to see. But I can certainly say: she is one of the greatest living beings today, for sure. Whether she is enlightened or not enlightened, whether she is a buddha or bodhisattva or whatever, is beyond my capacity to say, but definitely she is a great person. And it is true: if you don't have it, you can't give it. If you want to give something, you have to have it yourself. The total talking what we are doing, is for this

purpose. The total theme is this. You want to become a buddha. Why? You want to help. When you want to give help, you have to have it yourself. If you don't have it, you can't give it; for sure, that is true.

And you put that as a packet, again, organized within yourself, 'If I have to give love and compassion to others, I must develop myself. And if I have to develop myself first, I have to have love to myself.' If you compartmentalize it in that way, every single article regarding this that you pick up, will be a spiritual boosting, practice, teaching, guiding, pushing. And if you don't organize that, you will get, 'Hey, so and so said this and yah, I know, so and so said this in such and such a year, in such and such an article, number so and so, and bla bla bla.'. It does not mean anything. That is the flying business. When you put it down and organize it, it is effective business. This is a very good example of how you can use things for our own practice.

Audience: (about the enlightenment stage still having individuality, if enlightenment is beyond self-hood....)

Rinpoche: Enlightenment is selfless, but selflessness is there. So it is not without anything. Less does not mean it is equal to zero.

Audience: (...about experience in meditation) so much noise, like popcorns, 'It is not me, it is what I have been told, what I have read' etc., all these ideas are popping up, it has nothing to do with *me*. If I would get passed all of them what would it really be like there? You said there is still an individuality behind all of them.

Rinpoche: Sure. This is a very, very important question you are touching. A very important and very tricky and very difficult question. Yes, there are a hundred different popcorns popping up as you say. Yah. If you keep on throwing each one out and you throw ninety-nine out, can you hold the last one? That one will also pop up, make the same noise. So you throw that out. When you throw that out, will there be something left to be called G.? No, there won't be. If there would be, then G. would have been inherent existent. No, he isn't. So then what will happen? You may think: this is what happens to the pure mind and the lesser and lesser you go, the clearer and clearer the pure mind will become. But still it is not popcorn-noise-free at all. As long as it is popcorn it will pop; if it does not pop, it is not popcorn. And as long as it is a human being or consciousness, as long as it is a being, it has to make its own noise. If it doesn't, it is not a being. Then you raise the question: what happens? Nothing happens. Our identification is wrong. When you try to search deeply for something called *I* -that is what everybody does- you will never find it; it is not there. If it would be there, I should have been inherently existent, which is not the case. That does not mean I am not there either. I am there. You have to be satisfied with the combination.

It is like the question of death and dying, whether Buddha died or not, whether Jesus died or not, lived or died. This is called relative truth. You have to have a certain limit where you hold it, because in absolute truth you are not going to find it. In relative truth, whatever you find is a combination. On the combination you have to be satisfied. We are going to deal with that later, much later. But that is the truth. If you throw out the ninety-ninth you also have to throw out the hundredth one and then you are left with nothing. That is not right. So, actually the combination is the person, all combined together. Okay.

Clearing thoughts is different. We have a lot of things going on, clearing that is a different matter. But still, no matter how much you clear out, at the end you cannot find one and call, 'Hey, this is it'. Does that make sense to you? It is complicated. This is going to be the third principle, so we have to deal with it much later. We have not touched even the first principle.

Audience: (about drops being part of the whole ocean and we being the whole ocean, not just that one drop)

Rinpoche: Ya, and under the ocean the two bulls will fight. That is where you have to watch it. (I am sure the questioner knows what I am talking about, we speak the same language.)

Audience: If all popcorns have left, is not what is left the pureness of the self?

Rinpoche: If you find the pureness under all the popcorns, I congratulate you, but I don't think you will find it. That is why I was careful. I do not know whether you paid any attention, most probably many of you did not. I always carefully said: the *seed* of development is there. I never said: the purity is inside there. So you have to watch.

We talked about opportunities and leisure. Anybody that has anything to say, wants to raise any doubts, any questions, or anything?

Audience: (...) and the more I reflect the more I am finding I am confused.

Rinpoche: Wonderful. You have to be confused now. And to find you are confused, is difficult. Once you find you're confused, you can begin to handle it. To tell you the truth everybody is confused, unless you are enlightened. It is very hard to see that one is confused, because everybody thinks he knows everything. With or without realizing you would like to draw your own conclusions and put them in: tactactac and that is what it is. And when you begin to see that that is not right you begin to lose everything. You say, 'What has gone wrong?' That is normally how it works. So I am glad you found yourself confused. And once you know you're confused, then you begin to see how and where and why. And that then becomes important; you begin to move you begin to move on the straight path.

Audience: When you said last week that leisure and opportunities are hard to combine and that I can become an animal and will not be able to do dharma-practice, I wanted to meditate more on that....

Rinpoche: Wait a minute, I have to make a correction on your statement. I did come on the dharma-practice, true, but... If I remember correctly I said, 'Look from the other side, like having been an animal and see the opportunity now, think of having been in that level and see the opportunity that you have now, having been in that category see the opportunity you got now. That way you'll really appreciate what you have.' That is plain language and the bottom line. Normally we don't appreciate what we have, right? It is taken for granted. And then of course lastly move towards dharma-practice. Sorry for the interruption. Go ahead.

Audience: Meditating along the lines: when you are an animal obvious there is no chance for dharma-practice. Then you outlined a little bit on human lives or preoccupations that are also prohibitive of practising, i.e. being a hard-core materialist. But I realized it is even more subtle than that, even in the case of someone that has an interest in spiritual development and once he develops that, it is not just like being a dog is in the way, or being a materialist is in the way. Even if you think you want a spiritual practice, leisure and opportunity within that are still hard to combine, because of all the thoughts that are constantly circling through. I mean you can narrow down further and further in terms of all the opportunities and endowments that we have for the practice and still it seems that it is almost impossible to be able to pull it up and that coupled with: there is no time for life, it made me realize I make my own obstacles even while having the human form.

Rinpoche: Good thought. That is the way you should look in. And that is the way it is, really. But on the other hand, as you pointed out, there are people who are interested in the spiritual development and did not have the opportunity as you do. At this moment, at this moment, mark my word: at *this* moment I think you just sort of leave it there and don't go much deeper in that line, because then the question will rise: what sort of spiritual persons are interested in the spiritual field, but still do not have the opportunity? Then all the different practices will come into question and then it will go beyond that: does this practice deliver the goods or does that not deliver the goods? We don't want to go into that level. So just try to stick here. It is too early to go into which really delivers what.

On the other hand, you may also raise the question whether there is a necessity of spiritual development, and what *is* really a spiritual development. And also people may be thinking that it is some kind of instant thing, that hits you and you feel an experience of and all these sort of things. People may have thoughts and doubts. I like to make a little bit clear on that too. Normally in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition we say: there is no instant development at all. That is a true fact. Since you are going to listen to this a lot, I want to make it clear from the beginning. You will hear: there is no instant enlightenment. You will hear it and it is true; there is no instant enlightenment. But that does not mean there is no instant experi-

ence. It does not mean that at all. Okay? I want to make that clear from the beginning, so you won't get confused. You will experience a lot of different things. If a person is ready to be enlightened, then enlightenment will hit that person like that. At that level. Okay?

When we say 'There is no instant-enlightenment' you have to understand: at our ordinary level, the level that people like you and me are, it is not going to hit straightway. You know what I am talking about? Probably you don't know; anyway, it does not matter.

Audience: Wake up as a buddha.

Rinpoche: Yah, it is not going to happen instantly like a finger-snap. There are all different stages, goals. But at each one of the stages, when that stage is developed on an individual person, there may be an experience. Okay? If you gain one single experience it does not mean that you have obtained enlightenment. This is so important! There are a number of different experiences that you have to go through, a number. A countless number will come up, you know. At every point experience will come up.

As far as my experience goes, the majority of the western people, particularly those who do not have much background in the dharma practice, think, 'Hey, there is something which you experience and that is all about it, and then that is over'. No. No! There are steps, steps, steps. You go step by step. Everything you will experience differently. And people may say, 'Here hits one experience, oh, that is it, that is the end of it'. No! That makes this path different from any other path. Why? It really leads you through the different steps.

I don't really work for experiences either. Experiences and feelings, all those different things will come as a side-effect, right?, a side-effect.

Audience: a side-dish.

Rinpoche: James is a great cook, so he comes up with side-dishes. Yah, all the experiences are side-dishes, more or less like pickles. It could be hot, could be sweet or sour, but it is not the main thing. So from the beginning you have to think along these lines. And when I am looking at a lot of particularly those with a western understanding, I see they really sort of focus on one level and then think that experience is all about it. It is not. When you talk about enlightenment it means there are a lot of steps and each one of those steps will fulfill one of those experiences. Okay.

## **Chapter 9: Looking for refuge**

*Day of birth, enlightenment and paranirvana of the Buddha.* On this very special day of Buddha's birth, obtaining the buddhahood and death anniversary [31-5-1988] I would like to wish everyone of us very happy, very profitable and successful in everyone of our spiritual works.

According to *Mahayana* tradition the full moon of the fourth lunar month is considered to be Buddha's birth, death and obtaining enlightenment, all three together. So it is a very special day. You put efforts in coming here and sweating because it is very hot and I am sure all the effort you put in is not wasted. It will definitely gain good merit and serve good purposes. And especially this day is - according to the ancient Buddhist prophecies- a day of multiplication; whatever you do on this sort of very important day, multiplies. Actually the whole of the fourth lunar month is considered very important; things are multiplied like hundred thousand times. If you do one good effort it will benefit like a hundred thousand.

