

## In the Spirit of Manjusri

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In the context of Buddha Dharma, Dharma refers to the ultimate Dharma, which is nirvana. Therefore the understanding of Buddhist religion needs the correct understanding of the dharma of cessation and nirvana or liberation. If one's practices become an antidote towards the delusions or afflictions of the mind then those practices are dharma or dharmic. If the practices do not become antidotes to your delusions then they are not dharmic or dharma.

What is the distinguishing feature of the Buddha Dharma? It is the dharma that is practiced on the basic understanding or recognition that the delusions and afflictions of the mind are the true enemy. One's whole spiritual practice is dedicated towards combating these afflictions of the mind. Of course favorable rebirth and other desirable aspects of samsaric life along with their causes for these positive attainments are virtuous but these should not be our ultimate aspiration as Dharma practitioners. Our ultimate aspiration should be liberation from samsara.

Based on the true recognition of the unsatisfactory nature of existence in samsara and also based on the full appreciation of the desirability of liberation from this, one should develop a genuine aspiration to seek such freedom. This is called true renunciation. In order to develop a genuine aspiration to attain full liberation or freedom from samsara, one needs to develop a certain understanding of what nirvana or liberation really means. In this context one also needs to have some idea of what it means to attain such liberation. This understanding arises from the recognition that the delusions of the mind can be removed. In this context the understanding of emptiness is critical.

Generally speaking the notion of moksha or spiritual liberation is found in many religious traditions. For example in the non-Buddhist Indian tradition of Samkhya, there is a very sophisticated concept of moksha, liberation. They speak about twenty-five primary objects of knowledge, which are various manifestations of or modalities of the primal substance. When all of these manifestations dissolve into primal substance, this is when all delusions cease and true liberation takes place. Similarly in the Jaina tradition of ancient Indian thought there is a conception of moksha in terms of there being an ontological pure land where spiritually enlightened beings take rebirth.

What is unique to Buddhism is the true understanding of moksha or liberation that can only come when one has a deep understanding of emptiness. There is a passage from Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika, Fundamental of the Middle Way*, which gives a very succinct account of what Nagarjuna understands as moksha or liberation. Nagarjuna states that liberation takes place when the continuum of karma and delusions has ceased. Here the cessation of the karmic continuum and the delusions does not refer to a stream just coming to an end because it is a momentary phenomenon. Rather this cessation refers to a cessation that is brought about by deliberate means by the application of the path.

The karma which give rise to the whole perpetual cycle of unenlightened existence is in turn created by the motivating factors such as the delusions of the mind; attachment, hatred, ignorance and so on. These delusions or afflictions of the mind themselves are in turn created on the basis of a false perception of the world, particularly the kind of exaggerations we tend to place on our perceptions. This preconception of the

world in turn is created by our fundamentally ignorant way of perceiving the world whereby we tend to project some sort of eternal, abiding or enduring nature to things and events. This is termed conceptual elaborations in the sense that we are elaborating the world. This elaboration or the fundamentally misconceived way of viewing the world is something that can only be eliminated and rooted out by developing the insight into emptiness that sees through the deception and understands the world as it is. The key to undercutting this whole process lies in the correct understanding of emptiness.

There is an alternative reading to the last line of Nagarjuna's statement that all of these conceptual elaborations are calmed by the means of developing insight into emptiness. The alternate reading is where he says that all these conceptual elaborations are calmed within emptiness. This notion of calmed within emptiness has the sense that it is in fact the insight into our ultimate true nature of mind which dispels the delusions of the mind. The mind in a way becomes the same instrument of purifying the mind.

If one thinks through carefully, moksha or liberation is nothing but a state of mind, the ultimate nature of the mind. The ultimate nature of the mind is the emptiness of the mind and this is sometimes referred to as the natural nirvana. The emptiness of the mind, a mind which has reached a point where it is cleansed of all its delusions or pollutants, is nirvana or moksha.

Therefore in the scriptures there are mention of at least four principal kinds of nirvana or liberation. First is the natural nirvana that refers to the emptiness of the mind. In fact this is the basis or ground that allows, makes it possible, for our minds to become free. The remaining three are the nirvana with residue, the nirvana without residue and the non-abiding nirvana.

This notion of equality between samsara and nirvana has been developed in the Sakya explanation of emptiness where they talk about the equality of samsara and nirvana even in relation to aggregate objects like pots and so on. Although the real meaning of the equality of samsara and nirvana has to be based an understanding of the nature of the mind.

Within the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, the key is understanding the difference between fundamental ignorance and the rest of the cycle. There is a causal relationship present as if fundamental ignorance is eliminated, the whole cycle comes to an end. When teaching the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination in the sutras, the Buddha made three very important statements. First was that because this exists, that exists. The point he made here is that for anything to have the potential for causation of another, it must be existent.

The second statement is that because this came into being the other comes into being. The point made here is that existence alone is not adequate. What is required is that the very thing which causes something, it itself must be caused by something else. Nothing that is not caused can have the potential to cause something else. The point is that these are transient phenomena.

The third statement is that because fundamental ignorance exists, karmic factors also came into being. The point made here is that in order for something to produce something else, existence alone is not adequate as it also needs to be an impermanent phenomena. But impermanence itself is not adequate there needs to be commensurability between the cause and effect. For instance in the case of cyclic existence, there is a co-relation between the fundamental ignorance and the samsaric unenlightened state.

Because samsaric existence is undesirable, its cause that is the fundamental ignorance, is also something that is undesirable. The point Buddha makes here is that although everyone has the natural instinct to seek happiness, out of ignorance one creates the causes and conditions for one's own suffering. It is this ignorance which lies at the root of one's imprisonment or samsara.

Commenting on these three crucial statements from the sutra, Asanga makes the observation in his *Abhidharmasamuccaya, The Compendium of Knowledge* that this refers to the three conditions. Asanga makes the point in the first condition that unlike other religious traditions, in the Buddhist context creation has to be understood within the context of cause and effect not due to some transcendent being's divine power.

By emphasizing the second condition which is the fact that cause itself is an impermanent phenomena, Asanga states that the Buddha is in some sense rejecting the assertion of other religious traditions whereby a claim is made that the whole physical world comes into being as the result of creation from a permanent cause. For example in Samkhya philosophy, primal substance that is itself said to be permanent is seen as the cause of the entire universe. This is what is being rejected.

Therefore this whole causation chain needs to be understood from these perspectives. The twelve links themselves are then categorized under three classes; delusions, karma and suffering the effects. These teachings on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination are very succinctly captured in *The Sacred Words of Manjusri* by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

The Fifth Dalai Lama states in the example of a karmic cycle of taking rebirth in a favorable state of existence, like a human being, the initial fundamental ignorance, which is at the root of this rebirth, is the first factor, the first chain of the twelve links. This motivates or gives rise to action, which in the case of a human rebirth, would be a virtuous action. This is the second chain of the twelve links, a volitional, karmic act that arises from the motivating ignorance.

The third chain, consciousness, is divided into a causal path and the resultant path. The causal path is the consciousness that was simultaneous to the actual karmic act. The first part of the third chain is said to be the propelling causes, the initial causes that really give the thrust that propels the karmic action into a causal process. Fundamental ignorance is said to be the causal motivating factor and then there are certain types of ignorance that are said to be simultaneous to the actual actions. These are for example ignorance of the laws of cause and effect and so on. Such ignorance will lead to inferior rebirth in the cycle of existence.

The second chain in the twelve links is volitional acts or karmic action. There are three principal types; positive, negative and one that birth in the higher realms of existence. Only in the case of negative karma does one not only have fundamental ignorance as the motivation but also ignorance of the law of cause and effect. In all of these cases what is basic is the presence of fundamental ignorance. It is this fundamental ignorance that lies at the root of all of the chains.

Once the karmic actions are committed and karma is created the question then arises how does the karma maintain its potency throughout successive lives across time before it creates its result or effect? Here the question of how karma leaves its imprints comes into relevance. On the question of how karmic actions create imprints it is a very philosophically difficult question. I, myself, sometimes do not get a clear idea and of

course one can see that there has been a tremendous amount of discussion on this point in the Buddhist philosophical literature. One general consensus is that it is on the continuum of consciousness that the karmic imprints are carried over or maintained.

The Fifth Dalai Lama states that the eighth chain in the twelve links, which is attachment and also the ninth, called craving [grasping] and the tenth, the chain of becoming, these three are the activating causes. These cause the maturation of the karmic seed. Attachment here refers to the affinity towards desirable sensations such as pleasure and so on as well as the attachment to avoid suffering. The ninth chain, craving [grasping], is a much-heightened form of attachment. Through attachment and craving [grasping], the tenth chain comes into being which is a highly activated form of the karmic potential.

Nagarjuna also points out that Buddha himself stated in the sutras that aging and death are also caused by birth, the coming into being. Just as coming into being is caused by an event, disintegration or dissolution of a phenomenon is also caused by an event. Nagarjuna and his followers maintain that just as production or creation is caused by events so to disintegration or dissolution. Others disagree with this and maintain that cessation is a permanent phenomena and is known as a non-affirming negation, a simple negation, a cessation of a phenomena. Nagarjuna and his followers would maintain that as cessation is caused by an event, it has still the potential to cause something else.

The next four links of the chain are the six sources, name and form, what are known as the contacts and feeling. These are said to be the propelled results. Name and form refers to an early stage of embryonic development and the six sources refer to the stage of development where the sense organs begin to develop. When the sensory faculties are developed to a point where they are able to register experiences, contact comes into being as there is now interaction with objects. The further development of this is the ability to cognitively experience sensation as feeling.

Use of the combination name and form is to include even rebirth in formless realms of existence. It is said that beings who take rebirth in the formless realms of existence, although they do not have forms, but they have a name referring to the basis of the forms. Similarly the physical sense organs, the faculties, would not be fully manifest in the formless realms except that they remain in the form of a potential.

Eleventh in the chain, birth, is said to be of four different kinds; spontaneous birth, womb-born birth, egg-born birth and heat/moisture-born birth. Aging and death constitute the twelfth link in the chain. Aging need not necessarily refer to old age itself but rather it is said that from the second moment after one's birth, the process of aging has begun. One can say that the twelfth link has started immediately after one's birth.

In this chain of the twelve links the coming into being of the later ones depend upon the coming into being of the preceding ones whereas the cessation of the later ones depends upon the cessation of its preceding link in the chain. Through this way one can trace through to the final cause which is the fundamental ignorance. It is in this sense that one can say that fundamental ignorance lies at the root of one's unenlightened existence in samsara.

What is the nature of this fundamental ignorance? There is a divergence of opinion among Buddhist thinkers. Asanga maintains that ignorance is not an active state of misknowing but rather a passive state of unknowing. However people such as Dharmakirti and Candrakirti maintain that ignorance is not a mere passive state of

unknowing but rather an active state of misknowing. Therefore the ignorant mind is nothing other than the distorted mind which misperceives reality as existing with some sort of inherent nature or reality.

In brief what is maintain here is that the root of cyclic existence is grasping at the true existence or inherent existence of one's own self. Therefore it is only by eliminating this grasping at a self that one can begin the process of undoing the chain. Aryadeva, Nagarjuna's chief disciple, as stated in the *Forty Verses on the Middle Way*, the seed of samsaric existence is consciousness. By consciousness, he is referring to a consciousness that grasps at the true existence of self and phenomena. He then says that all objects; things and events are phenomena grasped at by that consciousness. When one gains insight into the absence of the self-existence of these phenomena then one can begin to eliminate, undercut the processes of the seed of samsara.

Similarly Nagarjuna states in his *Seventy Verses on Emptiness*, the mind that grasps at all things and events which come into being as a result of their causes and conditions as if they have some sort of inherent existence or autonomy, is taught by the Buddha to be ignorant mind. It is from this ignorant mind that the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination arises. If a person develops a full understanding of the meaning of dependent origination then one can begin the process of undoing the chain. One can particularly start undercutting the production phase of ignorance and once this is done then all the subsequent links in the chain will be cut also.

If we examine now our own natural state of mind, we have a deep sense of the presence of a self, even in our dreams there is an abiding core to our being. If we examine our natural sense of self, what can be called the I-consciousness or the thought of "I am", we find different degrees of strength. I am not talking about attachment to a sense of self but rather a notion of the sense of self. In certain situations we will have a strong sense of self where there is a strong belief in a real sort of existence of a person who is somehow independent of our body and mind. In that sense of self somehow this person, this self or me, is apart from the body and mind but at the same time connected to the body and mind. In some sense it seems like a boss or controller of one's body and mind. This sense of self in the scripture is said to be a notion of self that is substantially real.

