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BY

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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Lecture 1

We are so fortunate that we have such a Mahayana center where there is a chance for people to hear and study and actualize something. The center has not been established for a very long time, and such a place is kind of unexpected, it is kind of a dream that such a thing has happened in Australia.

Generally, to meet Dharma is extremely difficult, very rare. If we could count the number of people who have met the Dharma in the world, it would be nothing compared to people who have not met Dharma. This perfect, infallible teaching of Buddhadharma is extremely rare to meet.

Then in all Dharma there are three levels: the Lesser Vehicle path, the Great Path and the tantric path. Especially to meet the Mahayana teachings is extremely rare, extremely rare. Without meeting the Great Path, the Mahayana teachings, there is no way to follow the short-cut path, the tantric path, in order to receive enlightenment. So the Great Path, the Mahayana path, is the fundamental thing.

Usually we think if we are born in that country or even if we go to that place and meet the Dharma, we will become some kind of a holy person. However, it is not like this. Meeting Dharma, for instance meeting the Mahayana teachings, first of all we have to listen. We have to hear the teachings, then try to understand the meaning and then actualize. And then, *then* the person really meets the Mahayana teachings. It is not easy, not easy.

That's why I am saying it is fortunate that there is the existence of a center where we can study the teachings. Also the people who have helped build the monastery have created incredible good karma, have made great purification. It is fortunate to receive such a chance to do such work, which can benefit a great number of other people. I also think, from my side, it is quite fortunate to talk about the Mahayana teachings at such a place.

To do the meditation course, I'm sure everybody knows quite well, everybody has different reasons for taking the meditation course. But it is very important not to make a mistake at the beginning regarding the purpose of taking the meditation course. The purpose of staying here for one month is very important, especially the reason for following Dharma and practicing meditation. It is so important to really understand, for the new people who did not take a meditation course before, it's very important for you to understand. If you understand that, there is no danger that you will make mistakes in your actions when you are trying to practice Dharma here.

Those who took one or two meditation courses already, it is still necessary to check up. If you don't check up, you may make many mistakes. That's the most important thing. If there is a mistake, it is necessary at the beginning, before you spend time, to correct, to try to have a pure reason, then all your actions become pure, really sincere. Instead of feeling pride, "Oh, I know this. I have heard this subject before," such as about mind being beginningless, things like this. "I've heard it before." Instead of feeling pride like this, check up. If you really check individually, if you really check still there may be doubts in your mind. Not clear, not clear. The less doubt there is, that much more indestructible, unshakable is your understanding. It is that much firmer, you have that much deeper understanding. If you don't check well, if you do not check deeply, just feeling pride, "Oh I know, I

heard that subject,” such as this, then many doubts can arise in your mind and then sometimes it’s possible your understanding will change, there is danger.

Anyway, like this, sort of emphasizing, a short introduction especially for new people to understand. For instance, now there are many hardships in the life, when there is rain, much wind, feeling cold, becoming wet, having problems with your tent. I’m speaking of the present experiences. Always there are physical problems. If we don’t have this physical body, we don’t have to experience all these difficulties. There is no hardship of this kind of life. All these difficulties, physical problems, hardships, are also a product of mind. Why this physical body has problems, is suffering, is because the mind is in suffering. If the mind is not in suffering there is no reason, no way for the physical body to experience suffering. There is no connection, no reason why the body has to experience suffering.

Why is our mind still in suffering? Why? That is because so far we did not realize perfect happiness, even though we might believe in just one life or even if we believe in beginningless lifetimes. Why we have not received ultimate happiness is because we never achieved the path that brings this ultimate happiness; we never tried, never accomplished it. Once we have accomplished it and achieved the ultimate happiness by following the path, it is impossible to change, to fall down or to degenerate, to lose it. It is impossible because there is no cause, no hindrance. Not receiving ultimate happiness, not accomplishing the realizations of the path is mainly due to not realizing that the principal cause of suffering is in the mind, the inner factors. We have always believed the principal cause of happiness is external factors and we are always trying to change the external things, never changing the mind. Even though we try to check, we check the wrong way. Even trying to check inside, we check with wrong conception, which only brings more confusion in the life.

We always believe the external conditions around us are the principal cause of happiness or the principal cause of suffering. For instance, when a person makes us angry, we absolutely believe that they are the cause of our anger, that they are the principal cause of our anger. We absolutely believe that they are the real enemy. This is our nature, this is our experience. If we check up, when we try to remember our past experiences it is clear, it is true.

Perhaps we may feel pride, thinking, “I know that.” But when the situation comes, even if we have read books and heard the teachings, we feel pride, we do not use the understanding, we do not think in that way; when the real situation comes we do not think that way. That means we really don’t understand, we don’t really fully see it. That time our life is like the person who doesn’t know, who didn’t hear teachings. The mind is the same, ignorant. Then instead of trying to change our own mind, we are only trying to change the other person or harm them by killing, by destroying them.