People may think: Why so? What happens to karma? There is a very simple explanation for this. Within the framework of karma you get all room for all this. This is the result of the tremendous amount of virtues and hard work that Buddha has dedicated for his future followers to gain a little more benefit without putting much efforts in it. There is: a tremendous amount of virtue he dedicated for us by his praying and we can receive his blessings. All of them put together make it possible to work that way. Things like that are also very strange on the other hand. If people keep on doubting, saying, 'Yah, it is said so, okay, maybe, maybe not', they won't get benefit.

We are not trying to teach you blind faith, however as to these sort of things, when the Buddha and a lot of great masters have dedicated their work for the purpose set up and we start to doubt about it, we do not get any benefit. If you squeeze butter you get a lot of butter liquid, if you squeeze sand you don't get butter out; that was the example given. I don't mean you take everything with blind

faith, but you have to keep room for things like that also. You have to adjust. There are certain things we have to check with our intellect, there are certain things we have to take. This what we mentioned here happens to be one of the last category, for your own benefit. That is that.

Those of you who have taken Mahayana precepts today, should be really happy, because this is a very happy day to take precepts. Normally precepts are for twenty-four hours, are easy to protect, easy to carry on and very beneficial. Especially when you do it in a month like this and on a day like today, it has a multiplication of hundred thousand. So it is really very fortunate. Be very happy. Even if a few of you miss it today, it doesn't matter, within this month you can take it. It may not be as strong as today's date, but still there is a lot of benefit in this month.

*Retreat.* That is why we also set up the Avalokiteshvara retreat in this period. In normal circumstances we would have restricted it to people who have the full initiation of Avalokiteshvara; it should have been like that. However, I had a long thought, last night and the whole of today, kept on thinking: you can keep on restricting, but there are a lot of people who did not have the Avalokiteshvara full initiation and who may like to take this retreat for their own benefit, say mantras, meditate, do prostrations for purification. I thought with the permission of the Buddha and the great masters and particularly Avalokiteshvara and his mandala, we will allow anybody who likes to come and take that opportunity; the door is open. There only will be one little restriction, the *sadhana* part of it. When we get together we tell you about it, not now. The *sadhana* part of it is restricted. You cannot generate yourself in the form of a deity. That is the only portion where you have to make the distinction. Otherwise, saying mantras, purification etc. we will allow. So the door is open if you like to. If you don't like to, it is nothing compulsory, even not for those who had the initiations.

## Chapter 10: Renunciation

*Dedication.* It just struck me. When the other day the root text of The Three Principles was provided, you said 'thank you' and you started clapping, right? That is a nice way of doing. But for spiritual practitioners we do more than that. I should mention it. What we have to do is dedicate. When anybody does anything it creates virtue, good virtue. So we have to do two things. We have to pray and we have to dedicate, a combination. This is an example, I won't talk it every time, we have to know it. We pray that the virtue created by this and any other virtues created from the limitless beginning may become powerful and strong and will be able to achieve the ultimate result. That will be praying as well as dedicating. It is more or less dedicating, because the material is produced, any material you created. When I say material I don't mean physical material, but any efforts you put in. That you pray. There is material, so you dedicate it to achieve the ultimate result. With material to be dedicated it becomes dedication. When you don't have material you simply say, 'By the power of the enlightened beings and the true nature and the good thoughts may every wish be fulfilled; may they have longevity, property, happiness, whatever they want'.

I have a problem: because I am trained in this way from childhood it is automatically done, I pay no attention, so I am taking for granted everybody does that. I don't blame you, because nobody has informed you, nobody has told you. So you should do that.

Not only that. Everybody, whoever is putting any efforts in, we should always pray for, for everybody, all our friends, our dharma-friends; it is the community, it is the sangha, it is the group here. We should always pray, every time. I do pray for each one of you every day, without telling you. You should do the same thing. For everybody in general and particularly for those who are here together, 'Will their spiritual practice be a success, may there not be any obstacles, may they have longevity, may they not meet with obstacles, may their wishes be fulfilled' and all this. We should do that.

Not only that. Everybody who is putting money in that little box there, everything that is donated here and there, we should always dedicate, because it is common property. If you don't dedicate it, what will happen? It will become a debt *-kor* in Tibetan- like when somebody borrows money from you, it becomes some sort of debt. It is more than loan, it is borrowed money which you owe them in the future, in their future life, in future times. If you dedicate it and pray for it, it serves the purpose. This regards not only money; people put in labor, people do volunteer work; all this we have to pray

for and dedicate it. If you don't do that as a group, each individual will have a liability in future lives. I mean, everybody owes everything to everybody, it is connected, linked up, so it becomes a liability. And when you don't pray, don't dedicate it, what will happen is: it becomes first a liability on me and then on everybody else, together. Therefore we have to do it, we have to pray every day.

We should pray for everybody, particularly the community together, the thursday-people [*Lam-rim* studygroup] and the tuesday-people [introductory studygroup on *The Three Principles of the Path*]; and then we have people who are connected with this, listening to the tapes, everywhere, like the sister-groups we have in New York, in Europe, Asia, everywhere. You should pray for everybody. Those who know pray for everybody. And they dedicate everything for everybody. And those who didn't know before will know through the tape and they will do it too. It is our duty, we should do it, if we don't do it, it is a liability for everybody.

This is how *we* should say 'thank you'. Not only clapping, -or shouting, screaming, yelling, whatever you suggested- it is more than that and we should always do it. As a habit you should pray for everybody, particularly for your group community as a group of friends, every night, every morning. That is what you should do. It will be a good thing to do. Okay? And if you still don't like to do it, that is also fine, there is nothing forcing you. But I tell you it becomes liability, even a piece of paper, a little comfort, a little difficulty, or whatever it is, everything becomes liability. By doing it you have one advantage, again: every difficulty or hardship that you take, will finish off bad karmas, and that is a very good thing. Anybody who does some great work or a little better work, and will have a little problem here and there; that is nothing to be surprised of; it gets you rid of your bad karma. Even if you rack your taxes, even if you have take out something every month or whatever, is getting rid of bad karma, I can definitely tell you. So be happy about it and don't feel bad about it. That should be enough.

Audience: (about not feeling bad doing meditations on death).

Rinpoche: Not everybody does feel bad. Don't worry about it. Don't keep on worrying, 'Hey, I didn't feel bad, what is it?' That would be another additional problem, I don't want that.

Audience: I don't have difficulty picturing myself as an old man, but I do have a problem seeing myself laying in a box [coffin].

Rinpoche: I think that is the pinch you are getting, seeing yourself in the box, that is what you don't want to think about, what don't want to picture, right? I think so, really. So, it is not that you have to picture yourself as an old man, it is not that you have to picture yourself dead in the box, but what you really need is, 'I am subject to death and I can be subject any minute.' That is the important thing. You know what I mean? I think you have to satisfy on that point there and leave it there. You don't have to overemphasize on it. That is from the practical point of view.

From the intellectual point of view, the ego I believe, can not only perceive, can have the intuition too. I mean, what is really ego? What is really soul? And what is really consciousness? Where are the differences? All these are very intellectual things we have to deal with at a later path. This is really a difficult point. For us just now, whether you call it ego or whether you call it person, or mind, whatever, you sort of look for it in the heart or in the brain. That is the one picture you get, just now for us. Or do you get two different pictures? You can't pinpoint to two different things, probably one thing with different names. Even you try to imagine it, you are looking at your ego and when you start looking at it as a soul you don't see something else. Actually it is the same little one thing you perceive differently, with different names over and over again. So just now we are simply hiding ourselves under the different words and not really have something to hold just now.

Audience: Is it true that the ego can only deal with conceptual material, that it has no intuition?

Rinpoche: Ego does have some intuitions too.

Audience: Isn't the ego the part of consciousness that perceives the soul?

Rinpoche: The moment you say part you have divided it. I mean, it is easy to divide it by words, but actually what are you getting in the deep mind? What I am talking is not taking shelter under beautiful words, but when you really go and search for it, you don't hold anything, you don't have it. This is a problem. Let us not handle this just now. Let us go first over our basic thing we are doing now, then let us go over the altruistic love-compassion business and then after that we handle it. It is much better then. Okay? Good.

Audience: (...)

Rinpoche: Love as total love is good, but love as something for me is not good, like, 'I love this dog, because I want this dog, this dog is beautiful and such a nice character and well behaving and his hair is shining, he doesn't smell, has a very sensitive nose and I need it.' That means the love is turned down to *me*, 'I love this person, he or she is so beautiful, so nice, wonderful, beautiful thought, very understanding, physical beautiful, very attractive, cute, *I* want it'. Again, that turns to *me*. Even the thought, 'Beautiful, nice, wonderful, I like it, real love' you turn around and say, '*I* want it for *me* and *me* alone, nobody else.' That is taking one turn round. That is my guess. Everyone of us can think on that more and see where we go. I mean, it is not final, okay? Thank you.

### **Chapter 15: How to lead a spiritual life**

Audience: (about problems from childhood)

Rinpoche: This is important. Certain things I believe continuously run through the life. It is not a delusion, it is reality, it is true. Not only from childhood. I believe it is carried even over the lives sometimes. Not only from childhood it is carried to an elder age, but even the different lives you went through. A lot of people think: it is karma and you can do nothing. That is not true. If it is karma you can do something. If you cannot do anything it is not karma. I put it the other way round. That is true. Why? Because of the karmic principle itself. The karmic principle itself is that you have to have two parallel things running together: the original cause and -what I call- the temporary instigator. They have to work together. So you can always do something.

Now the childhood problems, that people are carrying over, are also to be dealt with as any other problem. I think the first and foremost is recognition. Recognize it. As we have been talking: the pains have to be known as pains, otherwise we can't kind of work them out. If you don't know you have pains and you have a problem, you're not going to work it out. You have to recognize that. The moment you recognize the problem, actually fifty percent of the problem is solved, almost fifty percent of the problem is solved. So the recognition is important. Sort of dig back and see the problem, try to see it. When you see it, then you know, you can overcome, you can work against, you can rehearse.