The Fifth Dalai Lama finally identifies what he means by an innate grasping at the sense of self in the certain states of our sense of self or I-consciousness. We tend to assimilate our sense of self with our bodily states or mental states where the identification with the body and mind is very strong so much so that there is a sense that mind and body are mixed together like milk and water, completely fused with each other. On the basis of such an assimilated notion of body and mind, a natural thought of I or self arises as if this self or I has an independent existence, an essence in its own right. The belief in this kind of self or existence is said to be the innate grasping at the self-existence of person.

When we talk about the sense of self, of course there will be certain types of a sense of self that can not be said to be false or distorted. The natural occurrence of thoughts such as "I am going" or "I am coming" have a level of self-consciousness or sense of self which must be valid, which allow one to function. This grasping at the self-existence of person based on a strong sense of self gives rise to emotional responses to given situations. If it is something desirable one tends to immediately grasp at it, cling to it and feel attached. If it is an undesirable object one tends to be repulsed and feel angry, hatred and so on. This is how the whole cycle of the chain begins.

The point I am making is that not all instances of a sense of self are false or deluded. Most instances of a sense of self, particularly those affected by an emotional reaction to a given situation, are polluted by a sense of grasping at the self-existence of person or phenomena. It is this grasping at self-existence which gives rise to other afflictions of the mind such as attachment, anger and so forth. The mere occurrence of them in our mind immediately creates a sense of disturbance within us and destroys mental composure or peace of mind. Since as Dharma practitioners what we desire and what we aspire to is ultimate, everlasting state of liberation and joy. Delusions, the mental afflictions, of mind are the true enemy. It is they who destroy the seed for such liberation.

It becomes important to not only appreciate the destructive nature of negative thoughts and emotion but also the completely undesirable nature of them. Anyone, so long as they remain under the control or power of the delusions, becomes an object of pity and compassion. There is no real place for joy or satisfaction. In a real sense so long as we remain under the control of the delusions we are in some sense imprisoned within cyclic existence. By reflecting on the destructive nature of the negative emotions or thoughts and also by reflecting upon their destructive power and ability to continually bind us to cyclic existence, one can generate a genuine aspiration to seek freedom and liberation from them. This is the true renunciation.

It is by appreciating the negativity or undesirable nature of suffering and also appreciating the causal mechanism of the origin of suffering that one can eventually develop a genuine aspiration to attain full liberation. When we talk about developing a genuine aspiration to attain freedom from suffering, here we are not talking about suffering in the ordinary sense but rather the third level of suffering, the suffering of pervasive conditioning. When one fully recognizes the true nature of this level of suffering then the wish to attain liberation will be very strong. This desire or aspiration to seek liberation or freedom is said to be true renunciation.

In order to fully appreciate the nature of suffering one has to be able to develop a good understanding of what is meant by impermanence or the transient nature of phenomena. If we look at the world, including both the universe and one's own body down to the minutest particle, everything goes through constant change and flux. This process occurs dynamically even every second. The question can be raised as to what makes our body and the whole universe go through this process of change? The continuum is uninterrupted. The very cause, which gave rise to the first instance also, planted within its seed the mechanism for its disintegration. Therefore everything is said to be under the power of their causes.

In the context of our aggregates, our body and mind, since they also go into the constant change of this dynamic process, karma and the delusions cause it to come into being in the first place. Karma and the delusions have as their root fundamental ignorance. It is this fundamental ignorance in the final analysis, which is creating this whole process.

We can say that one should rise against this ignorance. How does one go about doing this? Only through cultivating insight into the selflessness of person and phenomena can one begin the process of eliminating ignorance. The fundamental ignorance is the mind that grasps at the true existence of things and events. Therefore only by seeing through that delusion, that is to say that only by demonstrating the way in

which ignorant mind grasps at self and phenomena, is unfounded and invalid can one begin the process of eliminating it. When one begins to understand in this way then the passages in the *Pramanavarttika* where Dharmakirti says that understanding impermanence strengthens the understanding of suffering and the understanding of suffering strengthens the understanding of selflessness.

We can also reflect upon the fact that inherent, independent existence and the absence of inherent existence are mutually exclusive. Therefore they can not reside in one mind at the same time. The wisdom realizing emptiness and the ignorant mind grasping at true existence are directly opposite to each other. Ignorant mind, grasping at true existence, lacks grounding in any valid cognition whereas the wisdom cognizing emptiness not only is valid but also has a valid foundation. This kind of ascertainment can be strengthened, reinforced as it has a valid support. Therefore the more one develops it, the more one strengthens it, and it will become more and more reinforced so that one can develop it to a much higher level of power. Also one of the unique characteristics of the qualities of mind is that after one has developed it to a certain point, then one does not need to reinforce it again. It becomes a natural part of your habit.

It is on the basis of understanding this wisdom of emptiness because it is a quality of the mind, which maintains continuum in a stable way, and also because it possesses valid support in grounding in reason and experience, it has the potential to be developed to its limitless potential. As the origin of suffering can be eliminated, the Buddha emphasized that one must recognize the nature of suffering. Otherwise if there weren't any possibility of freedom from suffering then the Buddha's emphasis on contemplating the nature of suffering would only be a morose habit designed to create one's depression.

In the scriptures the Buddha has given the analogy of someone in prison. The person is so ignorant that they do not realize they are in prison and as long as that recognition does not arise and they do not understand their true state of affairs, there will be no genuine wish to obtain freedom from prison. The moment the person realizes that they are a prisoner, itself a form of suffering, then the wish to seek freedom from the prison will be sparked. One will then start making arrangements to get out.

Therefore the Buddha having taught the first two truths; the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, immediately followed that teaching by the truth of cessation and the path leading to freedom. Otherwise if there are only two truths, the first two and not the third and fourth, then there would not be a point in the Buddha teaching the truth of suffering. Not only should he, himself given up his practices and had an indulgent lifestyle but he would have also recommended this to his followers to adopt that kind of lifestyle. However this is not the case as after talking about suffering and its origin, Buddha had a remedy for it, the truth of cessation and the path that leads to cessation.

End of first teaching

I will now recite a verse from Nagajuna's salutary verses to the Buddha from the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*.

**[I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha,  
The best of teachers, who taught that  
Whatever is dependently arisen is  
Unceasing, unborn,  
Unannihilated, not permanent,**

**Not coming, not going,  
Without distinction, without identity,  
And free from conceptual construction.]**

Yesterday we discussed renunciation and today we shall be talking about bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment. In Lama Tsong Khapa's text *Three Principle Elements of the Path*, he identifies the three key aspects to the path. These are renunciation, bodhicitta and the correct view of emptiness. For a Buddhist practitioner the ultimate object of aspiration should be the attainment of liberation, which is technically called the state of definite goodness. There are two levels of this definite goodness or liberation. One is the attainment of individual freedom from suffering and the delusions. This liberation is attained by the combination of renunciation and the correct view of emptiness. These are the two principal factors that lead to the attainment of liberation from samsara. The combination of bodhicitta and the correct view of emptiness are what lead to the attainment of full enlightenment.

However the approach in Lam Rim is slightly different. In Lam Rim there is an understanding that this is a process which will take successive lifetimes of effort. Therefore an emphasis is also placed on the preparatory path. These preliminary practices involve accumulating the causes and conditions for an attainment of the right kind of environment. Those are the physical surroundings that would enable the individual to engage in the path that would eventually lead towards liberation. Therefore in Lam Rim there is an emphasis placed on the appreciation or recognition accorded to us as human beings.

The conditions leading to the attainment of a fully endowed human form are principally explained in terms of observance of moral discipline based on the framework of avoidance of the ten negative actions and leading to a disciplined life.

With regard to the conditions that enable us to obtain such a fully endowed form of human existence that is suited to the pursuit of the path that leads to the ultimate attainment of liberation, the basis of this preliminary stage is the observance of a disciplined way of life within the framework of morality by avoiding the ten negative actions. Although one could say that, so far as the general principle underlying karmic law is concerned of positive actions yielding positive results and negative actions leading to negative consequences, this very general principal perhaps is quite obvious to all of us. What is more difficult to understand according to Buddhism is the subtle aspects or workings of karmic law. These are said to be very hidden or obscure phenomena that we as ordinary human beings do not have at this point a rational recourse nor any other possibility of fully understanding. It is only enlightened beings who are totally free of obstructions to full knowledge who are capable of understanding all the subtleties of the workings of karma.

We can see here that Buddhism has an appreciation of different levels of reality, different kinds of objects of knowledge. There are objects of knowledge, which are obvious or apparent to us for which we do not need to use any reasoning. There is a second category which is said to be slightly obscure or hidden which though not obvious to us, through a reasoning process we can infer their truth or reality. However the subtle workings of karmic law falls into a third category that is very hidden phenomena. For example the fact that we are experiencing a particular sensation at this very moment in



this very congregation, although we can in principle accept that this must have a cause but as to what exactly was the cause and exactly the origin of this karma is too subtle for us.

The practice of karmic law has to be grounded in the taking of refuge in the Three Jewels; Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. When it comes to the practice of taking refuge in the Three Jewels, two principal conditions should be present. These being a sense of fear for the potential dangers that exist if we were to take rebirth in an inferior state of existence and also a sense of confidence in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha that they have the capability to protect us from such potential danger.

This immediately takes us to the question of the possibility of rebirth, what happens after our death. In one sense one could say that the next life is a distant future but from another point of view it is not really that far. The demarcation between the present life and the next life is only a breath away. The moment it stops the next life begins. Therefore the importance of the contemplation of death and impermanence is emphasized in the Lam Rim. As I pointed out yesterday the significance of reflecting upon the suffering of the inferior states of existence is not to enter into some sort of morbid contemplation but rather to instill within us a strong wish to really obtain protection from them. It is to emphasize to us that we as human beings have the potential to seek freedom from this.

This is the general approach one finds in the Lam Rim teachings. However within the category of the teachings known as Lam Rim there are slight divergences in the approaches. For example we find in Geshe Sharawa's Lam Rim approach, the practitioners reflect upon the presence of Buddhature in all beings. This is particularly true in Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* in which he states that the internal quality that is required for attainment of enlightenment is the Buddhature. The external condition is the guidance from an experienced spiritual master. We find that there is a tremendous emphasis placed on the full recognition of the fact that we as sentient beings possess within us ultimately the seed for enlightenment. This suggests that the possibility of cleansing our minds of all its pollutants.

However in Lama Tsong Khapa's approach in both the longer and middling versions of Lam Rim, *Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, he does not start the practitioner with the contemplation on the presence of the Buddhature in all of us. It begins with the reflection on the recognition of the value of reliance on a spiritual teacher and so on. In fact Tsong Khapa himself very explicitly states that the source material for his approach in Lam Rim is Maitreya's *Abhisamayalamkara*, *The Ornament of Clear Realization*. So it seems that in order to have a full understanding of the approaches that are set up in Lam Rim, one needs to also have a good understanding of a text like *Abhisamayalamkara*.

Another unique quality of Lama Tsong Khapa's approach in the Lam Rim literature is that when he is dealing with the skillful means aspect of the path such as bodhicitta, compassion and so on, he tends to emphasize citations from the literature of writers like Asanga and Maitreya. Whereas when it comes to discussion of the correct view of emptiness then the emphasis shifts to the citations of work by Nagarjuna and his followers, the Madhyamika literature. Constantly he substantiates his points and grounds them in either sutras attributed to the Buddha or the Indian commentarial literature. One

could almost say that Lam Rim texts are like a key that allows us to open the whole treasure of the Mahayana Buddhist literature.

As you are all probably aware the principal approach in Lama Tsong Khapa's Lam Rim literature is to arrange all the elements of the Buddhist path within the framework of practitioners of three capacities or scopes; initial, middling and great. I personally feel perhaps the ultimate source of this kind of approach of classifying all of the Buddhist path within the framework of the three scopes comes from Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses on the Middle Way*. There is a very explicit passage where he states that the correct sequence in which the practitioners of Dharma should approach their path to enlightenment is that in the first stage they must engage in practices that would enable them to counteract the negative manifestations of their delusions. In other words one has to first curb the negativities of one's behavior such as bodily, verbal and mental actions. This is the first stage. This practice really refers to leading a way of life that is within the morality of the avoidance of the ten negative actions.