If the other person is the principal cause of suffering, the unhappiness, then that person should be always our enemy, they have to always be our enemy in all our lifetimes. There would not be any change. Also they would be same to other people; they would always be enemy to other people. But that does not happen; that does not happen. The person definitely changes after certain years, in a month, in a week, in a day. In this life or in the future lifetimes, the person definitely changes, they do not always have the same personality. You know, the person is not always seen by other people as enemy. Depending on their actions, what they do, they become friends or they become enemies. Depending on their actions, what they do to us, they are called enemy or friend by the mind, by our own mind. It changes by those actions which we like or which we don’t like.

Now we can see so clearly in this way, with these reasons, that they are not the principal cause of our anger, they are not the principal cause of our unhappiness. The principal cause of our unhappiness, our anger is our own discriminating mind, which discriminates different actions that are done. So you see the whole thing depends on the projection of our mind. Same thing, if we really think clearly in this way, it's like a film machine projecting the pictures out there on the wall. If we really think clearly, this is very important. Only through the teachings can we clearly understand; through meditation we can really clearly understand, by checking.

For instance, no matter how much time we spend at university or school, we don't understand these things. We are completely ignorant of how things are working, how our perceptions are working and how our conceptions are working. This is just giving an example.

Now we can see it's a little bit silly, we can see just a little bit it's a silly thing. So like this, we have been doing exactly the same with everything, including non-living things—sometimes we even get angry with the weather when it does not show sun! When we have to go on a picnic or have to do some important things! I'm joking.

Anyway that part of the conception is completely wrong. Even if all sentient beings were killed, still our enemy, our principal cause of suffering is not finished. Even though we alone are existing, still the enemy is not finished, the enemy is not ended. Even though we commit suicide with our body, we split the mind from the body, still our suffering is not finished. Still the mind is living in suffering.

So all these life hardships, all these life problems are caused by the inner factor, the principal cause, which is greed, ignorance and hatred. That is greed, ignorance, hatred. No material possessions, no external factors can cease the principal cause of suffering—ignorance, greed, hatred. Just that method cannot cease these poisonous minds of greed, ignorance, hatred. Therefore there is a need for religion, there is a need for meditation and there is a need for Dharma practice. So this is the main purpose of religion.

As religion exists for this reason, so religion should be used to cut off these three poisonous minds, from where all the suffering arises. If we don't use it that way, then our religion is useless. It does not have any value if it does not benefit this; it does not have any value, it does not have any special purpose.

The perfect, infallible method to completely cease the poisonous minds, from where all the suffering arises, is the Buddhadharma, in which we can have complete trust, which can definitely work, can benefit. The Buddhadharma that's shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is something that can be experienced by any living being. It's something that can be experienced even by mosquitoes, even by the lower creatures, besides human beings, if it is practiced. It is not something that cannot be experienced or which is experienced only by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, it is not like this.

All the teachings that have been practiced by Tibetan lamas originally came from India, from those famous, highly realized pandits; all these teachings, which are the lineage that has been practiced by Tibetan lamas. First all the teachings are like this: no matter if it is called tantra or Mahayana teachings, whatever it is called, all these teachings were first of all shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, as he had the experience. Then after that his followers, the highly realized, fully experienced pandits, checked up. They checked whether it definitely works or not, like checking gold. When you

are checking gold, you check it in many different ways, by rubbing and burning, to see whether it is pure gold or not. Just like this, the teachings that were shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha were checked by his followers, by the fully experienced pandits, with logic, whether there are mistakes or not. After checking, many of the yogis, Indians and also people from many other countries, such as Tibetan yogis, took teachings and practiced and actualized [the path.]

All the teachings are very practical. If we practice, if we put them into action it works. As long as we do not put them into action, like anything, if we do not put something into action it does not work. Even in the worldly way same thing, if we do not take medicine, it does not work, it doesn't cure our sickness, it does not do these things, same thing. So the teachings are not just something picked up from the street! Not like this.

In order to cease all suffering, it is necessary to follow the whole graduated path, which leads to happiness. Still that is not sufficient. It is necessary to receive enlightenment, the complete cessation of all dualistic minds in order to benefit, to enlighten other sentient beings. To follow this whole graduated path, to receive enlightenment depends on having a spiritual friend or teacher who is perfect in understanding and who is wise in explaining to the disciples, showing guidance, who knows the path.

Anyway, this time I don't have any experience, I do not know anything. I have such limited understanding of Dharma, like an atom in this earth. Dharma is the earth and my understanding is just like an atom of this earth, so limited. Also I don't think this can benefit your mind because my personality is so poor, how can I benefit others, you know! A person who does only eating, defecating and sleeping! But it is the order of the guru, so there must be something! [Laughter] There must be something, it cannot be completely empty. I'm joking!