There are a lot of ways: meditation is one, therapy is another. Both work. And if you are capable, you can say mantras, you can pray. And if you put all these efforts together there is no such a thing which cannot be worked out, if it is karma. If it is not karma I do not know, but there is nothing which is not karma in life.

Audience: (..)

Rinpoche: Being where you are is very important; being what you are and as you are is very important, very important. Otherwise a lot of people try to be somebody else, which is not. And you will be caught in that dilemma. For whatever time you are caught in that, you will not be able to work out your own problem at all, because you try to be somebody else. And you don't see your own problems. So to be what you are is very, very important, before anything else to go. And if you are yourself you can see what your problems are and then you can work them out. If you don't see yourself as yourself then you don't see your problems as your problems, but as somebody else's problems, as though somebody else made them, 'If so and so did not do this, I would not go through this, I would have different..?'

Audience: (about self-hatred)

Rinpoche: Why you have to hate? You can do nothing. If I hate myself I can do nothing for myself. Why do you have to hate yourself, why you have to be flagged with self-hatred? Be yourself, the simple person 'me'. Acknowledge *my* own problems, acknowledge *my* own benefits, acknowledge *my* qualities, acknowledge what I am. That is what I mean. Acknowledge *my* faults, acknowledge *my* qualities. We are not always fault, you know. We have a tremendous amount of qualities, a tremendous amount of positivity too. It you don't acknowledge that, it is a problem. And when you do not acknowledge the positive qualities, your positivity, then your negative problems will take over on you.

And that must be the reason why a lot of emotional problems arise. It must be the reason. Because either you try to be somebody great and when you realize you're not, it is a problem, or you blame yourself too much, you go to the extent that when you cannot match anybody else you hate yourself.

You know, in the east, in Tibet, we don't see this much emotional problems at all. In the West you find a jungle of emotional problems; it is really a jungle of emotional problems. Everything is either high or low. It is really a jungle. I am sorry, it is, I begin to see it. When you try to project on yourself somebody and when you realize after some time it does not work that way, you feel.. This is what Buddha said very clearly and we have the experience also.

When people try to develop something, some spiritual development.. Especially in concentrated meditation they try to sit and develop and they gain a tremendous harmony and all this and people misunderstand that as fully enlightened and suddenly when they realize that this is not working any more : 'Oh my God, even the enlightened position is also bad' and then they really go terribly down. And that might be an emotional problem (laughs). It is the simple way here.

What is happening, you see, one tries to be something else. But if you acknowledge it yourself truly, be what you are, the way what you are really, and you look at it, the anger or hatred or attachment -let me call it emotional problems- you see that you cannot cut them immediately. Nothing can be cut immediately, because we had this for a long period. Nothing can be cut immediately, but it is always changeable, because it is impermanent.

If it were permanent you couldn't change it. Human beings are impermanent, our problems are impermanent and our qualities and advantages are also impermanent, so it can be changed, it is changeable. So you work slowly and acknowledge, be aware what is happening, be mindful and then things can take sort out itself.

I have experience with a lot of people who were angry. But I always tell them, 'Hey, you are angry.' I try to acknowledge to the person: you are angry. Sometimes angry for no reason, sometimes angry for some reason, valid or invalid, doesn't matter. If you say, 'Anger is bad, don't get angry' it doesn't mean anything, it doesn't effect. But at the same time you hear you are angry, try to review, don't get upset but try to review, think about it. And when you acknowledge your anger, your anger goes down. And you will notice yourself it will take less time.

Some people if they get angry they get angry for days, some for hours. But if you can acknowledge it, then the period of anger becomes shorter and shorter and shorter. At first you won't notice and you may think, 'Hey I have to watch, how can I watch, I don't realize when I get angry.' It doesn't matter, the moment you realize, you acknowledge it. And then you will be noticing it quicker. So the period of your anger will go down and down and down. So does the self-hatred. All the emotional problems will be like that.

And when you don't notice this, then it is huge, I mean it is like a mountain falling over you. You know when the emotions take over, it is really huge, it sort of completely overtakes me and I become small like this, completely overtaken. I don't know anything what happens. And when you encounter with this... Encounter means acknowledge it, seeing it, watching, telling yourself to get away from it as it is not a nice one.

It doesn't matter if you recognize it an hour later, even then it will work, if you recognize it two hours later, even then it is okay, if you notice it half an hour later, that is fine, if you notice it ten minutes late, it is good. Keep on acknowledging it. After some time it becomes smaller and smaller and it does not become any more overflowing mountains. It becomes a tiny little thing. Don't say, 'Go away.' It won't go away, because the level of totally getting away is not yet reached. But we can sort of

simply deal with these disturbing emotions and after some time it will be a tiny little one and you can say, 'Hey, how are you? I didn't see you for a long time, you want a glass of juice?' That is what we can do by simply **being aware**. Aware means: be aware who you are and be who you are and acknowledge all this. Be mindful, another very romantic language.

Audience: How do we differentiate between our own thoughts and others' thoughts? How to know whether it is *my* anger, then I can deal with it, or someone else's)

Rinpoche: I understand what you are saying. If you have a sort of psychic power, picking up whatever other persons are thinking, then definitely it are not your own thoughts, but your psychic power is picking it up. However, if you are thinking like a normal type and somebody makes you angry, causes you to be angry, then the thought is your own, though somebody has become a cause, what I call the temporary instigator. The other person has been kind enough to be a temporary instigator to instigate my anger, but actually it is my own anger and not somebody else's.

And we are good at blaming others, as I mentioned to you earlier. Number one, we don't want to blame ourselves, that is our nature. Straightway we blame A. B. C. and only if you finished that, if you cannot find someone then you have to blame yourself; otherwise we look everywhere. That is not the way, I believe. Really acknowledge it as my own. And again it goes back to saying: Be what you are. So acknowledge, 'My own thoughts are mine'. And acknowledge, 'It is my own problem'. And try to work it out rather than saying it is somebody else's. Though somebody else might have created it, helped to create. You know what I mean?

Audience: Is that the same with any emotion others show towards you?

Rinpoche: Vice versa. I think really it is my soup rather than somebody else's. It becomes my problem, though it may not have been created by me. Somebody might have thrown some garbage on you, jumped on you, but the moment he/she did it, it becomes my problem. He or she has to solve his or her problem, but when it is on me I have to solve it, it becomes my problem. Blaming others for it won't help. As I told you: the harmony begins within the individual. First I have to be in harmony with myself, then I become in harmony with others and then it goes on.

Similarly whenever there is something, somebody has provided the garbage, as long as jumped on you, you have to work it out. It becomes my problem. If I do not work it out, if I cannot go through it, nobody else can do it. How to do it? Instead of blaming the other one for throwing -though he did, I do not deny- at the same time acknowledge that it is my problem, then I can work it out. There is *nothing* that cannot be worked out, nothing. When you talk about becoming a buddha, why a tiny little problem like that cannot be worked out? Definitely it can be worked out. Easily. The thing is you have to know how to handle it.

### **Chapter 18: How to develop the altruistic attitude**

Audience: (about judging who deserves your compassion, rapers etc.)

Rinpoche: They deserve your compassion, for sure! They need more compassion than anybody else. They may not deserve your passion but they do deserve your compassion. You have to show equal compassion to the raper and the victim. That is the bodhisattva way. But that doesn't mean you have to excuse the rape. You cannot cut anybody off, that is against the bodhisattva rule. You cannot cut the mad person, you cannot cut the wild person. You have to love everybody. You have to develop compassion on everybody. You cannot give one up. If you give up, it is give-up a being, which is the worst thing of breaking the commitment. You may cut yourself away from the person, but you don't give the person up. You may punish the person, but you don't give up. You punish the person with love and compassion in order to help the person. You may give him a hard time. You have to. The more you care for the person, the more hard time you have to give in order to bring the person up. That is the bodhisattva way.

Audience: Having compassion to everybody you need to have time for everybody.

Rinpoche: What time do you need? Practically nothing. What you need is the capability to help.

Audience: (being afraid of the load of helping all sentient beings)

Rinpoche: You take the load you can carry and the capability will build up more and more. As you build up your capability, you will be helping more and more and more. Just now what are we doing? We try to help one sentient being. That is *this* sentient being, point your finger towards yourself. Though we may be talking about all sentient beings, the first step is helping one sentient being, *this* one, point the finger on your own nose. This one we try to help. We are taking responsibility for *this* one just now. Once you are able to help *this* one, then you may be able to help that one. Unless and until you will be able to help this one, you will never be able to help that one. Unless and until you smoothen and develop your own mind, you can never try and be able to help others, it never works.

One should not think of one's achievement, one should think of others' achievement and develop respect to all others. What you really need is the will-power. You should not be afraid. My dear friend, don't be afraid. Nothing will hold you back; only the fear will hold you back. Don't be afraid. Overcome it. When you go halfway through, halfway different methods will come. There will be ways and means of handling everything, so easily that you won't even realize. Really. No reason to be afraid, sir.

But, if you think of producing it perfect from the beginning, it is impossible. You will never produce it. Nobody is perfect. There is ways and means of purifying what went wrong. You have the seven-limb prayer with the purification. Why you always find there purification? The more you go, the more wrong things you have. The more wrong things you find, the more you need purification. Wrong doing is not permanent. The hell-realm is not permanent, a human being is not permanent. It is impermanent, it is changeable. So there is ways and means of changing. And there are many, many methods for it. So do not let submit yourself to the fear and don't be intimidated by the fear.