The second stage directly counteracts the delusions that give rise to such negative behavior. The delusions such as hatred, anger, attachment and also ignorance are at the root of all negative behaviors. The second stage is to counteract the delusions through the practices of the three higher trainings, particularly the higher training in wisdom the essence of which is the cultivation of insight into emptiness. The third stage is to counteract even the imprints left by the delusions.

When we are talking about bodhicitta, which means the mind of enlightenment, generally speaking there are different kinds of enlightenment. One can say the enlightenment of Sravakas, the Listeners, the solitary realizers and the enlightenment of the Buddha. When we talk of the mind of enlightenment we are referring to the full enlightenment, Buddhahood.

The Tibetan word for enlightenment is byang chub, which etymologically carries a sense of two different aspects. One is the purification aspect where the state represents a total elimination of all the impurities. The second aspect is the realization of full wisdom. One could say that in the very etymology of the term enlightenment or byang chub, contains this dual aspect. The dimension of purification represents a state of total elimination of all impurity and fault, afflictions of the mind. The second aspect refers to the realization that represents the totality of the full awareness of knowledge or wisdom.

The state of Buddhahood is said to be a state of great enlightenment because it represents the total fulfillment of the potential for awakening. The liberation of the Buddha is said to be totally unlimited and also, although both the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas are said to have attained full realization of emptiness, their realization of emptiness isn't in some sense complete with all its potentialities. Whereas the Buddha's realization of emptiness is complete with all its potentialities fulfilled as the other complimentary factors such as great compassion, bodhicitta are present.

Bodhicitta, which literally means generating the mind for enlightenment, carries the sense that we are generating within ourselves a genuine aspiration to attain enlightenment not just for the sake of ourselves but rather for being of benefit to all sentient beings. There is a sense of courage and expansiveness. Therefore it is said that genuine bodhicitta is endowed with two aspirations. One is the causal motivation, the motivation that gives rise to the aspiration to be of benefit to all sentient beings. This is the compassionate, altruistic motivation. This motivation leads to the arising of the genuine

aspiration to seek enlightenment. Therefore bodhicitta is said to be endowed with two aspirations; altruistic aspiration and the aspiration to seek enlightenment.

Although in terms of sequence the altruistic aspiration to be of benefit to others arises first and the aspiration to attain liberation arises later, in terms of the actual order of practice I think it is very important to first develop some conceptual understanding of what liberation consists of. What is this state we are aspiring to attain? Just I emphasized yesterday in the context of cultivating renunciation, it is important to have knowledge of what the state of renunciation consists of and also what liberation means, as this makes our desire to attain them firm and committed. Similarly in the case of bodhicitta ideally one should have at least a clear understanding of what the state of enlightenment consists of so that our aspiration to attain it is very firmly rooted and increases the sense of commitment.

Therefore it is stated in the scriptures that the ideal practitioners of the Mahayana path are the bodhisattvas who have a high level of mental capacity where in fact they will enter into the Mahayana path by first cultivating the correct view of emptiness. This correct view of emptiness will not only reinforce the altruistic aspiration but in fact will give the underpinning that is required to bring about the attainment of the altruistic aspiration.

For these kinds of practitioners first the understanding of what enlightenment consists of arises. This again would be based on an understanding of emptiness. As in the case of renunciation again here we see the critical role the realization of emptiness plays. This is not to suggest that one can not attain bodhicitta or altruistic aspiration without an understanding of emptiness. Of course there are possibilities for people out of strong faith, trust and confidence in the Path without actually having a deep understanding. On the sheer strength of faith, deep trust and admiration to the teachings of the Buddha, it is possible to attain bodhicitta. Such bodhicitta would not be very firm. It wouldn't have the stability or strength of conviction which otherwise it would have.

The significance of having altruistic aspiration grounded in the understanding of emptiness is that one realizes that there is a possibility of a way out from one's state of unenlightenment. Once one has a full understanding of this, one's compassion for other sentient beings will increase tremendously, as one knows that we are all imprisoned against our will and are ignorant of the way out.

The key to the attainment of bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment, is the cultivation of great compassion. Great compassion is a state of mind that focuses on the suffering of sentient beings and cultivates the strong wish to see these sentient beings free from not only the manifest suffering but also from the causes and conditions that lead to suffering. The principle feature of the compassionate mind is to focus on sentient beings and the strong wish for these sentient beings to be free of suffering and their causes.

Depending upon the strength of the great compassion that one generates; it can lead to different forms of bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment. For example in the sutras there is the mention of three different kinds of bodhicitta. One is called king-like attitude, the cowherd-like attitude and the attitude of a raftsmen. In the case of the cowherd mentality the person's strength of compassion is such that only after leading all sentient beings to full enlightenment that he/she is prepared to experience full awakening for themselves. Until this point the person is totally committed to striving for the attainment of enlightenment for others.

This is not to suggest that the different bodhicittas are somehow inferior or superior but seem to be definitely the way in which compassion arises in us. There seems to be differences at least in the kind of tonality of bodhicitta that we experience. Asanga states in the *Ornament of Mahayana Scriptures* that the root of bodhicitta is compassion. Generally speaking compassion is defined in terms of an aspiration that seeks to see other beings free from suffering. Love is defined as the opposing dimension, which is to wish to see all sentient beings as enjoying happiness.

Depending upon the complimentary forces the scriptures also mention three different levels of compassion. One is the simple compassion where there is the wish to see other sentient beings free from suffering. The second level of compassion that is reinforced by the full awareness of the impermanent and transient nature of all sentient beings yet how sentient beings continue to cling on to some notion of permanence. The third level of compassion is non-objectifying compassion firmly grounded upon a full awareness of the empty nature of all sentient beings yet sentient beings continue to cling on to some kind of intrinsic reality to their being. Thus they imprison themselves in a perpetual cycle of unenlightenment. One can see that the compassion reinforced by awareness of emptiness is the most profound.

All the teachings of the Buddha which are embodied in the various traditions such as the Theravada and the Mahayana, all share a common feature of being grounded in the principal of compassion. However there is a slight difference in emphasis. For example in Mahayana Buddhism the compassion one speaks of is not just the wish to see other sentient beings free from suffering rather for that compassion to be truly great it must be accompanied by a sense of responsibility. The practitioner is willing to shoulder the responsibility themselves to make the aspiration to become a reality. This is the unique characteristic of the Mahayana compassion, the great compassion.

When we talk about compassion I think it is important to point out that we should not confuse compassion with pity. In a genuine experience of compassion there is no sense of superiority or sense of inferiority to the object of compassion. This is often the case of having pity towards someone who is in an unfortunate situation. True compassion is a state of mind where one actually views the object of compassion as supreme just as the *Eight Verses on Mind Training* which states, “ May I view all sentient beings as being supreme from the very depths of my heart”.

In order to cultivate such a strong sense of compassion there needs to be a sense of intimacy or closeness. This empathetic feeling towards others should not be confused with attachment. This sense of intimacy should be unbiased, should be in principal universal spread to all sentient beings. Such a sense of connectedness, a genuine closeness to other sentient beings, can not arise within our normal state of mind where we have a discriminatory attitude towards our enemies, friends and neutral persons. The key to cultivating this sense of genuine closeness and connectedness to other sentient beings is to develop a sense of endearment to all other sentient beings.

Two different systems are suggested. One is the approach of exchanging and equalizing of self with others, which is found in texts such as *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. The other is to cultivate a view of all sentient beings as being dearest to us modeled on one's mother or someone who one considers to be the greatest source of kindness. Through this way one cultivates a sense of closeness towards one's object of compassion.

Now I will explain briefly the approach of exchanging and equalizing oneself with others. The first stage in this approach is to cultivate equanimity towards all sentient beings. The essence of this equanimity towards all sentient beings in this context here is to cultivate the understanding that in so far as the wish to seek happiness and avoid suffering is concerned, there is no difference between oneself and others. In this context what one is trying to do is to cultivate the reflection that just like oneself, all other sentient beings as infinite as space, all of us are fundamentally equal in having the instinctual desire to seek happiness and avoid suffering. Yet all are constantly confronting suffering and constantly devoid of the happiness we seek.

Similarly just as I myself have the nature, the potentiality, to eliminate suffering, all sentient beings also have this potential. Just as I myself possess the Buddhature, the essence for enlightenment, similarly all sentient beings do to. Also just as I myself have the potential to develop a correct understanding of emptiness, irrespective of how difficult it may be for me, similarly so do all other sentient beings of course with great difficulty just like myself.

One of the key practices the bodhicitta practitioners are trying to attain is to cultivate and enhance the altruism within themselves. In fact altruism for a Buddhist bodhicitta practitioner is the root of all goodness. It is the source of all goodness. Altruism can not be enhanced or fully developed without some kind of practice or training. The greatest obstacle to this is one's negative emotions like hatred and anger. Therefore it becomes critical for a bodhicitta practitioner to find a way of dealing with and overcoming anger and hatred. Again this can only be obtained through training and practice. The key practice here is the cultivation and enhancement of tolerance and patience. This again comes only through practice and training. Here without someone provoking us or the presence of an enemy to bring out our negative reactions, we don't have the opportunity to enhance our practice of tolerance or patience. So seen from this point of view, the presence of an enemy becomes a source of tremendous inspiration and teaching so much so that instead of feeling anger towards them one should feel grateful for the opportunity to practice an enemy provides. This is the kind of attitude one must develop.

In this context I really feel tremendous admiration for the Kadampa's mental attitudes. Some Kadampa masters say, "I value people's criticisms not people's praise as praise will only increase my pride and arrogance whereas criticism will give me insight into my own weaknesses and faults". Similarly the Kadampa masters say, "I value hardships and difficulties because then I will be experiencing the fruits of my negative deeds whereas if I am experiencing a joyful life then I will be exhausting the positive fruits of karma". These kinds of attitudes reflect a certain mentality, a kind of strength of character which is truly a miracle for a Dharma practitioner. Such types of practices are called transforming adversity into favorable conditions.

In fact one could argue that so far as our enemies are concerned instead of them being an object of hatred or anger rather the appropriate response is to have compassion for them. As Aryadeva states in the *Four Hundred Verses on the Middle Way* that the Buddhas do not see enemies as enemies but rather the delusions within them as the true enemy. If one's understanding of the Dharma practice is correct then we will have a deep sense of conviction that the true enemies are the delusions that exist within us. Therefore when we confront a situation where we are provoked by harm inflicted on us by a human

being, instead of feeling angry towards them we will feel compassion towards them. They are in an unfortunate position where they have fallen under the power or control of the delusions.

When one thinks along these lines, one starts to appreciate the sentiments expressed in Lama Tsong Khapa's prayer, "May I be able to cultivate courage and the attitude of closeness to those who continue to inflict harm upon me". One begins to appreciate these kinds of sentiment. Of course I am not suggesting that these kinds of practices are something simple or easily attained but however it is a fact that through training one can begin to become familiar with this sort of mentality and begin to have some experience closer to this kind of thought. Just as Santideva states there is nothing that can not be made easier through familiarity and training.

I can tell you from my own personal experience, although I am not claiming that I have high realizations of bodhicitta and the view of emptiness. I can assure you in my own little experience that through training, constant familiarization, one can begin to see real change within one's mind. I will tell you about my own personal experience, it may be useful to you as an example. I started to take seriously the practice of Lam Rim from the age of fifteen or sixteen. Around the age of twenty-five events led to my having to leave Tibet and become a refugee in India. Around the age of thirty I began to take seriously the practice of emptiness. As a result of my persistent practice of emptiness I began to sense that liberation or nirvana was a real possibility. Thus I developed a strong desire to seek that liberation or moksha.

However interestingly at that point, my wish was that if I attained liberation then I can really take a long break. Although I had tremendous admiration for bodhicitta, I never really took it as a possibility for myself as something I could realize in myself. My wish for liberation was rather selfish. Around the age of thirty-five I started to take seriously the practice of bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment. I felt deeply affected and inspired by the practice. Now today when I even talk about bodhicitta I feel a tremendous sense of closeness or familiarity. Please do not misunderstand, I am not claiming to be a bodhisattva. I'm also not claiming that I have realized emptiness.