Anyway, in order to receive enlightenment we have to completely achieve the Great Vehicle, the graduated path of the higher capable being. Without achieving that, there's no way to receive enlightenment, the complete cessation of the dualistic mind, the state that is completed in all knowledge. That is the graduated path of the higher capable being, which leads to enlightenment, and that is based on the graduated path of the middle capable being. So even just to escape from the bondage of suffering, which is caused by the poisonous minds—ignorance, greed, hatred—we have to accomplish, we have to actualize the graduated path of the middle capable being. In order to actualize the graduated path of the middle capable being we have to actualize the graduated path of the lower capable being. In order to actualize the graduated path of the lower capable being, we have to receive teachings and understand the meaning of the teachings and we have to practice.

Before that, while we and others have problems—I'm talking about practice—if we want to practice, if we wish to receive enlightenment, to escape samsara, then how to follow the path, how to start? I am talking since we are going to practice. If we talk in a practical way, what we need at the moment, before that there is need of the understanding of the mind.

So, I think I will read the first part: "Mind is Beginningless."

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 25–26]

If the mind had its beginning ... then what created the original being's mind?

This is another question that has to be checked. This question is very important to check up. Especially those who did not take a course before, it is necessary to check, to try to find answers to these questions. Check within your mind, what your wisdom says.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 27]

In addition ... is just dreaming.

Anyway, this I just read. If by reading there are any doubts or questions, they can be discussed after supper. There will be a short time for discussion if there is any problem in your understanding or wrong understanding or not understanding! These other students who have been taking courses before and anyone who has understanding about the mind, discuss with each other. And those who do not understand, discuss with the person who has understanding. Whoever has time, Dr. Nick or Ann, or whoever has time will also help. If we talk, if we go through with questions, it takes much time and the subject does not get finished. So this way is easier.

However, as I put the question here in the subject, especially at the points where I put the questions, that is the point, the place where you have to check up. Check up and see what your wisdom says.

There are two ways of checking. First, how it is a mistake believing that mind is caused, the principal cause of the baby's mind is the parents, the combination of the egg and sperm. How it is a mistake thinking the baby's mind comes from the parents' minds, the father and mother. You know, you put the question to yourself and check. Whatever beliefs you have should have understanding and logical reasons.

The baby's mind coming from the parents' mind, I actually did not hear and read in any book. Actually I did not hear other Westerners saying that but I just put the idea there, just to stop the future wrong conceptions. Usually the conception that is explained in the books and in the science books, I think, also that's what the doctor says, whom we believe is the doctor, whom we should believe. So usually we say that, even if the parents' bodies are perfect, when the baby has an imperfect body, science says it is because of the atoms. Even if the other babies have perfect sense organs in their body, but one specific baby has imperfect sense organs in the body, then the answer is that certain atoms or certain genes came from the parents, who had imperfect bodies. Other parents, even previous parents, even the grandfather or grandmother, or the parents of parents going back, it is their mistake. So the fault is put on their heads. [Laughter]

Usually we say it is like this. That there is a continuity, that's why this specific baby has met certain atoms. But then, if it is questioned why a specific baby is called, for instance, Rick, Richard, this specific baby, why he met these defective genes or atoms, which make him have an imperfect body or sense organs. If it is questioned, the answer is time; this baby met because of time. The baby received that because of that time. But there is no question why the specific baby has to meet this time. Why not other babies? Why this specific baby? Why not another baby who is called something like Robert? Why not him? Why this Richard? If it is questioned, then it's difficult. Well, I cannot say difficult, but you check up. Perhaps you may know. I'm sure you have answers, check up, check up. Time, because of time, something like that, but when you say because of time, I think when the person answers "time," I think sort of it's going zero, his mind is going zero, zero. I'm joking!

I think the way the person is thinking of time, they think time is kind of inexpressible, kind of not created, not a creation, or that maybe time is created by the time, it is created by only time; time is not a creation of mind, not a creation of the living beings. That is my feeling, the person who answers that, if they checked in the depth of their heart, their concept I think it is like that. So they give it to time then it disappears after that. Anyway, check up like this. Check up.

Time has many parts, particles—that the baby is born at such an hour, such a time, such a day—there are many particles. Anyway, check up what or who has created such time, that the baby has to receive such defects, the genes. So like this, check up. It is useful to check how time is a creation, you will understand slowly, it is created by the beings, not by itself. There's no way it can be created by itself. Anyway, check up like this.

One interesting thing to check up, for instance, is this instinctive feeling of the “I” that we all have day or night, all the time. This is not created by time, this feeling that we instinctively have in our body, which we feel, which we think of. This is not taught by our parents, this is not taught by our teacher; we have it even before the teacher teaches this capital “I” at school. Before that, before our parents, before our teacher teaching the I, this first person, second person, third person, I, he, she; before teaching this, we have this feeling—this is useful to remember—this instinctive feeling of I. “I want this. I am not doing that. I like this and that.” This we have, this is quite clear. Then even this feeling does not depend on our parents teaching I. Does this feeling come after parents said “I” or did this feeling exist before our parents taught us language? Was this feeling already there?