Audience: (about the example given last week not to get angry at the person because he is overtaken by his anger. About holding someone accountable for his behavior)

Rinpoche: You can hold someone accountable for his behavior, relatively. But at the same time I also have a responsibility in it and actually it is my fault. Though temporarily it may be his or her fault, when I look at the situation, but if you really look deeply I created the cause long, long before, otherwise I would not be going through that misery. That, again, does not mean you let escape the person who committed a crime. No. It does not mean that. The person has to be punished. We raised that last week. Yes, they should be punished, for sure. Not for the sake of punishment, not for the sake of teaching a lesson -maybe- but for making sure people are safe, making sure the society will be better, setting-up an example of some kind of discipline in the society. A society is made up of so many strange people, so many good and so many bad people. Therefore examples have to be set up. At the same time, whoever is involved, is not totally free either. You have created an original cause and you have created the conditions, every responsibility is involved. No matter how much it may be the total fault of the other party, still, 'If there are not two hands you cannot produce the sound of clapping'. If you look deeply, the law may tell you that you are totally clean and the other one is totally fault; in true reality both are involved. You should punish, but that doesn't mean you should punish with anger. You should punish with love and compassion. That is very important. Punishing with love and compassion and punishing for the sake of punishing is two different things. That is so important!

Audience: What is meditating mindfully?

Rinpoche: Mindfully meditating means: don't think of other things. Put all your effort in it, don't let your mind wander to yesterday's events or downtown. That is not possible from the beginning. No. It is very difficult to do, but it is not impossible. It is very much possible. And every time when you develop more awareness, it develops much faster. You get aware of what is going on, you acknowledge you are 'losing the mind' and when you are aware, you bring it back.

Audience: We need to get rid of the mental and emotional stigmatism about the homeless, aids etceteras first. Until we can break through that, physical action doesn't work.

Rinpoche: That is true, that is one way you can help. On the other hand they need a lot of physical help as well.

Audience: About feeling lazy seeing that there is so much to do and when feeling that, getting depressed and even doing less.

Rinpoche: Diligence and continuation you need: not doing too much on a day when you are happy and not doing too little when you are down. The example for diligence given in the traditional teachings, is a good source of water. We in Tibet live in a country with snow mountains. We get the water from the snow mountains. Some sources give a lot of water during the summer and dry out during the winter. A good source of water doesn't grow much bigger in summer and doesn't decrease much in winter, but gives a constant supply. That is very important for individual practitioners. One should not do it this way: do a lot of thing when you are happy and totally drop off when you are upset. That is not going to give you any result. A constant effort is needed, a continuation; not too much, not too little, but constant. That is very important. If you do a retreat, then you do much more, but that is a different matter. But daily do constant practice, not too much not too little. That is the trick actually of diligence.

Audience: (...)

Rinpoche: For your steady development we give those steps or outlines, especially in the *Lamrim* teachings. One is not supposed to change the strong focus on one step until one developed the previous one. But you may review and preview. I think one should do that daily. But your major focus is on the step where you are, till it becomes proper and becomes action under control. We call that: till you gained experience, in other words, till you get it under your control.

Every step gives you the signs of development and each one of them affects the individual's way of thinking and living and action. When that is happening, it is time for you to move to the next step. Until then the major focus should be left on that very point. It may take years; that doesn't matter. Once you go through, you go through very easily.

Audience: (discussion about attachment and detachment)

Rinpoche: We see our attachment in external objects, in work or something material or whatever. What I am really missing in this discussion, is the self-attachment. I think that is really creating the problems. The anxiety and emotional problems are the effect of it, not the source; it is the effects that you feel. The effects become possible because of the self-attachment, the attachment to oneself. With self-attachment I mean, 'I like to be this, I want that, I like to be this picture. That is my desire. I want that'. Then you feel possessive on yourself and self-building starts up. And then one starts thinking of protecting oneself. That is where the problems really begin. Where you have to protect yourself, you have a certain picture to be fulfilled. All external attachment comes up because of self-attachment. We are keeping *I* as the most important one inside. *I* should be satisfied and fulfilled. And in order to satisfy *me*, the external objects should be like this, this, this. That is where you can find your own answer if you start digging more into it; if you don't you should discuss it with other people, that really should be helpful.

There are two things. At the same time you do not demoralize yourself; that is not a good thing to do. You should have a goal, you should have a plan, everything building up. You should have it very strongly: creating the cause and conditions to materialize what you want to materialize. But that is your limit. You don't go beyond that limit, because then you create more problems for yourself. You create the causes and conditions as much as you can and then stop there. That is your line. If you step beyond that, you get into trouble. If you do not create the cause and conditions, you are not going to get anything. The tradition used to give here an example. Suppose you lie down under a fruit-tree; the fruit is ripe and you are waiting for the fruit to drop into your mouth. That is not going to happen. You have to create the cause and conditions.

Where do all the sufferings come from, where do all the good things come from? Shantideva says in *The guide to the bodhisattva's way of life*:

Whatever joy there is in this world  
All comes from desiring others to be happy.  
And whatever suffering there is in this world.  
All comes from desiring myself to be happy.

In the *Lama Chopa* it is further enforced:

In short, the naive work for their aims alone;  
While Buddhas work solely to benefit others.  
Having weighed those faults against Buddhas' excellence,  
Inspire me to change self-absorption to concern for others.

In short, who have been benefited? Just look: we are always seeking pleasure and benefit for ourselves and what did we gain? The buddhas have always been seeking pleasure and happiness for others, what did they gain?

## GLOSSARY

**ARHAT** [skr.] ‘Enemy destroyer’ or ‘foe destroyer’. One who has overcome the forces of karma and delusion and attained liberation from cyclic existence [*samsara*] and thus has obtained arhatship, the spiritual ideal of hinayana buddhism. It is the culmination of the four stages of perfection: in succession one becomes stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, arhat. The arhat has achieved *nirvana*, but not buddhahood, because he does not return out of compassion to teach others as the Mahayana bodhisattva does.

**ATISHA**, Dipamkara Sri Jnana [982-1055] A great Indian Buddhist pandit. He spent the last seventeen years of his life in Tibet, bringing many important teachings. Well-known is his short treatise *Light on the Path to Enlightenment* [skr. *Bodhipathapradipa*] which points out in a concise manner the path to enlightenment. This work became the foundation for what was to become the *Lamrim* literature. The followers of Atisha became known as the Kadampa school.

**AVALOKITESHVARA** [tib. *Chenrezig*] The great bodhisattva of compassion, chief disciple of Amithaba. Of great importance in Tibet as special protector of the religious life of the country. The Dalai Lama is considered to be an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara. In China he is -in combination with his female counterpart Tara- known in female form as Kwan Yin, protectress of women, children and animals.

**BODHIMIND** skr. *bodhicitta* ‘The awakened mind’, ‘the awakening mind’ or ‘mind of enlightenment’. Bodhimind or bodhicitta is the altruistic motivation of a bodhisattva: a mind that is directed towards the attainment of buddhahood, for the sake of all living beings; the fully open and dedicated heart. Second of the two principle aspects of the path to enlightenment. Once one has generated the bodhi-mind, one enters the first of the five bodhisattva paths.

**BODHISATTVA** [skr.] Also referred to as ‘child of the Buddha’, ‘spiritual hero’, or ‘fortunate one’. A bodhisattva is a living being who has produced the spirit of enlightenment in himself and whose constant dedication, lifetime after lifetime, is to attain the unexcelled, perfect enlightenment of buddhahood for the sake of all living beings. The term bodhisattva refers to those at many levels: from those who have generated aspiration to enlightenment for the first time to those who have actually entered the bodhisattva path, which is developed through the ten stages [skr. *bhumis*] and culminates in enlightenment, the attainment of buddhahood. Those who have embarked on the path but have not yet gained direct perception of the meaning of emptiness are called ordinary bodhisattvas; those who have attained the path of seeing and can in meditation directly perceive emptiness are called extra-ordinary or superior bodhisattvas or *arya* bodhisattvas.

**BUDDHA** [ [skr] [tib. *sanggye*] Lit. ‘awakened one’. Title of one who has attained the highest attainment for a living being. It refers to one who has completely purified [*sang*] all the defilements, the two obscurations, and completely expanded [*gye*] or perfected his mind to encompass all excellences and knowledges. A fully enlightened being is perfect in omniscience and compassion. Every being has the potential to become a completely enlightened buddha. There are countless buddhas. This eon is to have one thousand buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha is the fourth buddha in this eon. The first three were Krakuchchanda, Kanakamuni and Kashyapa. The fifth buddha will be Maitreya, the eleventh buddha is predicted to be Je Tsongkhapa and as the last one of the thousand of this eon Roca is mentioned. Also see: Buddha Sakyamuni.

**BUDDHA SAKYAMUNI** ‘Sage of the Sakyas’, name of the buddha of our era, who lived in India 563-483 BC. He was a prince from the Sakya clan. He taught the *sutra* and *tantra* path to liberation; founder of what came to be known as Buddhism. His mundane name was Siddharta Gautama.

**BUDDHA NATURE** Our potential to attain full enlightenment. Every living being has buddha nature. Buddha nature and buddha seed are synonyms.

**BUDDHAPALITA** [circa. 470-550 C.E.] A great madhyamika [middle way] philosopher. His great achievement was the elucidation of a main work of Nagarjuna.

**CHANDRAKIRTI** [ca. sixth-seventh century C.E.] The most important madhyamika [middle way] philosopher after Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. He is regarded the 'ultimate' disciple of Nagarjuna as he is the elucidator of the essence of Nagarjuna's message. He wrote famous commentaries on Nagarjuna's work. So he is considered one of the highest authorities on the subject of the profound nature of reality.

**CIRCLE OF EXISTENCE** See: samsara.

**COMPASSION** [skr. *karuna*] The wish to free others from their suffering.

**CONCENTRATION** [skr. *samadhi*] The ability to focus the mind single-pointedly on any chosen object of meditation and keep it there. Concentration meditation is one of the two main forms of meditation, the other one being analytical meditation.