The point I am making here by giving you this example is to show that things can change, one can actually have experiences and realizations. Also another point of this story is to show the time element. The practice, the real change, takes place over time. One should also understand that developing an intellectual understanding is one thing but having the experience is something else. Many of you may confuse intellectual understanding with experience.

First one has to develop an understanding through study and listening. Through contemplation one arrives at a deeper understanding. Through meditation and practice one gains a sense of conviction that it is possible to realize the goal, a sense of confidence arises. Through practice one gets to a point where when you actually think about it there is a real effect and change present, the moment one stops the change or the effects disappear. This stage is said to be having a simulated experience or realization. Through further practice the simulated experience which requires an effort on one's part can culminate in what can be called a spontaneous realization where a mere thought of something immediately gives rise to the experience. There is no longer any need for conscious effort on one's part. When a practitioner has attained a very spontaneous,

genuine aspiration to attain liberation, at this point the practitioner has entered the first of the Five Paths to liberation, the Path of Accumulation.

Similarly when a practitioner attains a genuine, non-simulated, spontaneous realization of bodhicitta, that is when they have entered on the Mahayana path and realized the Path of Accumulation. Such a Mahayana practitioner will then move on to the second Path of Accumulation and then the third and final stage into the Path of Linking or Preparation. This culminates in the direct realization of emptiness which is the Path of Seeing. This is when the Ten Levels of the Bodhisattva Path begin.

We have quite a long way to go. Don't be spoiled by the rhetoric in tantra about attaining liberation, enlightenment, within a single lifetime. When I was young I remember expressing a sentiment to Tathang Rinpoche, one of my tutors that the sutra path to enlightenment seems so long and arduous perhaps I may have a hope from the tantric path. I remember being scolded by Tathang Rinpoche for harboring such a sentiment. He pointed out to me that the person for whom the tantric path is suited is someone who has a tremendous courage. Even if the person has to wait for eons to get full enlightenment, there is a deep sense of willingness and commitment. For such a person then the tantric path if it is used then could be effective. If someone is disheartened by the time required in the sutra path and then seeks the tantric path because it is faster, then this is the wrong motivation.

Therefore I find the passage in the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, "As long as space endures, as long as sentient beings remain, May I abide in this world to dispel the miseries of the world" so powerful and inspiring. This is how one should train one's heart and mind. Once the practitioner is able to cultivate genuine compassion towards even one's enemies a major stumbling block in one's path has been removed. This is a very important breakthrough. It is through such a process that one cultivates the genuine sense of intimacy and closeness towards all sentient beings.

Also it is very important to subject the two types of attitudes, the self-cherishing attitude and the thought that cherishes other sentient beings, to analysis of the pros and cons. What are the merits of harboring thoughts which cherish only our own self-interest? One could say that up until now since beginningless time we have harbored within ourselves the twin evils, the self-cherishing thought and the thought grasping at the true existence of our self. In some sense one could say that we have been up till now seeking protection from these two attitudes. If it is true that they have the capacity to make us experience and attained enlightened happiness, they should have been able to do so by now. They have had enough time.

When one thinks carefully the course of one's life is as if one is groping in the dark aimlessly. If one is to reverse one's normal way of thinking then seek the friendship of the altruistic aspiration that cherishes the wellbeing of others and the wisdom realizing emptiness instead of the friendship of self-cherishing and self-grasping. Although one does not really have any experience in this one can take the example from the lives of great beings like Nagarjuna and the great compassionate Indian masters of the past. If one looks at their life stories one can feel confident enough that their lives testify to the power of altruism, the power of reversing the self-centered way of living and turning towards a more other-oriented, altruistic way of being.

In my own personal case when I think about my own way of being, I feel that the little bit of strength of mind I have, doesn't arrive from the title Dalai Lama nor from my

appearance as a fully ordained monk. Rather I think the real source of the strength lies in my admiration and commitment to the practice of altruism such as bodhicitta and also my conviction in the validity of the truth of emptiness. I feel that these are the genuine sources of any strength I may have as an individual person.

The greater one's capacity for altruism the greater one is able to develop one's good heart and warm-heartedness. This is how the genuine altruistic aspiration to seek happiness for all sentient beings arises within one. This will then be able to induce within one the thought to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Also it is a fact that until one attains full enlightenment one will not be able to fulfill the welfare of other sentient beings, as one would be prevented by one's own limitations. Therefore in order to fully realize the welfare of other sentient beings, the first step is on one's own part to free oneself of all obstructions to knowledge and all impediments. One is then fully able to utilize one's potential to be of help to all sentient beings.

End of second teaching

In Buddhism there is a discussion of something called the imprints of karma. As to what exactly is an imprint is quite problematic. It is not said to be neither physical nor mental but is almost in the form of a potency, something like a potentiality. One could almost say it is a form of subconscious continuum. When one talks about the subconscious sometimes it is understood in terms of a seed or potential, sometimes it is purely an imprint, something that imprints our consciousness, the imprints which predispose us to act in a certain way.

Perhaps one way in which to help understand how this continuum of karmic imprints is maintained is to look at the way in which memory functions within one's life. Memory involves a recollection of an experience one has had before. There is a gap between the actual experience and the subsequent memory of it. There must be something that connects the two, the intuitive experience of it. Whereas to what exactly is the faculty, on which these imprints are stored, some maintain that it is the fundamental store consciousness, the alayavijnana. Some maintain it is the sixth mental consciousness.

From the Tibetan point of view the highest level of practitioner is someone who dedicates his/her entire life to the pursuit of the Dharma and seeks solitude. They are said to be the lions among practitioners. There could also be serious practitioners who can continue to pursue their own path and make progress but at the same time share their experiences and knowledge with others leading the form of life of a teacher.

Many of these practices has to do with adopting a certain way of thinking, of being, and making these thought processes as a part of one's own way of being. This is not to suggest that whatever I have stated here is something that even I can put into practice. There is no suggestion that whatever one knows will be realized. What is true is that at the beginning one needs to develop an overview, an overall sense of the direction of the path. This is a level of conceptual understanding. I think it is crucial to at least have this kind of a grand picture.

For example if one is constructing a large house there is no possibility of having the whole construction built at once. The actual practice has to be done on a step-by-step basis. This isn't to say that at least the architect needs to have an overall plan and a conception of how the building will eventually unfold.



As to the specific question as to where to begin, I think this depends upon the mentality and temperament of the practitioner. Some should begin with reflection on the impermanent and transient nature of existence whereas for another reflection on emptiness may be a better place to begin. Yet for others a more devotional approach of seeking reliance on a spiritual master may be much more inspiring and effective. What is important is that once one has actually engaged on the path then to have a highly integrated approach whereby all the key elements of the path are complete. They will have a cumulative effect on the transformation of the practitioner's mind.

However there is at a very general level a definite sequence to the path. The first stage of practice should be focused on dealing with the negative manifestations of one's delusions. This practice has to do with morality practice, the practice of refraining from the ten negative actions. If one looks at specific negative activities such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so on, on many of these points there is a broad consensus between the legal status of those actions and the moral status of those actions. Refraining from killing is said to be moral and where it is said to be legal depends very much on the state of mind and motivation of the person in avoiding committing such a negative deed.

If one's motivation is purely out of fear of the legal consequences of murder then although in actual fact the person refrains from a negative act, one can not say that it is a Dharma practice as it is motivated by fear of the legal consequences. Whereas if someone refrains from committing a murder, not out of fear of the legal consequences but out of understanding that such an act is a negative deed, then this would be a form of Dharma practice. Still here it is not a profound Dharma practice as the motivation is still selfish. If a person refrains from committing murder out of the motivation that just as one cherishes one's own life so does this other person and murder is a most harmful act to that person, then this is a profound Dharma practice. Although in actual fact the act is the same in all three cases but depending upon the motivation present there is a difference whether the act is legal, moral or profound.

Existence, which is constituted by and caused by karma and delusion, is unenlightened existence itself and is the suffering of conditioning. What is crucial here is to have a deep understanding of the negativity of the delusions. The stronger one's realization of the negativities of the delusions then the stronger will be one's force or sense of repulsion to the consequences of one's delusions.

In terms of trying to cultivate a deep conviction in the negativity of the delusions of one's mind, perhaps the best way to do this is to refer back to one's own personal experience. When we judge our state of mind, we can see that everytime there is a strong occurrence of a negative emotion like hatred or anger, we see an immediate disturbance within our mind. It destroys any sense of composure we may have and creates restlessness. From our own personal experience we can see that many of the psychological problems, confusion and restlessness are the consequences of negative emotions and thoughts. In fact in the whole history of human existence violence on a large scale from war to domestic violence is all a direct consequence of strong negative afflictions and emotions.

However if one examines the relationship one has with one's own negative emotions, one is not fully aware or mindful of their destructive nature. In fact on the contrary, one tends to embrace them. For example if confronted with a threat or provocation, strong emotions like anger arise in one. It seems to give a strength or

courage to deal with the given situation. It is almost as if one willingly embraces these negative emotions and seeks them as a kind of protector. In reality the occurrence of such strong emotions in one creates all sorts of problems. To begin with one loses one's sense of proportion and loses the ability to judge between right and wrong. Also the extra boldness one gets is often blind and one is not able to utilize it in the right way.

We spoke about renunciation, the true renunciation that is the genuine aspiration to seek liberation from samsara. We spoke about bodhicitta that is the genuine aspiration to attain full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. The factors which obstruct the attainment of these objects of aspiration are the delusions and obstructions to knowledge. It is the insight into emptiness that is really the antidote to the elimination of these obstructive forces.

Generally speaking on the practical level someone is not a practicing Buddhist based on whether or not the person has taken refuge in the Three Jewels. The difference between Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical schools of thought is made on the basis of whether or not someone subscribes to what is known as the Four Excellences of Buddhism.

All composite phenomena are transient, impermanent and all phenomena are empty and selfless. Nirvana alone is true peace. The first of the Four Excellences is the recognition that anything that is a composite, anything, which comes into being from causes and conditions, is transient and impermanent. Second anything which is a product of polluted causes, contaminated causes, in the final analysis is a form of suffering.

The third is all phenomena are empty and selfless or devoid of self-existence. The absence of self-existence referred to here is the general notion of anatman, no-self that is common to all the schools of Buddhism. Of course there are one or two exceptional cases where such as the Vatsiputriya school or the Personalist schools which posit some notion of a real existence of self. On the whole, philosophically speaking, all Buddhist schools reject any notion of an atman or soul principle. Therefore the doctrine of no-self is fundamental philosophically for all schools of Buddhism.

The fourth and final point is that nirvana; the true cessation of suffering, alone is the state of lasting joy and peace. These are the Four Excellences of Buddhism that are shared by all schools of Buddhism.

It is said in ancient Indian schools of non-Buddhist thought that all posit an atman or soul principle which is said to be permanent, autonomous and independent from the mind and the body which constitute the empirical reality of the person. In the non-Buddhist schools of thought there is a belief in some kind of eternal soul which is totally separate, categorically separate from, distinct from the body, the contingent nature of the person, body and mind. Buddhist schools on the whole reject that kind of atman therefore the emphasis is on the no-self, the anatman.

There is also another level of the understanding of the doctrine of no-self. The no-self is understood in terms of the rejection of a self that is the master or controller over our aggregates such as the body and mind yet is still a part of it. This kind of clinging to an autonomous self, although this self is not completely separate from the mind/body aggregate but still enjoys some kind of autonomy. This is also said to be a form of belief in an atman or a soul. The majority of the Buddhist schools reject this.

When one talks about the Four Excellences in Buddhism, no-self or selflessness needs to be understood along these lines not necessarily along the lines of subtle no-self

as presented by Mahayana schools. Buddhist schools on the whole reject any notion of a self that is independent of mind and body, the aggregates. The notion of a self that is permanent, eternal and unitary is also rejected. This is the basic Buddhist position on the whole; it rejects such a soul principle. However as to what exactly is the individual person there is a divergence of opinion among Buddhist thinkers. Some maintain it is the totality of the aggregates, which is the true person. Some maintain that it is mental consciousness, which is the true person.

Buddhist schools on the whole accept the person itself as a concept, a nominal construct. Many Buddhist however believe that underlying the nominal construct there must be some real reference, some real person who should be findable under ultimate analysis.