Somebody must have already incredible answers! Do you remember? Was it existing before our parents taught us language? Was it existing or not? Who says yes? Oh, I see. So this feeling was already there when you were a baby, even when you were coming out of your mother's womb? This feeling was already there, wasn't it? Was this feeling already there? When the baby was coming out of mother's womb, that time, was this feeling there? Oh, I see, yeah. So when the baby was in the womb, then was this feeling also there? Isn't it yes? Maybe you are giving silent answer!

Check up like this. Repeat those two questions that are in the book, keep them in your mind and try to understand. When you meditate, try to check, try to find out how it is, which one is right, which one is wrong. This is the method, checking in such a way. Check up. This is a method to develop wisdom in order to discover the nature of mind. So it is not a kind of useless thing, a merely intellectual useless exercise. Do not think in this way.

If you still do not agree, if you don't find any proof, or if you still think it is not true, many babies can tell previous lives; they can remember their previous lives. For instance, in the West, in previous times there are many babies who remember their previous life and who proved the different places, different homes, where they were before and what they did and these things; and so many different stories in the newspapers in different places, things happening. And I think still, even recently, there are many babies who can remember their previous lives. This is happening in different countries in the West, besides Tibet and India in the East. Even though lots of children are experiencing this, because it is not explained in the books that are taught at school, only because of it not being read or explained, that just limits other people's understanding. It just stops us from understanding or believing that there is such an experience, such a wisdom that can remember previous lives, such a mind that can remember previous lives. Because it is not explained in the books we read or taught in school, even though there are people who have real experience and there is no mistake in their understanding, still we think they are crazy.

In New York before, I met an old lady who can tell future and past lives. She reads hands, she can kind of foretell, she reads hands for fortunes. She wanted to see very badly, so we discussed a little bit and I asked her, with my curious mind, whether she can see, remember any past and future lives. She is quite an old lady and she said she could recognize, she could tell other people their past and future lives. I did not ask her about my past and future life! But she said she usually does not tell people in the West that she knows, that she can tell their past and future lives, otherwise she told me that she would be recognized as crazy person. You know, sort of a sick person, a crazy person although she foretells past and future lives. She said, “Usually, I don’t talk about these things, only the present life.” Also she said that she feels a little bit embarrassed, kind of upset. In India, in the East, she found people who have a higher level of mind, she found more realized people than in the West. She said for most of the people in the West, the mind is low level and that’s why she feels upset. I’m not sure.

So anyway, there are many other examples like this that happened, and also I think many people know also stories from different countries, talking about past lives of different babies, children. And there are many stories in Tibet about reincarnated lamas. Anyway, even though that is mentioned, people would think that it only exists for Tibetan people who practice Dharma, but maybe not in the West. There are examples like this.

The most important thing, when you find it difficult to accept, is to check with these questions, try to check up. Such as the time—who has created, who has fixed such time for the baby. Whether the baby has fixed time or the parents have fixed time and who has created the time, who has created the time, that specific time. That’s very important.

And one most important thing to check up is this instinctive feeling of “I.” Check whether this feeling of the I came from our mother or whether this feeling of I came from our father; whether it is a combination of the father’s I and the mother’s I, or whether it came from both people. Check up like this. Check up like this.

If we think, if we easily agree, if we come to the solution that the feeling of I comes from our parents—possible, possible; if it is seen this way, that’s possible. We did not check up so far, but it’s possible to easily believe that it comes from our parents. Then think: if this feeling is part of our parents, the instinctive feeling of I, then this feeling should be our father’s; this concept, the feeling would be our father’s. Then we would be the father, we would become the father. Same way, if the instinctive I is part of the mother’s conception of I, then we would be the mother.

For instance, like this, no matter that parents have that many number of children, all their feelings of I would have come from the parents, part of that. Then all the children would be the parents. They all would be the parents. They would just have different bodies but they would all be the parents. Just with more bodies. Then it looks like the parents are born from parents. We are born from ourselves. This is a very interesting thing and very interesting to check up. So, you can think like this.

When you check up alone the feeling of I, the time, perhaps study like this, how the continuation of today’s mind came from yesterday’s mind. The continuation of the mind, this present year is continued from the previous year. That previous year, the mind continuity of the previous year, is continued from another previous year. And then you try to go back, try to remember the last year, how you were at that time. Try to remember last year, then after that try to remember before last

year. Try to go back if you can remember, year by year. Then try to remember, go back to baby time, when you started to talk. Then try to think of the time you were in your mother's womb. Try to go back.

Then that time ask whether the mind came from your parents, whether your mind came from the previous life; whether the mind came without depending, without being caused by the parents' mind—like this try to check. Perhaps you can remember your previous lives! Anyway, then again check. If you think the mind came from the previous life, then again think where did the first mind come from, if it came from another previous life, and try to go back like this. Try to see if there is a beginning, a specific time where your mind has begun.

Then also you can check with the feeling of I, where it came from. What makes us to have this feeling, instinctively there, without the need of being taught by parents, taught by teachers. It is already there. What caused it? Try to check like this.