**DALAI LAMA** Spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet, recognized as the human embodiment of Avalokiteshvara, the buddha of compassion. The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was born in 1935 and is the fourteenth of his line. The first Dalai Lama lived in the fifteenth century. The name *dalai lama* first came up at the time of the Third Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Sonam Gyatso, by whose learnedness and spirituality the mongol khan was so impressed that he called him *dalai*, mongolian for ocean. So the name means: ocean of wisdom.

**DEDICATION** Refers to the bodhisattva's constant mindfulness of the fact that all his actions of whatever form contribute to his purpose of attaining enlightenment for the sake of himself and others, i.e. his conscious dedicating, offering, giving away of the merit that comes from any virtuous actions as he eschews immediate reward in favour of ultimate enlightenment.

**DELUSION** [skr. *klesha*] A thought, emotion or impulse that is pervaded by ignorance, disturbs the mind and initiates actions [karma] which keep one bound within cyclic existence. That which makes the mind impure. Delusions are mental factors. The three root delusions or the three poisons: ignorance, attachment and hatred; from these many others arise. Lamrim distinguishes six root-delusions and twenty-two secondary delusions. Other words used for delusion: defilement, affliction, afflictive emotion, emotions, fettering passions. Destruction of the delusions and their imprints bestows nirvana.

**DESIRE** Can be either negative, like in the meaning of attachment to worldly pleasures, or positive, in the meaning of striving for enlightenment.

**DETERMINATION TO BE FREE** The attitude of wishing to leave behind the sufferings of *samsara* and their cause and to attain instead the peace of *nirvana* or the full enlightenment of buddhahood. First of the three principle aspects of the path to enlightenment. Also referred to as: Renunciation.

**DHARMA** [skr.] Buddha's teachings and the realizations that are attained in dependence on them. One's spiritual development. 'That which holds one back from suffering'. Also, any object of knowledge.

**DHARMAKIRTI** A famous Indian philosopher of the beginning of the seventh century C.E.

**DUKKHA** [skr.] The overall experience of *samsara*. Translations: dissatisfaction, frustration, suffering, pain.

**EIGHT WORLDLY ATTITUDES** Eight worldly concerns or the eight childish attitudes, traditionally called the eight worldly dharmas: [1] gain, finding, obtaining, profit, acquirement. [2] loss, not-finding, disappointment, disprofit, damage. [3] fame, glory, celebrity, reputation. [4] dishonour, disgrace, infamy, disrepute. [5] praise, laud, commendation, renown. [6] blame, abuse, reproach, reproof, censure, reviling, degradation. [7] well-being, happiness, prosperity, pleasure. [skr. *sukha*] [8] misery, pain, distress, trouble [skr. *dukha*].

**EMPTINESS** [skr. *shunyata*] The absence of the illusion of the inherent existence of people and things, upon realizing which one understands ultimate truth. Voidness, specifically the emptiness of absolute substance, of truth, of identity, of intrinsic reality, of self or inherent existence of all persons and things in the relative world.

**ENLIGHTENMENT** [skr. *bodhi*] Buddhahood; the total purification of obscurations and the full expansion of wisdom. The goal of *Mahayana* practice.

**FIVE SKANDHAS** [skr.] Aggregates. Literally meaning 'pile' or 'heap' which has the connotation of an utter lack of internal structure. The body-mind organism is made up of innumerable elementary constituents, called 'dharmas', which are grouped into five. These five basic constituents of our psycho-physical existence are of great importance as a scheme for introspective meditation. They are: [1] matter or form [skr. *rupa*], [2] feeling or sensation [skr. *vedana*], [3] perception or discernment or discrimination or intellect -the sense of verbal, conceptual intelligence- [skr. *samjna*], [4] volition, motivation, habits, compositional factors, formative elements or conditioned activities [skr. *samskara*] and [5] consciousness or primary mind or pure awareness [skr. *vijnana*]. Associated together they make up most living beings.

**FOUR IMMEASURABLES** Immeasurable equanimity, immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy. These are called immeasurables because we practice them by taking as our observed object all living beings whose number is immeasurable.

**FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS** The truth of suffering, the truth of the causes of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering. They are called noble truths because they are the truths as the 'noble ones' or *aryas* can see them.

**GESHE** Literally 'virtuous friend'. In the gelug order of Tibetan Buddhism a degree of doctrinal learning by a monk who has mastered the five principal treatises of logic [skr. *pramana*, general doctrine [skr. *prajna-paramita*], madhyamika philosophy [skr. *madhyamaka*], phenomenology [skr. *abhidharma*] and monastic discipline [skr. *vinaya*].

**GREAT COMPASSION** [skr. *mahakaruna*] The firm and spontaneous resolve to separate all sentient beings without exception from the suffering of cyclic existence. It refers to one of the two central qualities of a buddha or a high bodhisattva: his feeling born of the wish for all living beings to be free of suffering and to attain the supreme happiness. This great compassion has nothing to do with any sentimental emotions such as 'Oh, the poor creatures, how they are suffering'. On the contrary great compassion is accompanied by the clear awareness that ultimately there are no such things as living beings, sufferings etc. Thus it is an unlimited sensitivity that does not entertain any dualistic notion of subject and object.

**GREAT LOVE** [skr. *mahamaitri*.] The firm and spontaneous resolve to endow all sentient beings without exception with the real, lasting happiness that knows no suffering.

**GUNTANG JAMPELYANG** [1762-1823] Tibetan scholar, well-known for his eloquent spiritual poetry and philosophical work.

**GURU** [skr.; tib. *lama*] See: spiritual master

**HEART SUTRA** The essence of wisdom sutra. Of the several perfection of wisdom sutras a very condensed and famous one.

**HINAYANA** The 'small vehicle' of Buddhism, taught by the Buddha for those unable immediately to conceive the spirit of enlightenment, as a means for them to attain personal liberation. It includes the *sravaka-yana*, the hearer- or disciple vehicle, and *pratyeka-buddha-yana*, the solitary-realizer vehicle. It is a contrast to the mahayana or 'great vehicle' or bodhisattva-yana, which is taught as a means for living beings of an altruistic aspiration, to attain the liberation of self and others through simultaneous perfection of wisdom and compassion, that is called buddhahood. The names hinayana and theravada are not quite interchangeable, but are very much used so.

**I or SELF or EGO** [skr. *atman*] Buddhism does not accept the existence of an independent, self-existent, unchanging ego or self, because if such were to exist, a person would be unchanging and would be unable to purify himself of fettering passions and attain buddhahood. Rinpoche often refers to this one as 'I rinpoche', 'the Big Boss inside', 'Dictator I'. There is acceptance of a relative, impermanent, changeable, conscious-entity, which is the continuation of life, linking one's former life to this life, and this life to future lives.

**IGNORANCE** [skr. *avidya* tib. *marigpa*] The root cause of cyclic existence; not knowing the way things actually are and misconstruing them to be permanent, satisfactory and inherently existent. The delusions that gives rise to all other delusions and the karma they motivate. Ignorance can be eradicated by the wisdom of emptiness.

**KADAMPA MASTERS** Literally 'The Word-Instructed'. The Kadampa lineage was founded in the eleventh century by the teacher Drom, Atisha's chief disciple. The Kadampa masters carry the lineage of Atisha's teaching; before Tsongkhapa the tradition is called old kadam, after that time the tradition is known as new kadam. The teachings on training the mind, *lojong*, are the main teachings of the kadam tradition.

**KANJUR** Literally 'Translation of Buddha's words'. The collection of sutras and tantras, vinaya rules and abhidharma. 108 Volumes. The collection of commentaries on those is called *Tanjur*.

**KARMA** [skt.] Generally it means 'work' or 'action'. Specifically those actions of the body speech and mind, both wholesome and unwholesome, which are motivated by delusion and perpetuate the condition of cyclic existence through the process of moral causation. In other words, karma is an important concept about the cumulative force of previous actions, which determines present experience and will determine future existences. By the infallible ripening of karma [like seeds] beings experience misery, happiness etc. Collective karma or environmental karma is the karma we create when we act in association with others. Those who create the karma together also experience the effects together.

**LAM RIM** Lit. 'Stages on the path'. Stages on the spiritual path to enlightenment in sutrayana.

**LHAGTONG** [tib., skr. *vipasyana*] Special or penetrative insight. The meditative understanding of impermanence, selflessness and emptiness that overcomes ignorance and leads to liberation.

**LOVE** [skr. *maitri*] The wish for others to be happy. The buddha of love is the buddha to come Maitreya.

**MAHAYANA** (skr., tib. *techen*) 'The great vehicle', called 'great' because it carries all living beings to enlightenment or buddhahood. It is distinguished from hinayana, which only carries each person who rides on it to their own personal liberation. It is the vehicle in which refuge is taken in the scriptures revealed after Buddha's death (and propagated by masters such as Nagarjuna, Asanga, etc.), as well as in the earlier scriptures accepted by hinayana. Also, unlike the hinayana, whose basis is renunciation, the basis of the mahayana is great compassion; and its aim, rather than personal nirvana, is fully omniscient buddhahood. The practises of a *bodhisattva*. Mahayana includes both the vehicle of perfections (*paramitayana*) and *vajrayana*

**MAITREYA** The embodiment of the loving-kindness [skr. *maitri*] of all the buddhas. At the time of Buddha Shakyamuni he manifested as a bodhisattva disciple. Predicted by Buddha Shakyamuni to be the next buddha. He presently resides over Tushita heaven.

**MANDALA** Circle. In particular it is a symbolic offering of the entire universe to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, as described in the Buddhist scriptures. More generally a mandala it is a symbolic representation of a deity's realm of existence. A symbol of the innate harmony and perfection of Being.

**MANJUSHRI** [tib. *Jampelyang*] Male meditational deity. The eternally youthful crown prince, the embodiment of the wisdom of all enlightened beings. Tsongkhapa is regarded the manifestation of Manjushri.