On the whole much of the Buddhist position is to identify the person with either the continuum of the consciousness or the aggregates. In the case of the Cittamatra school they posit a continuum of consciousness which enjoys a stable foundation, the *alayavijnana*, the fundamental store consciousness. All of these schools basically share a commonality that is to suggest there must be a substantially real person who should be findable when one seeks for the reference behind the term and concept of the person. This suggests that these Buddhist schools are not entirely content with the notion of a person as a mere construct, a mere nominal reality. Rather they seek some kind of objective grounding to what a person really is, to find some kind of objective reference to the term and concept of personhood.

However, Madhyamika thinkers such as Candrakirti and Buddhapalita rejected all of that and argued that there is no real need to seek for some kind of reference for our concept of person and self and find some kind of objective reality that has a degree of intrinsic existence or identity. From Candrakirti and Buddhapalita's point of view the very urge to seek for some kind of objective grounding in this manner suggests a clinging to some kind of reified reality. Candrakirti argued that this way of looking at the world stems from a belief in some kind of inherent existence of things. If things enjoyed inherent reality that means they enjoy a degree of independence. If things enjoyed independent existence then that would contradict their fundamental nature which is the interdependent nature of reality. The fact those things come into being as the result of many causes and conditions shows they lack independent existence. Candrakirti rejected that even a person has any intrinsic reality. The person is a nominal construct.

This is not to suggest that a person or self does not exist but a person and self do exist. They possess a nominal reality, a construct. But it is a construct that comes into being in dependence upon the basis of designation such as the physical and mental aggregates. Neither body nor consciousness nor the continuum of consciousness nor the aggregate of mind and body can be said to be the person. The person is something dependent on these bases of designation.

Even if one attains a level of understanding of no-self, not at the subtlest level but at the gross level of realization of the absence of self as enjoying any substantial reality, that in itself will have a powerful impact upon one's emotional life. It will immediately decrease the force of many of the derivative delusory states of mind.

In the Mahayana tradition in the Mind-only and Middle Way schools in addition to the doctrine of no-self or person, there was the acceptance of the no-self of phenomena. If one looks at the understanding of the no-self of phenomena in the

Mahayana schools, for example like the Yogacara or Cittamatra school, the Mind-only school, they argue that many of the perceptions of the world that we have, especially the perception of physical realities, in the final analysis don't possess any objective reality. They are projections of the mind. The recognition of this is the realization of emptiness of external phenomena.

Physical objects that we perceive as real do not have an objective existence; they are projections of the mind. They are in a sense extensions of the mind. There is no separate reality "out there". Within the Yogacara or Cittamatra there is a very sophisticated system of thought in which one's perception of the external world is accounted for in terms of how they are projections coming out of one's own mind. They speak of fifteen different kinds of projections. In any case they are traced to four principal types of imprints which give rise to these kinds of perceptions. The first is said to be imprints that give rise to the perception of similar kinds. For example when one sees a blue object, one recognizes it as a blue object and this ability to recognize a blue object as blue is said to be the consequence of an imprint within one's own mind left by successive, previous experiences of the perception of blueness.

The Cittamatrins also state that one's ability to relate the concept "blue" to blue objects is caused by an imprint called the concept creating imprint. This imprints on one's consciousness by previous experiences. They suggest that if one examines one's thought when perceiving a blue object not only is it identified as blue but also one correlates the concept of blueness with the blue object. Furthermore if one examines one's perceptions, one tends to imagine as if the blue object exists objectively as the true reference of the concept of blueness and the term blue. In reality the relationship between the term and concept on the one hand and the blue object on the other, is really arbitrary. There is nothing objectively real on the part of the blue object that justifies it to be the basis of that designation. However this is not how it appears to us and Cittamatrins argue that this is a false perception.

This is what causes the perception of duality between the blue object and the perception of blue. This duality is the result of karmic imprints. This is what lies at the root of the cycle of confusion. The Cittamatrins because of their basic philosophical standpoint of the question of whether or not there is an objective reality or physical world have a different interpretation of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. They do not subscribe to literal interpretation of the Prajnaparamita Sutras. For them the key to understanding the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras lies in the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra, The Sutra Unraveling the Thought*, where one finds a discussion of what is known as Three Nature theories. These are the imputed nature, the dependent nature and the ultimate nature of reality.

Cittamatrins would interpret the teachings of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras arguing that one can not take them literally as a literal acceptance would amount to a form of nihilism as one would reject any notion of identity. The Cittamatrins thus reinterpret the statement that all phenomena are empty, all phenomena are absent of identity, by interpreting the notion of identity differently in different contexts. For example when discussing the identitylessness of imputed nature one can understand it in terms of self-defining characteristics and so on.

They argue that the perception of the external world arises as the result of the imprints that exist within the consciousness. They speak of different kinds of imprints.

Imprints that give rise to the perception of objects and imprints that give rise to delusory perceptions and so on. We find in the Cittamatra texts a very sophisticated process of reasoning which they described in terms of the Four Ways or Four Stages in one's quest for the understanding of the ultimate truth through analysis of the name, reference, identity and the characteristics. Thus one arrives at the final point where one's perception of empirical reality, external reality as enjoying some kind of objective existence, is in the ultimate analysis is an illusion.

The very perception of grasping at some sort of a belief in this duality of subject and object is the fundamental ignorance. The overcoming of this duality takes place through the realization of the absence of this duality between subject and object. Thus for the Cittamatrins the absence of this subject/object duality is the highest emptiness, the ultimate truth.

Regardless of the validity of the Cittamatrin schools position, this kind of understanding of the nature of the external world definitely has a very high therapeutic value, liberative value. This is in the sense that after having negated any notion of some kind of abiding, eternal soul principle then when one shifts one's focus to the nature of the external world and begins to view them in the final analysis as a result of our own mental projections, this in itself would have a tremendous impact on reducing the intensity of one's grasping at the external world. Once one realizes that much of what one perceives of the reality "out there" is a creation of one's own mind, it will automatically effect a loosening of this kind of strong grasping, strong clinging, to the really existent "out there". One can not deny the liberative value of the Cittamatrin's theory.

From the Madhyamika point of view the problem with the Mind Only school's position is that in some sense they are only going half way in the journey. They have been able to reject the objective or intrinsic reality of the external world but in the process of rejecting the duality between subject and object, they have ended up solidifying the existence of consciousness and mind leaving some kind of absolute or intrinsic existence or reality to consciousness. From the Madhyamika point of view even this kind of belief in the existence of the mind and consciousness will have the effect of constricting one as it can lead to many of the derivative delusions.

Within Madhyamika thought one can see that because there is no explicit statement on the part of Nagarjuna as to the question of whether or not the external or physical world possess some kind of objective reality, there is a divergence of opinion. For example one of the earliest commentators on Nagarjuna, Bhavaviveka, has maintained that there is no need to reject the objective reality of the external world. Although one can maintain that all phenomena are in the final analysis empty of independent existence, there is no need to totally reject some degree of objective reality to the external world.

There are other Madhyamika thinkers like Santaraksita and Kamalasila who share many of the doctrines of the Cittamatrin school. Particularly they reject the objective reality of the external world while integrating that kind of insight within the overall Madhyamika position that in the final analysis that both subject and object are devoid of independent existence. There is quite a divergence even amongst the Madhyamika thinkers.

However there is a third line of interpretation of Nagarjuna's thought represented by people like Buddhapalita, Candrakirti and Santideva, the three principal

representatives of this line of thought, who depart quite a lot from the Cittamatra school and also from Bhavaviveka's interpretation as well as Kamalasila's and Santaraksita's interpretations. They differ from the Cittamatra School as the Cittamatrins make discrimination between the non-reality of the physical, external world and the true existence of consciousness. Buddhapalita, Candrakirti and so on reject this. They argue just as the Mind Only school, that when subjecting the notion of the external, physical world as being composed of atomic constituents in terms of the indivisibility and finite nature of the atom to a dissecting analysis that ultimately the very notion of physical reality tends to disappear. Buddhapalita and Candrakirti argue that one can apply the same kind of deconstructive analysis to even mental events such as consciousness. This is done by subjecting these events to analysis in terms of their constituents, the temporal stages of the continuum of consciousness. When one subjects consciousness to this kind of analysis, one again begins to lose the very notion of what exactly is a mental event. They argue there is no need to discriminate between the external world and the consciousness as far as having inherent existence.

Similarly they differ from people like Bhavaviveka by arguing that he ultimately believes in some kind of intrinsic nature that can be validly established by consciousness. Whereas people like Buddhapalita and Candrakirti reject this arguing that there is nothing in an ordinary perception that is not tainted by the perception of intrinsic reality. It is only when one attains the non-conceptual, intuitive realization of emptiness that one can gain a state of mind totally free of such contamination or delusion. Therefore Candrakirti and Buddhapalita argue that just because a form of perception is deceptive does not necessarily mean that it is not valid. One can have a valid cognition of an object but at the same time the perceptual level can have a degree of deception or illusion.

The point Buddhapalita and Candrakirti are making is that so long as one succumb to the temptation to seek some sort of objective grounding for our perception, seeking an entity that enjoys an intrinsic reality "out there", then one is still under the power of grasping, clinging to some type of true existence, some kind of independent existence. Therefore one should be able to have a worldview that is valid within the framework of conventional validity where one does not seek for some kind of ultimate grounding. One can make sense of one's perceptions at the conventional level where cause and effect or subject and object can be accepted in relational terms.

One can identify at least five different levels of emptiness or no-self. First is the emptiness of a soul which is said to be permanent, unitary and so on. Second is the absence of self as some sort of substantial reality. Third is the emptiness of subject/object duality. Fourth is the emptiness of some kind of intrinsic reality that is not dependent upon the perceiving mind. The fifth level of emptiness is the emptiness of the Prasangika School which is the emptiness of inherent existence.

When one talks about the no-self nature of reality or emptiness, there are many different levels of understanding, five have been already discerned here. If one looks at these five different levels of emptiness, although they are all equal in being a concept of understanding emptiness, the difference is that while one may have realized the first level this is no guarantee that one will not fall under the temptation of grasping at real existence. For example one have a realization of the absence of a soul as a unitary, permanent entity while at the same time one can continue to hold on to a belief of some kind of substantial reality of the self. Even if one has realized the lack of a substantial

entity of self but one can continue to believe in the empirical reality of the physical world as having some kind of independent existence.

This suggests that even if one has attained the first, second or third level of the realization of emptiness, one is still not free from clinging or grasping at some kind of intrinsic existence. Therefore one is then not completely free from the causal mechanism of producing within one the negative emotions like attachment. In contrast if one has realized the highest level of emptiness, the emptiness of inherent existence, and it is vibrant and vivid within the mind, it really precludes neither any possibility nor any room for clinging or grasping at any notion of intrinsic existence. This shows that the later levels are subtler than the earlier levels.

On what grounds does one arrive at the conclusion that nothing really possesses inherent existence? One can relate this to one's own personal experience. In our naive perception of the world, whether it is an internal experience or a perception of an empirical object, one tends to believe in an inherent reality of these things as if they really exist "out there". One feels they are tangible and that one can point one's finger at the object. When one examines carefully and probes for what there is, then the object begins to disappear.

However this is not to suggest that nothing exists. Our own direct, empirical experience of being in the world testifies to the existence of ourselves as sentient beings and also our interaction with objects in the world testifies to the existence of the world around us. The question is if things can not be found to exist when we probe for their ultimate nature but if at the same time our empirical experience suggests that they do exist, in what sense can we understand them as being existent? Since objective reality with some kind of independent existence becomes completely untenable, this leaves only one alternative, that is to say the existence of things must be understood at the nominal level as nominal reality.

Once one has gained this sort of understanding that the existence of phenomena, things and events, can be understood only in terms of a nominal reality, one refocuses one's attention to one's self and the objects around one, then one will realize this is not how one tends to perceive oneself and the world. Through this kind of process of analysis one can arrive at the conclusion that although the world and oneself appears to be as if they enjoy some kind of independent existence, but in reality this perception is false and illusion.

As to the specific application of the forms of reasoning to arrive at such a conclusion, one finds in the Madhyamika literature the reasoning that seeks the absence of identity and difference. As a result of one's prolonged analysis when one arrives at a certain conviction that things and events definitely are devoid of inherent existence, one gets to a point where one's understanding of this will be very firm. As a result of prolonged familiarity with this kind of understanding it is possible to arrive at a point where one's perception or realization will be content-free as if it is the mere absence.