I think especially the new people should try this meditation. Those who have taken courses before—those who have been meditating on the graduated path in daily life, who have been meditating on a different meditation subject—those people can meditate on the graduated path, whatever meditation you usually try to practice, according to the level of your mind. If you are trying to practice the first part, meditation on the perfect human rebirth, then you make meditation on that. Whatever part you are training your mind in, from that subject you can try to meditate.

And then, it can be possible that even if you took courses before, you never tried to meditate during this time. Possibly you forgot the meditation, even though you tried the one-month course before. Then you can do meditation on breathing. The breathing meditation, first breathing meditation then, if you can remember the subject of meditation, you can do meditation on that subject of the graduated path. If you don't do that, if you find that difficult, then just concentrate on the breath, breathing concentration, purifying breathing meditation.

For new people, the first thing is checking, checking the mind's continuity, like this, as we have just explained. Checking whether the mind came from the parent's mind, whether it was caused by the past or present body, or whether it came from the baby's previous life. And also check the feeling of I.

Lecture 2

Whether religious or non-religious, we are all the same: we all desire happiness and do not desire suffering. The one who desires ultimate happiness, such as enlightenment, has to depend on practicing Dharma. Without depending on Dharma there is no way to achieve any of these goals. Even for someone who is irreligious, who doesn't have any teachings, who doesn't practice the teachings, any happiness that they desire—the happiness of this temporal life, the happiness of having perfect material enjoyments, the temporal happiness of having good reputation, mental pleasures, physical pleasures—any pleasures that irreligious person experiences are all rooted in the Dharma. All those pleasures arise from the Dharma. Another way of saying this is from a positive

cause, from a virtuous cause—the action that is virtue and the creator of the action which is the virtue.

Therefore at this time, especially for us, who are not satisfied with temporal comfort, who are not happy with the temporal comfort that we have been enjoying so far and who are seeking greater happiness, greater peace, which is transcendent to the ordinary, temporal happiness, which lasts forever, of course it is extremely important to create the correct cause, which is not mistaken, as we have the chance and as we want to achieve everlasting happiness.

In order to make our suffering less in the future and to have a better and better life, more and more peaceful and happy, and to cease all the sufferings completely; all that depends on our present daily life actions, how we do the daily life actions, how we create the daily life actions, whether all the daily life actions become virtuous or evil. Even if we wish for this or have plans like this, whether it works or not, whether it will happen or not, depends on our action or our practice, how we lead our daily life.

The present action, what we are doing now, listening to Dharma, needs a pure motivation. So it is necessary to have at least a short motivation, like this:

“It is not sufficient that only I am released from the suffering realm, which is bound by delusion and karma. Numberless sentient beings are suffering without having the method to solve the problems, without having guidance. Not having wisdom, Dharma wisdom, to know what the right action is and what the wrong action is. In order to enlighten them and release them from suffering, I must achieve enlightenment first. Therefore, I must complete the whole graduated path to enlightenment. Therefore I am going to listen to the profound teaching on the commentary of the graduated path to enlightenment.”

This commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment is a Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate beings to enlightenment and is well-expounded by the great philosophers Nagarjuna and Asanga. It is a profound teaching, as though the essence of the magnificent, unequaled great pandit Atisha and the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa’s knowledge, the essence of the knowledge was taken out. It includes all the essence of the 84,000 teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, without omitting anything. All of these teachings were arranged for the graduated practice of the path to achievement of enlightenment.

This knowledge has four outlines. We have already talked of:

1. Knowledge of the authors, in order to show the pure reference.
2. Knowledge of the teachings, in order to arise devotion, the benefits of studying this knowledge, of practicing this teaching, the lamrim.
3. Listening and explaining these teachings.

I often repeat an explanation of the motivation at the beginning of the teachings. For instance, if you can, try to understand this example of the patient. We have often been patients in our life, we have been patients many times by getting sick, by having different diseases; many times we became patients. Why did we become patients? That problem was not created by God, not created by some other person, it’s not something that happens without a reason or happens without a cause. Getting

sick is a causative thing; it is caused by something. It is no-one's fault; it is only our own fault, only the patient's fault, and we can always find something that causes it.

If we check up, if we are fully aware of our actions, especially of our past actions, if we really understand, many times we can find that when we do the action, we are not aware—I'm just talking in a general way, not talking about karma—generally many times we get sick, many times we get a disease, diarrhea or a headache, teeth pain, always something, always there are different things happening. If our mind is a little bit aware, a little bit clearer, then we should think, check back, "What mistake did I make in my actions?" When we check back, we can try to think what caused it; the wrong actions that brought the trouble.

Usually we kind of check up the conditions: "Oh, it's because I have been eating many candies, drinking many Coca-Colas on picnics, at parties." Or for a long time walking, wandering around on the ground or mountains, sitting for a long time on cold and wet ground. "Maybe that must have caused so much gas in my stomach! Then maybe it was because at that party I ate a lot of meat; that's why I have pain." Things like that. Anyway, sometimes we check and find certain things like this, certain actions of which we were not aware at the time but afterwards, when the problem comes, by checking we remember. "That was a mistake." We check like this.