**MANTRA** [skr] Literally: protection of the mind. Sanskrit syllables recited in conjunction with the practice of a particular meditational deity and embodying the qualities of that deity.

**MEDITATION** [skr. *bhavana*, tib. *gom*] Literally 'getting used to'. The process of controlling, training and transforming the mind that leads one to liberation and enlightenment. The process of becoming thoroughly familiar with beneficial states of mind through both analytical investigation and single-pointed concentration.

**MERIT** [skr. *punya*, tib. *sonam*] The wholesome tendencies implanted in the mind as a result of committing skilful actions. That positive wholesome tendencies or energy has the power to create happiness and good qualities. Rinpoche translates it also sometimes as luck.

**MERIT FIELD** In general a field of merit is any basis on which one can collect merit, like a field of earth is the basis on which you can grow crops, the crops depending on the field. A supreme field for accumulating merit are the holy beings, to which we can offer the seven limbs of our practice, the holy beings acting as a field in which we plant and nourish our seeds of virtue.

**MERU** In Buddhist cosmology Mount Meru or Sumeru is the king of mountains, the axial mountain of the world/universe.

**METHOD** [skr. *upaya*] Skilful means or liberative technique. This is the expression of the actions of the great compassion of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, physical, verbal and mental. One empathetically aware of the troubles of living beings would use the most potent and efficacious techniques possible to remove those troubles. And the troubles of living beings are removed effectively only when they reach liberation. Wisdom and method need always go together as the two wings of a bird crossing the ocean of samsara.

**MIDDLE WAY** [skr: *Madhyamika*] The Middle Way School is one of the two main schools of Mahayana tenets [the other one being the Cittamatra or Mind-only school]. The madhyamika view was taught by Buddha in the Perfection-of-Wisdom sutra [*prajnaparamita sutras*] during the second turning of the wheel of dharma and was subsequently elucidated by Nagarjuna and his followers. The view is that all phenomena are dependent arisings, thereby avoiding the mistaken extremes of self-existence and non-existence, or eternalism and nihilism.

**MILAREPA, Jetsun** [1040-1123] A Tibetan yogi who achieved buddhahood in one lifetime. He was the foremost disciple of Marpa, famous for his intense practice, devotion to his *guru* attainment of enlightenment and his many songs of spiritual realization. His biography is a favourite example of hardship undertaken in order to attain enlightenment.

**MUDRA** Symbolic ritual gesture

**NAGARJUNA** [*kLu.sgrub*] Saint, scholar and mystic of Buddhist India, born about four hundred years after the Buddha. Discoverer of the Mahayana scriptures, the lineage of wisdom, according to the myth handed over to him by the *nagas*. He is the founder of the Madhyamika or Middle Way School of tenets. He is said to have lived five hundred sixty years due to his alchemical ability. Some scholars nowadays discriminate three Nagarjunas: one who lives in the first century B.C.E., the 'philosopher' who lived in the second century C.E. and another who lived in the eighth or ninth century C.E. Prof. Thurman says about this, 'Be this as it may, I will render

the legendary account, since the mythic Nagarjuna is the one Tsongkhapa has in mind when he refers to him as ‘Champion’, ‘Holy Father’, ‘Saviour’ or ‘Great Master’, one whose philosophical profundity is integrated indivisibly with his religious sanctity, and even with the magical prowess [skill] of his enlightened compassion.

**NIRVANA** [skr., tib. *nyangde*] The unconditional peace that is realized through becoming liberated from cyclic existence. Generally refers to the hinayana attainment of arhatship, or personal liberation from samsara, but can also include full buddhahood. In the former case, delusions and their instincts are destroyed, giving freedom from cyclic compulsions; in the latter, the innate tendency of the mind to grasp at inherent existence is destroyed as well, granting omniscience.

**OMNISCIENCE** This refers to the gnosis of the Buddha, with which there is nothing he does not know. However, ‘everything’ here is specifically everything about the source of the predicament of wordly life and the way of transcendence of that world through liberation. ‘Everything’ does not refer to any sort of ultimate totality, since a totality can only be relative, i.e. a totality within a particular frame of reference. Thus, as Dharmakirti has remarked, ‘It is not a question of the Buddha’s knowing the number of fish in the ocean’ The Buddha’s omniscience, rather, knows how to develop and liberate any fish in any ocean, as well as all other living beings.

**PABONGKA Je** [1878-1941] is regarded the most influential gelugpa teacher of this century. He was the root-guru of both the Senior and Junior Tutors [Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche and Kyabje Ling Rinpoche] of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and holder of many sutra and secret mantra lineages. A course of twenty-four days or oral teaching of lamrim, transcribed and edited by Trijang Rinpoche came to be known as his *Liberation in the palm of your hand*.

**PARAMITAS** [skr.] The paramitas or perfections or transcending practices of the bodhisattva’s way of life are generally six: generosity or giving [skr. *dana*], morality or ethical discipline [skr. *sila*], tolerance or patience or forbearance [skr. *ksanti*], diligence, joyous perseverance or enthusiasm [skr. *viryā*], meditation or concentration [skr. *dhyana*] and wisdom [skr. *prajna*]. The practice of these six is based upon the altruistic aspiration to attain buddhahood as a tool to benefit the world.

**PARINIRVANA** A more emphatic term for nirvana, when it is used in reference to the apparent passing away of a physical body of a buddha.

**REFUGE** Taking refuge is turning one’s mind towards a valid source of protection from the sufferings of *samsara*. In buddhism this involves entrusting oneself to the three jewels of *Buddha*, *dharma*, and *sangha*.

**SAMADHI** Meditative powers of mind. As a mental faculty, samadhi is the ability to concentrate one-pointedly. In meditation, samadhi becomes the ability to totally absorb the mind in an object of concentration. The total mental stabilisation, which is such a powerful mental state it can be turned to accomplish amazing results.

**SAMSARA** [skr.] Life as experienced by living beings under the influence of ignorance. The unliberated condition in which one is propelled from one state of birth to the next through the forces of karma and delusion. There are six states of birth within cyclic existence: as a god, a titan or demi-god or jealous god, a human being, an animal, a hungry ghost, or a hell-being.

**SANGHA** [skr.] As object of refuge it is the community of *arya* beings or saints, those who have achieved spiritual aims -have attained a direct realisation of emptiness- and are able to help. In daily life we regard the community of those on the spiritual path as a sangha.

**SENTIENT BEING** [skr. *sattva*] Any being trapped within the six realms of cyclic existence [celestial, titan, human, animal, hungry ghost and hell realms] through the forces of karma and delusions. Any being who is not a buddha is a sentient being.

**SHANTIDEVA** [687-763] A great Indian Buddhist teacher, meditator and scholar, most famous for his masterpiece, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*.

**SHARIPUTRA** One of the two most important direct disciples of the Boeddha; the other one being Maugalyayana.

**SIX ROOT DELUSIONS** [*kleshas*] Attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, doubt, wrong view. There are other divisions. There are other divisions of three, five, twenty.

**SKANDHAS** See Fove Skandhas

**SPIRITUAL MASTER** [skr. *guru*, tib. *lama*] Lama literally means ‘He with no ceiling’ or ‘He with no equal’ or ‘The one without superior’, ‘The highest one’. The spiritual teacher. The lama’s principal quality is that of leading disciples from the beginning of their quest all the way to the attainment of buddhahood. Before leaving the earth Buddha said that he would appear in the form of lamas for those who would in the future desire to follow his teachings. A direct guru is any spiritual guide from whom we have received teachings in this life, a

lineage guru is any spiritual guide who has passed on the lineage of teaching received by our own direct gurus. One's principal spiritual guide is also known as one's root guru. Levels of looking at the lama: In the hinayana-level one sees the lama as teacher. In the Mahayana-level one sees the spiritual teacher as a spiritual friend. In tantric practice one sees him as an enlightened being; the guru's body is seen as the sangha, his speech as the dharma, and his mind as the Buddha.

**SUPREME FIELD OF MERIT** In general a field of merit is any basis on which one can collect merit, like a field of earth is the basis on which you can grow crops, the crops depending on the field. A supreme field for accumulating merit are the holy beings, to which we can offer the seven limbs of our practice, the holy beings acting as a field in which we plant and nourish our seeds of virtue.

**SUTRA** [skr.] The exoteric teachings of Buddha, the spiritual text and the teachings they contain. Sutras are of two kinds: hinayana and Mahayana.

**TANTRA** [skr.] Literally 'thread' or 'steam' or 'continuity', the 'stream' or 'tread' of innate wisdom embracing all experience. Another name is: secret mantra, the texts of the secret-mantra teachings of buddhism. The esoteric teachings of Buddha. The essential practice of tantra that distinguishes it from sutra is bringing the result into the path. The practice involves identification of oneself with a fully enlightened deity.

**TARA** [tib. *Dolma*] Female meditational deity. 'She who can free us'. Compassionate saviour goddess. She was born from a tear of Avalokiteshvara and vowed to help him to liberate all beings from samsara. Referred to as the mother of the buddhas of the past, present and future. She is Atisha's patroness and became subsequently a favourite goddess in Tibet because of Atisha's introducing her devotion. There are twenty-one Tara forms.

**THERAVADA** 'Vehicle of the Elders'. Tradition of buddhism following its earlier style of practice and understanding of scripture. Sometimes called *hinayana*. Its final goal is *arhatship*.

**TRIPITAKA** Literally 'the three baskets'. The three collections of scriptures that belong to the Buddhist canon: *vinaya*, the collection of scriptures on morality, *sutra*, the collection of scriptures on transcendental wisdom and method, and *abhidharma*, the collection of scriptures on metaphysics.