Although I am not suggesting that the realization of emptiness requires the attainment of tranquil abiding, samatha, but what seems to be true is that without the attainment of calm-abiding, one's realization of emptiness can not really progress much. What seems to be true is the deeper one's conviction in the emptiness of intrinsic existence or inherent existence, the more liberated one will become in terms of grasping and clinging at objects and self. Therefore one will also begin to untie the normally

imprisoning process whereby one tends to grasp at things and objects with strong attachment and emotional reactions.

Also what seems to be true is if one examines the nature of many of one's delusions and afflictions of the mind, one finds a strong grasping at the object of that emotion whether it be lust, hatred or attachment. Any understanding of emptiness will have a direct effect on undermining the delusions. This understanding cuts through the heart of the inherent existence of the object of one's delusion. On the other hand if one looks at the positive states of mind, they are free of these clinging and grasping therefore the realization of emptiness can not harm them but rather reinforce them.

Isn't the whole understanding and thought processes pertaining to emptiness undermining to conventional reality, the reality of one's day-to-day experience? In this respect Lama Tsong Khapa makes an important point in *The Three Principal Elements of the Path* where he reminds us that generally speaking in all philosophical tenets it is the perception of appearance that dispels the extreme of non-existence and the perception of emptiness that dispels the extreme of existence.

Buddhapalita really sums up the Madhyamika position on how the understanding of emptiness reinforces one's belief in the reality of the empirical world, the conventional everyday life. He sums up the points expressed in a wonderful passage in the *Madhyamikamulakarika, The Fundamentals of the Middle Way* by Nagarjuna. In it Nagarjuna states anything that is dependently originated has been taught to be emptiness and this is dependently designated. This is the path of the middle. Buddhapalita explains here that one's true understanding of emptiness must take place in terms of dependent origination. One could almost say that there is a creation between dependent origination and emptiness. The fact of the dependence of things and events in itself suggests the emptiness of independent existence or inherent existence. The fact that things are devoid of inherent existence suggests that very dependent nature. Therefore in some sense they are two different sides of the same thing, two different ways of looking at the same thing. Therefore Buddhapalita has suggested a way of understanding Nagarjuna's teachings on emptiness in a very unique way where emptiness and dependent origination are equated with each other.

When one has developed such an understanding it is said that the very perception of appearance dispels the extreme of existence and the very perception of emptiness dispels the extreme of non-existence. What happens here is a reversal process of what normally happens in other schools of thought because the appearance suggests a way of relating to the world which is within the nominal reality. Because of this it rejects any form of intrinsic existence and because emptiness is understood in terms of dependent origination, the very concept of emptiness suggests things do exist.

What exactly are the criteria by which one can determine whether something is existent or not? Here one can discern three criteria. One is an object of consciousness or known that its concept exists. The second is the convention known is not contradicted by another valid cognition. The third criterion used is such a convention is not negated by an ultimate analysis that probes into the real mode of being.

If one takes the example of the horn of a rabbit, one can have a concept of this. One can have an image of it and one can also use terms like rabbit's horn. Although the concept can exist but one can not say the horn of a rabbit is real, as the perception of the non-existence of a rabbit's horn will directly contradict the view that a rabbit has a horn.



The third criterion is needed because certain philosophical postulates such as the alayavijnana, the store consciousness, and the notion of atman are concepts that are posited as a result of reasoned philosophical thinking. Therefore if these things are real they should be able to withstand ultimate analysis however which is not the case. It is on the basis of these three criteria that one can determine whether something exists or not.

Candrakirti tried to come up with an understanding of the nature of existence whereby no belief in any kind of inherent existence is posited but at the same time one has the possibility of making a real substantial distinction between a false reality and a real entity. An example is the difference between a dream person and a real person. One must have a way of distinguishing between the two. This is the essence of Candrakirti's philosophy where a way of understanding existence is developed which would not involve forcing a belief in some kind of intrinsic reality of things and events.

It is on the basis of developing such an insight into the profound emptiness that one can attain either liberation from samsara by counteracting the fundamental ignorance and the derivative delusory states of mind or when complemented by bodhicitta one can attain full enlightenment through the practice of emptiness. So with this teaching on the *Three Principle Elements of the Path* by Tsong Khapa ends with a beautiful exhortation to practice which reads, "O son, When you realize the keys of the three principal elements of the path as they really are, seek solitude and cultivate strong effort and quickly reach the final goal". This is advice we need to adopt.

End of third teaching

The subject matter of the *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* by Nagarjuna is emptiness. The key meaning of emptiness as we spoke about yesterday is emptiness in terms of dependent origination. In the salutary verses Nagarjuna pays homage to the Buddha as someone who propounds the teachings of dependent origination with great mastery. Therefore he praises Buddha as the peerless teacher. In the Buddhist teachings the principal of dependent origination is very important.

In the *Sutra on Dependent Origination, Pratityasamutpada Sutra*, Buddha states that whoever sees the nature of dependent origination sees the Dharma, sees Tathagata, the Buddha. One can understand this statement that whoever sees the nature of dependent origination perceives the nature of Dharma at many different levels. For example when one understands the principal of dependent origination in terms of cause and effect, then the meaning of understanding the nature of Dharma can be understood in terms of the meaning of the law of causality. On this basis one can build a firm foundation for an ethically disciplined way of life and this correct view of karmic law is said to be one level of the correct view of Dharma.

However when one take the meaning of dependent origination at a much higher level were one understands dependence not just in terms of cause and effect but also dependence in terms of how things in the final analysis originate in relation to a multiple, complex nexus of the interaction between designation, labels and so on, then this level of the understanding of dependent origination takes one directly to an understanding of emptiness. Therefore the realization of the nature of Dharma is at a much deeper level.

Tathagata means thus gone. The state of Buddhahood if understood in terms of a state where all the conceptual elaborations and all forms of duality have been calmed into a state of purity, a state of total peace and joy then one can say that Buddhahood is a state

thus gone into the Dharmakaya. From this point of view Tathagata can be understood in terms of Dharmakaya, the Truth Body, the Buddha Body of Reality. If one understands Tathagata as coming rather than going then Tathagata is understood as the Rupakaya or Form Body, the physical embodiment or emanation from the source of Dharmakaya. So Tathagata or Buddhahood can be understood both in terms of the Truth Body and also in terms of the Form Body.

The principle of dependent origination at the general level is a principal fundamental to all schools of Buddhism. However if one understands the principle of dependent origination at a subtle level in terms of emptiness then that is fundamental to the schools of the Middle Way thought, the Madhyamika. Some of you might be familiar here when I introduced the teachings of the Buddha stating that in philosophical outlook the principal of dependent origination is the key Buddhist teaching and the practice of non-violence is the conduct of a Buddhist practitioner.

The rationale for adopting such a way of behavior or way of interacting with others is not because the Buddhists say that by engaging in harmful action one goes against the will of the Buddha. The rationale is because everything is interdependent things come into being as the result of causes and conditions and since our fundamental aspiration is to seek happiness and avoid suffering; one should avoid causes and conditions that lead to suffering. One should adopt causes and conditions that lead to happiness. So it is ultimately the principle of dependent origination that provides the rationale for adopting the Buddhist practice of non-violence or non-harming.

The blessing or empowerment that is being performed today is of Manjusri because Manjusri is seen as the embodiment of the enlightened wisdom of the Buddhas. By participating in the ceremony and receiving the blessing it can enhance one's potential for generating insight into emptiness and dependent origination. I will begin the empowerment ceremony by conducting a ceremony on generating the mind of enlightenment. This will help us to reinforce, reaffirm our commitment to the Buddhist conduct of non-violence, non-harm and altruism.

I thought it might be quite useful if I confer the precepts of a upasaka, a lay practitioner's precepts. Of course there are many different precepts. The complete precepts involve restraining from killing, stealing, making false claims about spiritual realization, and avoiding intoxicants and sexual misconduct.

We had a discussion of the three higher trainings yesterday. The high training in morality is principally aimed at curbing the excesses of negative behavior. The high training in meditation is aimed at curbing the internal conditions for the negative behavior, delusions and so on. The higher trainings in wisdom are that which eliminates the delusions from within. When one talks about higher trainings in wisdom, the principal form of which is the wisdom realizing emptiness, the category of wisdom can also include insight into the impermanent nature of reality or insight into the insubstantiality of self. The higher trainings in wisdom are that which directly contracts the delusions. It is the actual antidote.

One can use the analogy of a missile. The actual warhead is analogous to wisdom. The actual rocket is like meditation, which is what propels wisdom. The launch pad, which needs to be very firm, is analogous to morality, sound ethical discipline. Morality is the foundation, the basis.

In practical application one has to begin with morality. This is the first step. On the basis of a sound ethical discipline, one can build on meditation, the second higher training. Although the actual generation and cultivation of wisdom itself does not depend upon having a meditatively stable mind but in order for that wisdom to be perfected and developed as a direct antidote to delusions, one needs the factor of a meditatively stable mind. Through the combination of meditation and wisdom one can attain what is known as vipasyana or penetrative insight. This enables the practitioner to directly channel all of their attention through the power of meditation.

Although one takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, which together constitute the Three Jewels, the primary object of refuge should be the Dharma, the Dharma of cessation. Since the true cessation is the Dharma which is the cessation of all negativity. By taking refuge principally in the Dharma, one makes a claim or a wish that by adopting an ethically disciplined way of life at least one is embarking on a path to eliminating all negativity and impurities of one's body, speech and mind.

The precepts being offered are the Five Precepts, which I spoke about earlier. One should regard the Buddha as the real teacher, the great teacher. In the past at first he was just like us, an ordinary human being with all the human weaknesses. It was through a gradual process of disciplining and purifying his mind that he became fully enlightened. One makes prostrations to him with the pledge to take him as our ideal example and follow in his footsteps.

Unlike the last two days in which were engaged in a series of lectures, today is a real teaching. You should bow to me, who is giving you the precepts. The actual recitation will be done on the basis of the Sanskrit formula.

Buddham saranam gacchami  
Dharmam saranam gacchami  
Sangham saranam gacchami

At this point one should make a fervent pledge of whatever commitment one is making. Those who are quite desperate can take only one precept that I shall not murder. At least you won't go to jail! When talking of the precept of not killing although principally it refers to murder, you should also avoid killing animals as well. It is important for Buddhist practitioners to have this instinctive sense that whenever one sees another sentient being that we are all living beings.

(Recitation of Sanskrit refuge formula three times)

One should make a fervent pledge, "Just as all the great masters of the past; the Arhats, Bodhisattvas and so on have lived an ethically disciplined way of life and observed all the precepts, so shall I observe the precepts and not transgress them until my death". One should develop a firm sense of commitment in one's heart to the precepts one has taken. It is important that from today onwards to be mindful that one is now an upasaka, a lay practitioner. If a mosquito is biting one, one's immediate response should not be to kill it but one should recall that one is a lay practitioner.

What is important is the cultivation of mindfulness and awareness. Although in one's normal day-to-day life one does use a degree of mindfulness and introspection, once one has adopted the Buddhist path then one deliberately and consciously applies mindfulness and introspection. Through this way once one's application of these faculties becomes more developed then one gets to a point where one can even maintain one's

focus single-pointedly on a chosen object. The moment one's mind gets distracted or diverted one is immediately aware of the distraction taking place. It is only through the development of these two faculties, mindfulness and introspection, that one gains single-pointedness of mind.

Once one has cultivated the faculty of single-pointedness one will get to a point where the power of one's mind and one's attention is so strong that one can channel all one's awareness into a single object. One has the ability to penetrate into the depths of the nature of the chosen object. Once one has this kind of single-pointedness of mind and when this is applied to one's understanding of emptiness, then one is able to attain what is known as the union of tranquil abiding and penetrative insight.

Generally speaking attainment of single-pointedness of mind and also the union of tranquil abiding and penetrative insight is something that is not unique to the Buddhist path. It is a common technique and practice in many of the ancient Indian religious traditions. For example in the non-Buddhist schools they also have an extensive discussion of the levels of absorption as well as the states of experiences of the Formless Realms. What distinguishes Buddhist meditation is the meditation on emptiness where there is a union of tranquil abiding and penetrative insight. This kind of union is both the cause for obtaining liberation from samsara and the fully enlightened state of a Buddha.

In order for that wisdom to become a cause for the attainment of full enlightenment it needs to be complemented and supported by bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment. Now I will conduct the ceremony for generating the mind of enlightenment.