But what the patient discovers is not the main cause. This is not the main cause that brought the problem, the disease; it's not the main cause. We didn't discover the main cause; our mind is not aware, is still ignorant. It didn't mean we fully discovered the principal cause of that disease. Even though we were accurate, it was correct, that was just a condition which brought the problem. It was not the main cause, not the real cause. When we remember something, a mistake in our behavior—eating or sleeping or doing something in our daily life—when we remember something, then we know that it is our own fault. In that way we know, we understand that it is our own fault, our mistake.

Like this example, there are other mistakes. This is not the real mistake; what we usually find is not the real, the worst mistake. The real mistake, which brings the disease, is another cause. There is something else which was created in the past without us knowing, without being aware.

For instance, the suffering. If there is no mind, can suffering exist? Can one experience suffering without mind? How is the body suffering?

Student: How do you mean "one"? Are you meaning that one is the body or one is the mind?

Rinpoche: When you cut your nails do you get pain?

Student: No.

Rinpoche: Why?

Student: You cut them where you know there are no nerves.

Student Two: Are the nerves mind?

Rinpoche: What do you mean by nerves?

Student: The message-carriers in the physical body; whatever it is that carries pain.

Rinpoche: Whatever it is that carries pain? Your body doesn't carry pain?

Student: Yeah, but it travels along certain channels in the body.

Rinpoche: So your body carries pain?

Student: The channels on the body carry the pain to the mind. No?

Rinpoche: Why do you allow your body to carry pain?

Student: Why allow it? If you don't, then you might damage it, damage your ligaments or something.

Rinpoche: Carrying pain; isn't that the problem?

Student: It's a problem if the body is being damaged; it's a physical problem.

Rinpoche: I'm saying to damage the body itself is pain, isn't it? So why allow the body to carry pain?

Student: I don't. I always stretch my legs out.

Student Two: I didn't allow my body to carry pain, so that ...

Rinpoche: You didn't allow, let your body carry pain? What about you? Do you allow your body to carry pain?

Student: No, no, I don't. Wait a minute, if I feel pain, I alleviate it. If I feel pain, I take the necessary action to take the pain away. If I'm cold, I put something on.

Rinpoche: But why didn't you try to not have the pain? Why didn't you make to not have the pain, rather than to have the pain and stretch?

Student: Because that takes up too much energy.

Rinpoche: If you don't have the pain, you don't have to stretch your legs too.

Student: Because you have to fight it and that takes up a lot of energy. You have to concentrate on it.

Rinpoche: I'm saying that if you make to not have pain, you don't have to stretch your legs and use much energy.

Nick: What Rinpoche is saying is why do we allow ourselves to be susceptible to suffering pain at all? Why are we vulnerable?

Student: You have to preserve the body to keep it healthy.

Nick: But why?

Rinpoche: Not keeping healthy. Because with the body you have pain it means you are not keeping the body healthy. [*Student:* That's right.] So you are allowing pain, not taking care means allowing pain. [*Student:* That's right. No, that's not right!] So, why do you do two things: having pain and stretching the legs? Either leave stretching the legs or leave the pain!

Actually, if you really check up it is a childish thing, or like sleeping. The whole problem of having pain is created by yourself and you put much effort, finding difficulty curing the pain and working very hard to cure the pain. All that is unnecessary double work. If you have made up your mind and body completely to not have pain at all, no sickness at all, then there is no need for medicine, no need to worry about not being cured and such as operations, the many things you have to experience, all these don't have to be done.

So what I am saying is that without the mind, there is no way for suffering to exist. For instance, just now someone said that when we cut our nails we don't feel pain. Didn't someone say that? I'm not sure whether someone said it or I said it. That means, actually, why the physical body suffers is because the mind is in suffering. When a nail is [hammered] into the plants or those non-living things, they don't have pain, similarly, the body has no pain if there is no mind. So the suffering is an internal factor. That internal factor, the principal cause of the suffering, is not matter; that is something that is rooted in the mind.

But then the question: if that is the fault of having mind, then maybe the method is to try to cease the mind, to cut off the mind. But having mind, also that method of trying to cease the mind, trying to stop the mind is a meaningless, effortless, result-less method. It is impossible to cease the mind, to completely cut off the mind, to make it no longer have continuity.

So the actual mistake, the actual cause is in the mind. For instance, some of us, however much we try to be aware in the daily life conditions—eating, going out, taking care of the body with external conditions—however much we take the best care, trying to be aware “this one harms this, this one harms this and that,” however much we try to take care, there are problems, either mental or physical pains. These and other sufferings arise, which we have to experience.

Like this clear example, no matter how much we take care, everyone has to go through death. No matter how much we try to take care from enemies, from the elements, fire and water, and other dangers. No matter how much we try, everyone has to experience this life's problems of decay, the body becoming decayed. There are many things, many things.