**TSONGKHAPA** [1357-1419] Lit. 'The man from the onion land [Tsongl.]' Je Tsongkhapa was a great fourteenth-century scholar and teacher who reforming the Kadampa tradition restored the purity of buddhadharma in Tibet, thus founding the Gelug tradition. His many treatises finalized the work begun by Atisha of clarification and synthesis of the vast body of Indian scriptures and schools of practice into a unified exposition of sutrayana and tantrayana paths. He wrote several lamrims, the most well-known one is Great exposition on the Stages of the Path, *Lam rim chen mo*. On the stages in tantra he wrote the Great exposition of secret mantra, *Nag rim chen mo*. He is regarded a full enlightened being and along with Long-chen Rab-jam-pa [1308-1363] and the Sakya Pandita [1182-1251] an emanation of Manjushri. He is regarded as the synthesis of Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani and therefore regarded as the embodiment of the wisdom, compassion and power of all the buddhas.

**TUSHITA** [tib. *Ganden*] The Heaven of Joy. The pure land of Tushita is resided over by Maitreya, the future buddha. It is the place where bodhisattvas wait to become a buddha. Famous teachers such as Tsongkhapa and Atisha are residing there. Tushita pure land is situated in a 'corner' of the six abodes of the desire-realm gods.

**VAJRAPANI** [tib. *Sangwedag*] An important bodhisattva whose compassion is to manifest in a terrific form to protect the practitioners of the dharma from harmful influences.

**VAJRAYANA** Secret mantra vehicle. The advanced means to quickly achieve buddhahood -within one lifetime- for the sake of all sentient beings. Its method is bringing the result into the path. It is also called: *tantrayana*. It is part of the Mahayana, which is divided into *sutrayana* and *tantrayana*

**WISDOM** [skr. *prajna*, tib. *sherab*] The sixth of the six transcendences or *paramitas*. The unmistakable understanding of things; specifically the insight into emptiness: the actual way in which things exist; Wisdom is the antidote to ignorance. It is symbolised by Manjushri.

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## INDEX

### A

*Abhisamaya-alamkara*, 133  
 actions and consequences. *See* karma  
 alertness, 49  
 altruism, 31; 123  
   how it relates to me, 130  
 altruistic attitude, 123; 127; 137. *Also see*  
   bodhimind, *also see* bodhicitta  
   how it is beneficial, 130  
   seven steps for developing, 140–42; 145–48;  
   149–54  
   why important, 132  
 analytical meditation. *See* meditation  
 anger, 26; 105; 141; 209  
 arhat, 32; 54; 144; 153. g  
 Atisha. g  
 attachment, 105; 119; 135; 138; 212  
 Avalokiteshvara, 136; 159; 180; 181. g

### B

Beng, Geshe, 91  
 big boss, 126–27  
 bodhicitta, 123; 134; 143; 153. *Also see* bodhimind,  
   *also see* altruistic attitude  
   reasons for developing, 135  
   seed, 144  
   why you need it, 135  
 bodhimind, 143; 153. g. *Also see* bodhicitta, *also*  
   *see* altruistic attitude  
 bodhisattva, 123; 153. g  
 buddha, 103  
   cause for, 143  
   qualities of a, 70  
 Buddha, 70; 161. *also see* Sakyamuni buddha. g  
   day of birth etc, 206  
   lifestory, 13–14  
   personal experience, 109  
   qualities of a, 70  
   quoted, 15; 33; 39; 112; 118; 154; 161

  teachings of, 109  
 buddha nature, 70. g  
   seed, 33  
 Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, 70  
 buddhahood, 14; 202  
   and individuality, 202  
 buddha-nature, 33  
 Buddhapalita, 35. g  
 Buddhism, 15  
 Buddhist, 31  
   becoming a, 31

### C

celibacy, 23  
 Chandrakirti, 132; 144; 153; 167. g  
   quoted, 144; 167  
 circle of existence, 46; 53; 93; 117; 119. *Also see*  
   samsara  
 circle of life. *See* samsara  
 compassion, 124; 125; 133; 134; 137; 145; 146;  
   147; 148; 160; 210. g  
   and pity, 199  
   beginning, middle, end, 134; 149  
   great, 149  
   great compassion. g  
     importance of, 134  
   how to develop, 139  
   in action, 155  
   in action, 154–56  
   obstacles to, 138  
   sign of having developed, 150  
 compassion, 127  
 concentration. *Also see* meditation  
   and wisdom, 162–68; 162–68  
 consciousness, 202  
 continuation of the person, 111

### D

Dalai Lama, 74. g  
 death, 26; 54; 63; 67; 69; 73; 82; 118

and individuality, 202  
 facing realistically, 61–67  
 no certainty, 63  
 unavoidable, 62  
 what can help, 64; 66  
 what happens when we die, 82  
 death, 202  
 death and dying, 61; 66  
 dedication, 179. g  
 delusions, 23; 106; 113; 117; 118. g  
   how to handle, 117  
 dependent arising, 46; 78; 164  
 desire, 23–25; 66; 83; 126; 135. g  
   three ways of overcoming, 23  
 determination to be free, 31; 42; 45; 46; 50; 53; 66;  
 84; 103; 105; 117. g  
   conclusion, 120  
   review, 126  
   sign of having gained, 120  
   what holds us back, 105  
 development  
   sign of, 107  
*Dhammapada*  
   quoted, 118  
 dharma  
   absolute and relative, 71  
 Dharma, 71. g  
 dharma practice, 18; 27  
 Dharmakirti, 160. g  
   quoted, 160  
 dissatisfaction, 47; 66; 95; 99; 117; 127; 190  
 distorted view, 97–101; 160  
 dualistic mind, 132  
 dukkha, 117. g

**E**

ego, 199; 208  
 eight worldly attitudes, 78. g  
 emotional problems, 126  
 emptiness, 160; 162; 163; 164; 168. g. *Also see*  
   perfect view  
   and Tsongkhapa, 165  
   empty of what?, 165  
   finding the object to be negated, 161; 166–67  
   two problems, 161  
 enlightenment, 205. g  
 Ensapa, 79  
 equanimity, 140–42  
 eternalism, 161  
 examples  
   child in pit, 138  
   hair out of butter, 65  
   hand-person, 141  
   hologram, 97  
   jail, 48  
   refuge, 71  
   salt, sugar, tea, 58

samsara and man's beard, 105  
 samsara and waves of the ocean, 104  
 samsara is honey on knife, 105

**F**

faith, 80  
   blind, 206  
 false security, 97  
 fear, 97; 98; 99; 100  
 five skandhas, 216  
 food offering, 124  
*Foundation of All Perfections*, 183  
 four currents, 135  
 four immeasurables, 129. g  
 four noble truths, 109–14; 115. g  
 framework, 58; 202  
 future lives, 25; 45; 58; 69; 82; 93

**G**

Ganden Lha Gyema, 176  
 Gautama, 13; 33; 97  
 geshe. g  
 going beyond, 93  
 gone beyond, 110  
 great compassion, 133; 149  
   how to develop, 139  
   seed of, 137  
 great love, 150; 152  
 Guntang Jampelyang, 146. g  
 guru. g

**H**

habitual pattern, 76; 89  
 happiness, 46; 48; 98; 147; 200  
   projection of, 97  
 hatred, 138  
*Heart sutra*, 159; 164. g  
 human life  
   hard to get, 57–58

**I**

*I*, 160; 166; 168; 204. g  
 identification, 204  
 identity, 97; 111; 112; 160; 198  
   holding on to, 82  
 identity-less, 112; 165  
 ignorance, 135; 160; 161; 163; 164. g  
 impermanent, 57; 82; 99; 159; 187; 189; 209  
 individuality, 203  
   and death, 202

**J**

jail, 48  
 Jesus, 61

**K**

Kadampa, 54; 78; 79; 91  
 Kamapa, geshe, 54  
*Kanjur*, 109; 160. g  
 karma, 33; 66; 82; 87–91; 94; 95; 99; 113; 118; 126;  
 206; 209. g  
   acting and experiencing, 88  
   characteristics, 89  
   collective, 88  
   how to handle, 90  
   individual, 88  
   lucky, 94  
   own creation, 88  
   results, 89  
 Krishnamurti, 162

**L**

*Lalitavistara sutra*, 15; 110  
*Lam Rim Chen Mo*, 41  
 Lamrim, 41. g  
 learning, thinking, meditation, 35–36; 56–57  
 leisure, 55; 200  
 leisure and opportunity, 53–54; 56; 204; 205  
 lhagtong, 163. g  
 life  
   embracing, 53–57  
   importance of, 54–104  
   turn off your interest in this, 73  
   valuable, 100  
   what do we aim to get out of, 76  
 Lingrepa, 78  
 Lopön Leggyi Dorje, 40  
 love, 124; 125; 127–28; 133; 137; 139; 145; 146. g  
   for ourselves, 45  
   great, 150. g  
   sign of having developed, 152

**M**

mahayana, 152  
 Maitreya, 133; 177. g  
   quoted, 133  
 mandala. g  
 mandala offering, 186  
 Manjushri, 40; 41; 132; 180; 218  
   spiritual master, 39–41  
 mantra, 218  
 materialism, 75  
 meditation, 19; 35; 139; 143; 182. g  
   analytical, 34; 35; 62; 83  
   analytical and concentration, 114  
   concentration, 35; 83; 216  
   mindfully, 211  
 meditation guided  
   four immeasurables, 129  
   Ganden Lha Gyema, 176  
   one's pure nature, 103

  overviewing meditation, 187–91  
   overzichtsmeditatie, 192–96  
 meditation guidelines on  
   care, 125  
   death, 62–66  
   developing great compassion, 149  
   developing great love, 150  
   developing the special committed mind, 152  
   developing wisdom, 163–64  
   equanimity, 140–42  
   finding the object to be negated, 166–67  
   handling obstructions to equanimity, 140–42  
   leisure and opportunity in my life, 55; 56–57  
   mother beings, 142  
   obstacles to compassion, 138  
   pain and happiness, 47  
   remembering the kindness, 145  
   renunciation, 73  
   repaying kindness, 147  
   suffering in samsara, 94–95  
 meditation practice, 67  
 merit. g  
 Merit Field. Also see Supreme Field of Merit. g  
 Meru. g  
 method. g  
 middle way, 75  
 Middle Way, 218  
*Migtsema*, 180; 182  
 Milarepa, 17; 79; 81. g  
   quoted, 79; 80; 81  
 mindfulness, 49–50; 90; 119; 210  
 mirror, 75  
   use dharma as, 34  
 morality  
   basis for human life, 57  
 mother, 145; 146  
 mother sentient beings, 142; 150  
 motivation, 17; 36  
   levels of, 18  
   pure, 176  
 mudra, 144; 182. g