In front of you visualize a living Buddha surrounded by great Bodhisattvas like Manjusri and Maitreya as well as great Indian masters like Nagarjuna and Asanga. Since my own lineage comes from Tibetan Buddhism, one should visualize the great Tibetan masters of the past and also as we are in the Chinese community here, one should visualize the great masters of the Chinese Buddhist tradition. Imagine yourself surrounded by all sentient beings. Focusing on the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and great masters cultivate a strong faith in them and admiration for their qualities of kindness and compassion. Also cultivate faith in the sense of aspiring to seek the state of enlightenment they have achieved for yourself and all sentient beings. Generate faith in the sense of conviction in the truth of their path and the nature of their enlightenment. Then focusing on yourself and the sentient beings around you, cultivate a strong sense of compassion and love, caring for them. With these strong feelings both of faith in the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and masters and compassion and love for all sentient beings, perform the seven-limbed practice.

The seven-limbed practice involves the purification of negativities and the accumulation of merit creating the right conditions. Purification of negativities essentially means overcoming obstacles.

Now we will recite the three verses from generating the mind for enlightenment. The first verse pertains to taking refuge in the Three Jewels. Here the only difference is that we are not just taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha but rather the manner in which we are taking refuge is quite different. We take refuge here in the Dharma not just "out there" but rather the potential Dharma, which we could realize within us. Through the realization of that Dharma in us then we become Sangha then the highest perfection of the Sangha is Buddhahood. When we take refuge in the Buddha,

Dharma and Sangha in the context here, we are taking refuge in our future resultant states of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha which is an ideal state we are aspiring to attain.

The second verse pertains to generating the mind of enlightenment. What we are saying here is that in this congregation, in the presence of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, by calling them witness upon this great event, we will generate the mind for full awakening for the sake of all sentient beings.

The third verse is a dedication verse, an aspirational prayer that is my favorite line, the greatest source of inspiration for me. When reciting these three verses, feel that by taking refuge in the Three Jewels I shall now generate the mind for full awakening for the benefit of all sentient beings. May that mind of enlightenment arise in me.

**With a wish to free all beings  
I shall always go for refuge  
To the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha,  
until I reach full enlightenment**

**Enthused by wisdom and compassion,  
Today in the Buddha's presence  
I generate the mind for Full Awakening  
for the benefit of all sentient beings.**

**As long as space remains,  
As long as sentient beings remain,  
May I too remain  
And dispel the miseries of the world.**

If possible one should make a firm pledge that I shall never abandon this courageous mind that I have generated today. I take this recitation as very important using it as part of my daily practice in the morning. I also feel that this does have an impact on my thoughts and mind.

At this point I will explain the meaning of the beautiful prayer the Chinese Buddhists recite. The first line is, "May I be able to eliminate the three poisons of mind". We have had discussions on these three poisons of mind the last few days. These refer to ignorance, hatred and extreme attachment. All of these and their derivatives are the true enemy that creates so much misery for oneself and others. One makes the fervent prayer to be free of these poisons.

The second line reads, "May the perfect wisdom arise in me". This points out that simply by making a prayer that one may eliminate all poisons of the mind is not enough. Even if all the Buddhas of the past, present and future joined forces they could not eliminate those poisons from one's mind. It is only by generating the light of wisdom penetrating into the ultimate nature of reality that one can dispel the darkness created by the poisons of the mind from within. Therefore in the second line one makes the prayer that may the perfect wisdom arise in one's own mind.

The third line says, "May I be able to overcome all obstructions". The point here is to make a request that may all the obstructions preventing one's attaining the light of wisdom be overcome so that the light of wisdom may shine within. One could say that

these three lines of prayer are common to the Sravaka, Pratyekabuddha and Bodhisattva vehicles.

The fourth line reads, “May I be able to engage in the deeds of the Bodhisattva eternally”. The fourth line is the unique prayer, the sentiment unique to the practitioners of the Bodhisattva path. This is also to emphasize that the prayers of the first three lines are not motivated simply by one’s own wish to be free but also for the sake of all sentient beings.

The essence of generating the mind of enlightenment is for all of us to cultivate the thought that for the remaining part of our lives, what is most important is to be warm-hearted and to lead a way of life which is not destructive or harmful to others around you. Once one has this basic quality of warm-heartedness then on top of it one should be as intelligent, wise, skillful and competent as possible.

Next is the blessing ceremony of Manjusri. This is a Vajrayana teaching, a tantra teaching. In order to practice tantric teachings one has to be initiated into the practice. In the congregation here if there are people who have never received any empowerments or initiations before then you should not visualize yourself into the deity Manjusri. Rather you should visualize Manjusri at your crown on top of your head.

What is the unique feature of the Vajrayana approach? Earlier we spoke about the critical importance of cultivating the union of tranquil abiding and penetrative insight focused on emptiness. In the Vajrayana teachings there is a unique set of practices that enable one to attain this union with much more effectiveness and faster. Also we spoke of the Two Bodies of the Buddha, the Buddha Body of Reality (Dharmakaya) and the Buddha’s Form Body (Rupakaya). The Dharmakaya is said to represent the fulfillment of self-interest and the Rupakaya is said to represent the fulfillment of others’ welfare. Just as the resultant state of Buddhahood is a composite of two embodiments similarly there are two principal dimensions or aspects to the path, which correspond to the attainment of the resultant state. These refer to the practices of emptiness, which relate to the Dharmakaya and the practices of skillful means, which relate to the Rupakaya.

The essence of the Mahayana teachings and practices is the union of these two, the wisdom of emptiness and the skillful means of bodhicitta. In the general Sutra practices and teachings the union of these two, method and wisdom, takes place in terms of one reinforcing and supporting or complementing the other. For example bodhicitta is used as a motivation which would then creates impetus for the generation of the insight into emptiness. This realization of emptiness is further strengthened and complemented by compassion. In the Sutra context the union is more in terms of mutual complementarity.

If there were a possibility of creating the union of method and wisdom in such a way that they become totally inseparable or indistinguishable then such an approach to the path would be much more profound and effective. In the Vajrayana teachings is a very profound way of unifying the method and wisdom aspects of the path. One first meditates on emptiness and then one’s realization of emptiness itself is visualized or turned into the physical embodiment or form of a deity. One refocuses attention back on the deity and realizes its emptiness. The most profound union takes place at the level of Highest Yoga Tantra.

If one can engage on the Vajrayana path on the basis of a clear understanding of the tantric path, then it can be truly profound and effective. Some Tibetan masters of the

past have emphasized many of the significancies of the Vajrayana teachings by the representation of the vajra and bell. The Tibetan say that if one utilizes these implements with a full awareness of their significance and a full understanding of the Vajrayana path, then when one rings the bell it will have a profound symbolism and meaning. But the simple act of playing a bell doesn't really have any profundity. One can see that even cows have bells around their necks and make loud noises.

The reason I point this out is that unfortunately sometimes people in their rush to attain Vajrayana teachings because of the way in which it is promoted as the best, highest and quickest, people hastily rush to receiving initiations without full realization of what it involves and what is its true significance. There is a real danger that one's ringing a bell is like the cow's. This is very true even of the Tibetan Buddhists as well. When they hear there is an initiation everyone rushes to it with great enthusiasm. But if someone hears there is a series of lectures taking place on Buddhism then they say, "Oh yes, well....". Sometimes I exploit this weakness and use it to my advantage. I announce there is a Kalachakra initiation and everybody rushes to it. I do the Kalachakra ceremony last and very fast but I spend much more time explaining the key elements and a general overview of the Buddhist path. That way they have to sit and listen to them. This is my skillful means! Although I thought I was rather smart but some of the students are even smarter. They make sure they arrive only exactly on the Kalachakra initiation day.

You should imagine the guru in the form of the deity Manjusri; orange in color holding a sword in his right hand, holding the stem of a lotus with a scripture on top with his left hand. This is how you should visualize the guru. At the crown of guru as Manjusri's head visualize a white Manjusri, at the throat a red-colored Manjusri and at his heart a blue Manjusri. Visualize a place where there is a full mandala arranged with a similar form of Manjusri.

At first you make a request to the guru whom you have visualized in the form of the deity Manjusri to confer upon you the empowerment and blessings of Manjusri. Now you visualize in front of you all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with Manjusri in the middle. In their presence you take refuge in the Three Jewels and take the Bodhisattva vows making the pledge to engage in the deeds of the Bodhisattva.

Among the members of the congregation who have already received tantric empowerments in the past, they can visualize themselves as the deity Manjusri as described earlier. If you are attending Vajrayana teachings for the first time then you should visualize Manjusri at your crown. At this point everyone should try to reflect upon what is exactly the nature of the self or I. We have constant thoughts of "I-consciousness"; "I'm this" "I'm that". We should reflect on what exactly is this self. As we had discussed yesterday in our normal thought we tend to have a sense that there is something called the self or I to which all our physical and mental aggregates belong. We have thoughts like "My body", "My mind" or "My feelings" and so on. There is a sense that there is a self, a me or an I, which is separate from our empirical physical and mental aggregates. Yet at the same time if we were to search for this self that is supposedly distinct from mind and body, the concept begins to dissolve.

Nagarjuna has stated in his *Precious Garland*, the *Ratnavali* that the person is neither the earth, water, fire nor wind elements yet there is no person outside these elements. He also states since the notion of person or self arises on the basis of a composite of all these elements, the person or self does not exist with independent reality

or intrinsic reality. Nagarjuna continues to state that just as the person or self can not be found within or separate apart from the constitutive elements, similarly the individual elements themselves if subjected to a similar analysis are again composites, can not be found to possess any intrinsic or independent reality. This analysis can be extended to the entire realm of phenomena.

Those who already been initiated into Vajrayana teachings before should now imagine that the awareness understanding emptiness that one just developed dissolves into emptiness and emerges in the form of an orange-colored seed syllable DHIH. This syllable then turns into the deity Manjusri, orange-colored holding a sword in his right hand and holding the stem of a lotus with a scripture in his left hand. Those receiving initiation for the first time after having reflected on the nature of emptiness should visualize at your crown Manjusri.

At the crown of Manjusri is a blue-colored Akshobhya with one face and two arms holding a vajra. The guru in the same form as Manjusri from his heart light emanates and touches the heart of the deity in the mandala visualized in front of you. From the deities heart in the mandala lights emanate in all directions and draws forth the blessings of all of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. These come back in the form of images of Manjusri that dissolve into you through the pores in your body.

At your heart visualizing yourself as Manjusri, visualize a four-spoked white wheel, a wheel of wisdom. At the center of the wheel is the syllable DHIH. On the two sides of the DHIH in the center of the wheel is on the right the letter AH and on the left the letter OM. On the four spokes of the wheel clockwise from the front visualize RA, PA, TSA and NA. Now you should visualize emerging from the heart of the guru replicas of the same set of the wisdom wheel with all the syllables, which dissolve, into the set at your heart. Through this way imagine receiving the blessings of the mantra and speech of Manjusri. Repeat after me the mantra OM AH RA PA TSA NA DHIH.

Inside your throat is horizontally the syllable DHIH with its head facing towards your back. When all of us do the recitation of DHIH DHIH DHIH... 108 times in one breath, you should imagine many small letter DHIH dripping from the DHIH at your throat and are absorbed by the DHIH at your heart. Through this way imagine that it sharpens your mind and increases the power of your memory.

You should make a pledge to perform a mantra recitation of Manjusri on a daily basis, if possible one whole round of the mala. If you can not perform a whole round of a mala then seven or twenty-one repetitions on a daily basis is okay. The blessing ceremony of Manjusri is over. I received this empowerment for my tutor Tarthag Rinpoche and then also later from Trijang Rinpoche.

**Venerable Master Sheng-yen:** The Sixth Ancestral Master Hui-neng was perhaps the most eminent Chan master. His initial enlightenment occurred when he heard a phrase from the *Vajracchedika* or *Diamond Sutra*, “Give rise to mind without abiding anywhere”. The *Vajracchedika Sutra* mainly teaches us to give rise to this bodhimind, the altruistic mind of enlightenment and expounds on the nature of emptiness.

The *Lankavatara Sutra* also had a great impact on Chan Buddhism. This sutra emphasizes the teaching of Tathagatagarbha or True Suchness also known as Buddhature. It encourages us to have a conviction that all sentient beings have



Tathagatagarbha or Buddhanature. In other words it states that all beings can become Buddhas.