However, what the Dharma offers, the understanding of the word Dharma, how listening to Dharma brings us to everlasting happiness, the cessation of suffering, is because firstly, the foundation, Dharma, is like a mirror. It shows all our mistakes, all our wrong actions, wrong thoughts, which have been causing all these sufferings from beginningless previous lives until now, and also in the future.

Why the general education, worldly knowledge does not offer ultimate happiness, why it does not explain, why it does not show a path, why we cannot solve problems, especially the mind problems, why we cannot cut off problems completely, not to have any more, is because worldly education, worldly knowledge does not offer the knowledge that understands mistakes. That worldly

knowledge does not explain deeply the mistakes we make, the wrong thoughts which produce wrong actions and the resultant suffering. So, however much of that knowledge we have, however much we study, we keep on making mistakes in daily life, with wrong conceptions, with a mind full of wrong conceptions, not knowing [our nature], the nature of the mind.

The life is spent like this. No matter how much we spend our life getting educated, because of not recognizing our wrong conceptions, not eradicating our wrong conceptions, the mistaken actions, we keep on making mistakes in this life. Same thing in the future life, same thing in other future lives—we always carry on like this. This life is how we have been from beginningless lifetimes until now. Always we take care of ourselves; we try to solve one problem but then another problem comes. We try to stop this, then again confusion comes. So we are always full of confusion. How we try to stop the problems is temporary; like the disease or any problem, the method that we have been using only helps temporarily but not completely, it doesn't cease completely.

The Dharma first of all reflects just like a mirror. A mirror shows our body, whether ugly or beautiful, whether it has a black spot. Just like a mirror, Dharma shows all the wrong conceptions that we have and all the wrong actions that can be produced by following the wrong conceptions. So, first of all, what Dharma shows is this, by listening to the Dharma we understand this, by thinking and understanding the meaning of what is explained in the Dharma and then by meditating, we recognize, we can really, clearly recognize each of the wrong conceptions. We can clearly recognize how they are false, how all these wrong conceptions are really false.

At this moment, we really think it is true, we believe it is really true; whatever the wrong conception tells us, whatever it says, we believe. We completely trust and believe in it. It is just like our friend who is a spy, but we don't recognize them as a spy. They want to give us trouble, put us in prison, punishing us or something, but they tell us beautiful words and they behave like a good friend. So we have complete trust in them, we completely believe in them, we completely believe they are our best friend who will never betray us, who can never betray our life. So, very soon we get into problems and our life becomes complicated by being betrayed by our friend, who is a spy.

There are many wrong conceptions, but attachment especially is just like that kind of spy. What attachment does is it only bring unhappiness. Because we don't recognize the wrong conceptions, we don't recognize the shortcomings of the wrong conceptions, how they bring problems; this we don't recognize. Such a person as us, with that level of mind, is completely ignorant in recognizing the different wrong conceptions and the result of wrong conceptions, how they create problems for us.

So what Dharma teaches or shows first is this. Then on the basis of this, Dharma teaches the method, how to cut off wrong conceptions, how to remove them.

This is what I am trying to say, my emphasis is this. So most of the time the Dharma will talk about our life, our mind, our faults or mistakes, and also how to make it beneficial for us.

If you think, for instance, you are looking in a mirror and you see your face is dirty, but you think that it is someone else's face. "My face is not that dirty; it is clean. It is someone else for sure." Like that kind of example, if you think these teachings—which talk so much about wrong conceptions, so much about the negative things, the wrong actions—are not for you, they are for someone else, that person whom you don't like. Keeping in your mind someone who is your enemy, you think

“That is for him,” sort of like that. Dharma is not like this. If it is like this, the teaching doesn’t directly benefit your mind; it doesn’t make you recognize your wrong conceptions, your faults.

When you listen to teachings, the more faults you find in your mind, the more wrong conceptions you find in your mind, that is the benefit of the teaching, that is the purpose of listening to the teaching. That means you understand the teaching, as you recognize more and more of your mistakes. That is the way, that is the first step, the first thing; to develop Dharma knowledge, to start in the path to enlightenment and everlasting happiness. That is the first thing.

For instance, in order to cure the patient’s sickness, without the doctor recognizing what is wrong with the patient, without first recognizing the sickness, how can they give medicine? The first thing in order to cure the sickness, the very first thing, is to recognize the sickness, what type of sickness it is. Then we can take the medicine. So, it is just like this. The attachment is very strong, it doesn’t want to be told “You are negative!” It doesn’t want to hear negative things. It always expects to hear good things. Correct? Maybe it is only so for me! We always expect to hear something good. “Oh, you are so good, you are so this and that, you are so clever, wise, intelligent.” We always expect good things, we never expect bad things.

That’s how attachment cheats us. If we believe what the attachment says, that’s how attachment cheats us completely. That’s how the attachment deceives us to not receive the ultimate happiness, to not get into the path. It makes us go through the circle, with attachment creating wrong actions, again suffering the resultant confusion, then again with this wrong conception, attachment, we create wrong actions. Like this, it always circles around.

Student: Rinpoche, would we help or hinder each other if we pointed out each other’s attachments? Is that a help or a hindrance?