**N**

Nagarjuna, 35; 162. g  
 nectar, 110  
 negative forces, 20; 24; 26  
 negativities, 33  
 nihilism, 161  
 nirvana, 32; 133; 144; 151; 153; 219

**O**

obstacles, 83  
 offering, 177  
 Om Mani Padme Hum, 181  
 OM TARE..., 181  
 omniscience. g  
*opportunity*, 53; 55

outlines, 172

## **P**

Pabongka. g

pain, 46; 118

paramitas, 162. g

paranirvana. g

path to enlightenment, 198

patience, 26; 27; 57; 91; 149; 187

perception, 132; 140; 160; 168

perfect view, 32; 42; 159. *Also see* emptiness

permanent, 209

person

continuation of, 111

positivity, 33

practice

advice on compassion practice, 148

can I help myself, 100

cutting the delusions, 106

debate with yourself, 56

get yourself convinced, 66

guided meditation

four immeasurables, 129

Ganden Lha Gyema, 176

one's pure nature, 103

overviewing meditation, 187–91

overzichtsmeditatie, 192–96

guidelines for a meditation

on leisure and opportunity in my life, 55; 56–57

on pain and happiness, 47

guidelines for a meditation

on care, 125

on death, 62–66

on developing great compassion, 149

on developing great love, 150

on developing the special committed mind, 152

on developing wisdom, 163–64

on equanimity, 140–42

on finding the object to be negated, 166

on handling obstructions to equanimity, 140

on mother beings, 142

on obstacles to compassion, 138

on remembering the kindness, 145

on renunciation, 73

on repaying kindness, 147

on suffering in samsara, 94–95

handle your meditation practice with care, 67

how to balance our meditation practice, 84

how to do the meditation – mindfulness and alertness, 49

nearness and distance, 128

points to consider, 77

samsara and 'going beyond', 96

soak your mind in the spiritual practice, 80

spiritual support, 136

the need for review, 106

use the talks as a mirror, 26; 75

watch and cath, 91

watch your mind, 20

what points to meditate on, 143

your group as mirror, 27

praise, 177

precepts, 206

prison, 93; 105

problems, 34; 126

covering up, 25–26

emotional, 126

from childhood, 208

man-made versus root, 24–25

our real, 23

root-

how to handle, 26

purification, 90; 178; 180

purification buddhas, 41

## **Q**

questions and answers, 197–213

Questions/suggestions for home practice, 15; 21; 27; 37; 42; 50; 59; 67; 72; 84; 91; 96; 101; 107; 115; 121; 156; 169

quotations

bodhisattva playing horsecart, 153

Buddha

collections in the ed disperse, 118

deep, peaceful....nectar obtained, 15

I achieved, why can't you, 112

on Nagarjuna, 161

prince overpowers ministers, 154

test teachings, 39

you and I were equal, 33

buddhas come out of bodhisattvas, 153

Chandrakirti

Buddha have grown..., 144

Chandrakirti

on inherent self, 167

parts of the cart, 167

Dharmakirti

love-compassion, 160

doing a little practice is better, 18

Geshe Beng

I have a weapon, 91

Kadampa jewels, 79

Kamapa on death, 54

Maitreya

away from nirvana, 133

Milarepa, 79; 80; 81

naive work for their aims alone, 213

Shantideva, 130

cover earth by leather, 127

from milk butter arises, 130

joy in the world..., 213

on bodhicitta, 130

spiritual friend, 39  
 the zombies of the worldly concerns, 78  
 use dharma as mirror, 34  
 you may have stored food, 65  
 quote  
 select a path, 25

**R**

refuge, 69–72; 176. g  
 mahayana, 72  
 ultimate, 72  
 reincarnation, 16; 99; 100. *Also see* person,  
 continuation of. *Also see* future lives  
 rejoice, 178  
 relative truth, 62  
 renunciation, 42; 45; 73; 77; 80; 117  
 retreat, 206  
 root text, 5; 174

**S**

Sakya Pandita, 197  
 Sakyamuni buddha, 181. g. *Also see* Buddha  
*samadhi*, 76; 182. g  
 samsara, 23; 42; 49; 82; 84; 98; 99; 104–5; 126;  
 133; 144; 160. g. *Also see* circle of existence  
 faults of, 163  
 no new-born, 147  
 problems in general, 95  
 root of, 160  
 sangha, 71; 156. g  
 security  
 false, 97  
 seed, 198  
 self-interest, 27  
 selflessness, 165–68  
 sentient being, 211. g  
 sentient beings, 124; 152; 155  
 seven limb practice, 177  
 seven steps altruisme, 140–42; 145–48; 149–54  
 Shakyamuni buddha, 13; 14; 33  
 shamatha, 76; 162  
 Shantideva, 127; 130  
 quoted, 127; 130; 212  
 Shariputra, 159. g  
 shunyata, 42  
 sign  
 of having developed determination to be free,  
 120  
 of having developed great compassion, 150  
 of having developed great love, 152  
 of spiritual development, 107  
 whether this practice is helping you, 148  
 six root delusions. g  
 skandhas, 164. *See* five skandhas  
 soul, 202  
 spiritual demands and society, 123  
 spiritual development, 66; 113; 205

my need for, 11–15  
 three levels of, 32  
 spiritual discipline, 58; 59  
 spiritual friend, 39  
 spiritual master. g  
 Manjushri, 39–41  
 spiritual path  
 choice of, 25  
 spiritual practice, 18; 101; 114  
 how to start, 197  
 motivation for, 17  
 need of, 12  
 soak your mind in it, 78  
 spiritual support, 83; 156  
 spirituality, 23  
 and materialism, 75  
 grounded, 33  
 wat it is and is not, 17  
 spritual practice  
 need of, 11  
 stories  
 Buddha's lifestory, 13–14  
 origination of root text, 39  
 Rinpoche's flight from Tibet, 74  
 the beggar and the gold, 74  
 the mare that gave birth, 146  
 student's part, 34  
 suffering, 26; 95; 98; 118; 197. *Also see* pain  
 cause of, 113  
 meditation on, 94–95  
 of change, 93  
 pervasive, 94  
 problems of samsara, 95  
 three sufferings, 93–94  
 truth of, 110  
 Suggestions for reading, 15; 21; 28; 37; 42; 50; 59;  
 67; 72; 84; 91; 96; 101; 107; 115; 121; 136; 157;  
 169  
 Supreme field of merit. g  
 Supreme Field of Merit, 129; 176; 180; 184  
 sutra. g  
 sutra path, 24

**T**

tantra. g  
 Tara, 181. g  
 TAYATHA GATE GATE..., 181  
 TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI..., 181  
 ten innermost jewels, 79  
*Three Principles of the Path*  
 indeling van de grondtekst, 173  
 origination of the text, 39  
 outlines, 172  
 root text, 5; 174  
 the three principles, 31  
 tradition, 11  
 transcendence, 45

tripitaka. *g*  
Tsongkhapa, 39; 41; 136; 176; 180; 183. *g*  
    and emptiness, 165  
Tushita, 177. *g*

## **U**

ultimate friend, 142  
Umapa, lama, 39

## **V**

Vajradhara, 132  
Vajrapani, 40; 132; 180. *g*  
vajrayana, 36; 104; 132; 182; 199; 202. *g*  
view  
    distorted, 97–101; 160  
    perfect, 32; 42; 159

    short-sighted, 141  
    wrong, 135  
vipasyana, 163  
visions  
    three kinds of, 39  
visualization, 182

## **W**

watching the mind, 17; 20  
wisdom, 35; 159; 162; 163; 168; 180; 182. *g*  
    and concentration, 162–68  
wrathful activities, 181

## **Z**

zombies, 78



Born in Lhasa, Tibet, Kyabje Gehlek Rinpoche was recognized as an incarnate lama at the age of four. Carefully tutored by Tibet's greatest living masters, he received specialized individual teaching at Drepung Monastery, the nation's largest monastery.

In 1959, Gehlek Rinpoche was among those forced into exile, fleeing the Communist Chinese who had occupied Tibet since 1951. While in India, Rinpoche as a member of a group of sixteen monks, was chosen to continue specific studies with the great masters who had escaped Tibet, including the Dalai Lama's personal tutors.

At the age of twenty-five, Rinpoche gave up monastic life. In the mid-70's, Gehlek Rinpoche was encouraged by his teachers to begin teaching in English. Since that time he has gained a large following throughout the world. Coming to the U.S. in the mid-80's, Rinpoche later moved to Ann Arbor, MI and in 1987 founded Jewel Heart, an organization dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture and Buddhism. Today, Jewel Heart has chapters throughout the U.S. and in Malaysia, Singapore and the Netherlands.

A member of the last generation of lamas to be born and fully educated in Tibet, Gehlek Rinpoche is particularly distinguished for his understanding of contemporary society and his skill as a teacher of Buddhism in the West. He is now an American citizen. Gehlek Rinpoche's first book, the national bestseller, *Good Life, Good Death*, was published in 2001.

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