The Sixth Lineage Master Hui-neng taught that in order to perceive your self-nature and reach enlightenment you must be free from dualistic thinking, judging what is good or bad. At that very moment you can look into your original face so to say and find out who you are.

A similar approach can be found in the conversation between the First Master Bodhidharma and his disciple the second disciple the Lineage Master Hui-k'o. One day the story goes Hui-k'o wanted Bodhidharma to pacify his agitated mind for him. He was filled with vexations. Bodhidharma did not give him a particular method instead he asked, "Where is this agitated mind of yours? Find it and give it to me so I can pacify it for you."

In the Chan tradition there is no specific method to enlightenment. Chan only encourages one to fully investigate this mind of affliction. Traditional early Indian Buddhist practice is indeed very difficult and one must proceed with methods such as contemplation of the Five Points of Steering the Mind, anapannasati (sp.?) or full awareness of breath, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and so on. On the other hand Chan teaches one not to analyze or engage in intellectual investigation. By contrast Chan teaches the instantaneous casting off of the deluded mind through the search for this mind of delusion.

When one personally experiences the absence of mind one naturally perceives the nature of emptiness. Furthermore to truly engage in Chan practice one must generate the altruistic mind of enlightenment and take Bodhisattva vows which are also known as the Three Inclusive Pure Precepts. If an individual has already experienced a thorough state of enlightenment then forms and patterns will no longer bind their conduct.

The attainment of samadhi in Chan is actually a state that is in perfect accordance with the wisdom of emptiness. Chan does not emphasize the gradual stages of samadhi or one-pointedness of mind. Rather it places great emphasis on the emergence of the wisdom of the nature of emptiness. If an individual has given rise to great wisdom then this is also the attainment of great samadhi. In other words Chan places great emphasis on both the attainment of samadhi and prajna.

To begin the practice one must have genuine faith in what the Buddha said that all sentient beings have Buddhanature, the potential to reach Buddhahood. Thus the Ts'ao-tung school or a sub-school of Chan teaches a method called just sitting where one first experiences one's own body sitting and become aware of the workings of the mind. Once the mind is sufficiently clear you separate from the clinging to the four elements, the five skandhas, the mind, consciousness and all mental factors. At that very moment one confronts the question, "Who am I?"

There is an easier approach that is when confronted with external situations, things and events with the experience of internal thoughts of this and that, do not conceptualize, label or cling to these phenomena. In this way one will be in accordance with the nature of enlightenment. If one accords with the wisdom of emptiness at that moment that is enlightenment. However this state should not be understood as dull or inert as if someone bashed one over the head.

In Chan sometimes a master would hit a student with a stick or suddenly yell at him. This stops vexations and deluded thoughts from arising. So some foolish people

may think that, “Oh it is easy to reach enlightenment. You just have to find someone to hit you over the head and this will free you from conceptualizations and thoughts”. Is this non-arising of afflictions and thoughts the state of enlightenment? I don’t believe it is. It is only a kind of shock. Why? Because it is not in accordance with the nature or insight into emptiness.

The Hua Tou method of the Lingchi School consists of asking investigative questions such as, “Who is having such afflictions?” “Who is clinging?” “Who is having all of these negative habits?” “Who is it?” “Who?” Continually ask oneself until one reaches a point free from scatteredness and arising thoughts. When one reaches this state perhaps a master’s blow may be quite useful.

In recent years I have engaged in a social movement I call Building a Pure Land on Earth. We can all do this by purifying our minds. When our minds are pure our actions and conduct will be pure. When our actions are pure we will have a purifying influence on those around us. When this happens a pure land will appear in our world. To reach purity we must experience the wisdom of emptiness.

If we can not do this we should be aware of our afflictions and at least not let them grow into actions, which would cause more harm. When we recognize our afflictions we can subdue then finally sever them. To know or recognize affliction is to be in accordance with the pure mind. One may find this difficult at first but do not despair or feel regret. Once one recognizes the afflictions put them down right away. One can use the Hua Tou method or the awareness of breath method to bring one’s afflicted mind to a settled state where vexations will not easily arise. At this time one will be in accordance with purity.

An ancient Chan master said, “If within a single thought your mind is pure then that is one moment of Buddhahood. When your subsequent thought is in accordance with purity that moment is Buddhahood”. The *Saddharmapundarika Sutra* or the *Lotus Sutra* states, “If a person upon entering a temple can say Nammo Buddha or Homage to the Buddha then he has attained Buddhahood”.

The Buddha is said to have three bodies; the Body of Reality, the Body of Transformation and the Body of Bliss. One can look upon one’s own body with the conviction that it is the Transformation Body of Buddha. Can’t you see that everyone in this world then is a Buddha? Isn’t this world a Buddha Land?

**Dalai Lama:** Of course even Lama Tsong Khapa accepts the notion of instantaneous liberation but he makes the point that what seems like an instantaneous realization is actually a culmination of many factors coming into play. It could be a sudden impetus that leads to the instantaneous liberation.

For example he gives an example from a sutra where a king from central India had received a very expensive gift from a king of a distant land. The king did know what was the best kind of gift to give in return, as the gift he received was so valuable so he approached the Buddha asking for advice. Buddha suggested the king send a painting of the Wheel of Life that depicts the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination with a description in verse form at the end. The gift was sent along with a message that the gift should be received with great joy and fanfare. The other king was very curious when he received the message and made arrangements to receive the gift with great festivity and celebration. When he finally opened the gift he was surprised to see a small painting. When he studied the painting and read the description of the Twelve Links of Dependent

Origination depicted in the Wheel of Life, it gave rise to an instantaneous realization of the truth. This experience happened out of the blue, instantaneously as a result of the visual perception of the painting with its description.

From Tsong Khapa's point of view although the actual event may be instantaneous, it is a culmination of many factors coming together. What makes it instantaneous is something that arises as an impetus.

In the Dzogchen teachings, particularly the approach to meditation taught in the Dzogchen path, although I can not say they use a stick as the Chinese master described here, but there is a similar approach. The practitioner shouts the syllable PHAT and it is said that when the syllable is uttered with great force, at that point the whole chain of thought processes is instantaneously cut. It gives rise to a sudden spontaneous experience that is described as a sense of wonder. It is a form of non-conceptuality, a state of the absence of thought.

There is a verse attributed to Sakya Pandita though some Sakya masters dispute the authorship of this, which states that between the gaps of different thought processes the experience of clear light takes place continuously. It suggests that when one shouts PHAT and then experiences the sudden, spontaneous sense of wonder and state of non-conceptuality that is when one experiences the clear light. This is momentary.

It is said for those who have ripened karmic states who has great accumulations of merit and many of the conditions aggregated, it is said at this point such a person can also experience emptiness. To use Dzogchen terminology it is said once one experiences the sense of wonderment as a result of uttering PHAT instantaneously cutting the chain of the thought processes, accompanied by other factors like receiving the blessings and inspiration from one's guru then it is said one can perfect that experience into what is known as the experience of the true pristine awareness. When one experiences this clear light, this sense of wonder in a non-conceptual state, from the Dzogchen point of view one could say that one experiences the whole world as assimilated into the nature of emptiness.

**Venerable Master Sheng-yen:** How long can the individual maintain this state of clear light and perceive the nature of emptiness? Does this experience gradually fade away? Does the individual still have afflictions? How does this experience effect his sleep?

**Dalai Lama:** Using Dzogchen terminology when they talk about the clear light nature of mind they are actually talking about an essential quality of consciousness which is continuous so long as consciousness retains its continuity this clear light would also maintain its continuity. So long as there is water the clarity of water's nature will remain. Sometimes the water gets muddied and at such times one does not see the clarity of the water's essential nature. In order to perceive the clear nature of the water one just need to let it be still. Similarly whether one is in a virtuous thought or a non-virtuous thought one is still in a state of mind both of which are pervaded by the clear light nature. From the point of view of the practice of trying to experience the clear light both virtuous and non-virtuous thoughts are obstructions. Emphasis is placed on trying to still one's consciousness by stopping the thought process both virtuous and non-virtuous so that one can experience the clear light.

Here in these teachings there is quite a lot of similarities or parallels with the instantaneous teachings, the simultaneous teachings of Chan Buddhism. Once an

individual is able to have such experiences of clear light of course it would have an immediate effect on the clarity of one's dreams. However such a Dzogchen approach of instantaneous teachings require preliminary practices which in the Dzogchen terminology is called seeking the true face of mind by means of analyzing its origin, abiding and dissolution. Here the analysis would be quite similar to the Madhyamika dilemma approach, the four-cornered logic of Madhyamika analysis.

What century was the Patriarch of Chan Hui-neng living?

**Venerable Master Sheng-yen:** The eighth century.

**Dalai Lama:** The reason I asked this is that there is some relevance to the development of Tibetan Buddhism. We know that Lama Tsong Khapa had been one of the most vociferous critics of the simultaneous teachings of the Chan tradition in Tibet. However during the eighth century or during the reign of Trisong Deutsen at the Samye Temple if one looks at the temple map there were different wings devoted to different sections of the Order. There was one section devoted to Vajrayana practitioners, one section dedicated to the lotsawas or translators and there was one place called the Place of Dhyana, the place for meditation. This was the residence of the Chinese masters. We are talking about the eighth century when Samye was built and this was the time when the Indian masters Santaraksita and Kamalasila were active in Tibet.

My personal feeling is given that in Santaraksita's time there was a separate wing in Samye Temple dedicated as the residence of the Chinese masters representing the Chan tradition, Santaraksita must have welcomed and recognized their tradition as part of an important development in Buddhism. However it seems during Kamalasila's time, who was a disciple of Santaraksita, it seems there were certain followers of the Chan tradition in Tibet who perhaps promoted a slightly different version of the doctrine. A tremendous emphasis was placed on seizing all forms of thought, not just in the context of a specific practice, but even in general terms almost as a philosophical standpoint where all forms of thought were completely rejected. This was the version, which was Kamalasila attacked. It seems there were two different interpretations of Chan, which came to Tibet.

The master referred to a form of an experience of emptiness where the person remains in the experience uninterruptedly. Such experience or realization can only take place at a much higher stage of development because this involves gaining a mastery over both the experiences of meditative equipoise and the subsequent realizations. In many of the stages before one becomes fully enlightened meditative equipoise and the subsequent realizations are sequential, they alternate sequentially. It is only the state of full enlightenment that experiences of meditative equipoise and single-pointedness in that state and subsequent realizations become simultaneous.

From this point of view anyone who is able to remain in the direct experience of emptiness uninterruptedly in meditative equipoise without ever arising from it can only happen when one is fully enlightened.

**Venerable Master Sheng-yen:** A state of thorough enlightenment does not end afflictions rather it is a state where doubt in regards to the Dharma is forever terminated. Fully enlightened people may still have afflictions but they would not allow them to manifest verbally or bodily. They are not free from all afflictions but they clearly know the path of practice they must follow.

The Chan tradition does not emphasize a sequential practice of dhyanas. In regards to these practices I myself have studied and experienced them but the personal experience of seeing self-nature is more important. This is another name for enlightenment. Like the first taste of water it is something one must experience for oneself. The experience of the nature of emptiness is the same. One must experience it personally or one will never know it. One may hear of it but that is all one will do.

Thorough enlightenment however differs from seeing self-nature in that one may return to the ordinary state of mind after seeing one's self-nature and not fully recognize how afflictions operate and manifest. A thoroughly enlightened person is aware of the workings of afflictions at all times. Their minds are extremely clear.

**Dalai Lama:** What seems to be true is that as the scriptures state from the point of view of practitioners who have directly experienced emptiness their experience differs from those who haven't had a direct experience and whose understanding is only at the level of intellectual understanding or conceptual. Emptiness still remains beyond words, beyond language, ineffable and inexpressible. You can not simply describe it as directly experienced by the meditator.

I would like to refer to the Master Sheng-yen's new initiative, which involves building a purity of society and environment on the basis of the purity of the individual's mind. I find this very encouraging as it reconfirms my own approach. So far the liberation from samsara and suffering is concerned in some sense it is a private business, the business of the individual. Perhaps at the level of community and society what is more important is to try and create a nirvana of society, to create a society where there will be less strong negative emotions like hatred, anger and jealousy. Here there is a real meeting of minds. What would be truly wonderful is that some time in the future to have this kind of dialogue and discussion especially related to emptiness at the Five Peaks Mountain in China.