Rinpoche: I think that is fantastic! But many people have the problem of not recognizing what attachment is. So actually, it is useful checking like this: check your own problem, check your own negative mind, check how it is in the nature of attachment, how it is in the nature of pride. As you have a problem, try to recognize it, try to feel it. Try to recognize whether its nature is peaceful or non-peaceful, how it is. It is useful to try to explain to each other, very useful.

I think I’ll read the checking meditation, some emphasis on page 26.

Also, one thing for people who listen to the following subject, who have done other courses: it is important when the pride comes, it is important to check up whether you have the realization of the meditation, whether the realization is achieved or not. Even though you have the realization, you cannot have pride. Pride is always the non-peaceful mind; the nature of pride is non-peaceful. This is very clear. You can feel it if you are aware, if you check up. When you have pride you are not happy, if you really check up you are not happy. The mind is really very unhappy, very uncomfortable when you have very strong pride. No matter how much realization you have, how much higher realization you have; actually, how it is supposed to be is that as you have higher realization you should have less pride. That is what has to happen. If there is no realization achieved then that shows the need for practice, the need for understanding.

Also one thing is this: taking a one-month meditation course doesn’t mean anything. Of course there will be a difference between hearing Dharma and not hearing any Dharma, but just for one

month making meditation, putting effort into meditation, just by that you cannot receive ultimate happiness so easily. Just that cannot cut off all the wrong conceptions. These wrong conceptions are something that have always been in the mind from beginningless previous lifetimes, which don't have a beginning or a certain period when they started. No such thing. So you should not expect, you should not think that they can be very easily removed by doing meditation for seven days, for one month or a short time. For instance, by putting drops of honey on the acid-tasting plant that is growing in the garden, you cannot make it sweet. Putting drops of honey each day cannot make the plant with an acid taste become sweet. So, just like this, you have to make a long-term plan.

Of course generally, how quickly we realize the meditation is not the same for everyone. It depends on our level of intelligence, it depends on our practice and understanding, and it depends also on how much purification we do. Generally the meditation that we do is purification, but it is very helpful to have the Guru Shakyamuni yoga purification, the visualization of Guru Shakyamuni purification. This is very helpful and very powerful; we need help in order to actualize the meditation, to cut off, to remove the wrong conceptions. So it also depends on how much purification we do.

The length of time it takes is not the same for everyone. But generally it's necessary from your side to make a long-term plan, like: "I'm going to do this, since this negative mind is false and always brings problems. How can I always keep doing this? How can I always be with this? I must cut it off, and by doing one action, by following the path, by practicing the Dharma, I must achieve ultimate happiness."

Once we receive that [ultimate happiness], we never have to work; we never have to follow from the beginning of the path; we have nothing to worry about. Once we have done this action it is finished, not like the worldly actions, which we keep on doing. Just like when we eat food, the food runs out; then again we eat food and again the food runs out; always circling around, it never finishes, never ends. This life is not the first one. The experience of this life is like eating, we keep on eating and taking out; this is not the first thing, we are always circling, it never finishes. Also working for food never finishes.

Dharma work is not like this, it is completely different. Dharma work, once we do it, once we complete it, it is finished. But the samsaric work, the worldly work, never finishes. Worldly work, which is done with attachment, with the three negative minds, the three poisonous minds, never finishes at any time, however much we carry on in this.

Therefore, it is worthwhile from our side to make long-term plans: "I'm definitely, even if it takes many lifetimes, even though it takes one hundred lifetimes, a billion lifetimes, I have to get out, I have to cut off all the wrong conceptions and receive enlightenment to benefit other sentient beings." Such a plan, such beneficial thought is necessary for us and for all sentient beings.

Also one thing, during this one month you should try to meditate and put as much effort as possible. Try to put all your energy, physical and mental, mostly mind energy, into meditation. Try very hard during this one month because one thing is this: if you look at your daily life, there is no time from beginning of the day to nighttime, there is no time. When the meditation course finishes, you will have no time to meditate. It's difficult. For instance, if you check back, after taking those previous meditation courses, whether you have been meditating every day even for one hour a day,

even one hour—even to find just one hour to make meditation every day, even that is extremely difficult.

So how can the mind be developed? The whole time goes. The whole time finishes by talking from the morning time, and by eating. Even though we are at home in the morning and nighttime, the time goes like this. There is so much distraction, so much distraction from our side and from other people, but mainly from our side. Many times we make the distracting thoughts. The main cause of distraction is within our mind, so sometimes we make other people distract us, we cause other people to disturb us. Then sometimes maybe we complain also. This is very clear.

For these reasons we should not feel pride and we should put effort when there is a chance to meditate for one day or for one month. Also, thinking of our life, if we have millions of years to live that is something else. Even if we don't achieve complete mind control, even if we are not released from all suffering in this life before our death, we should make some progression in this life. It is necessary to do something good, which makes this life meaningful. We should develop the mind as much as possible and try to make it as pure as possible. What I mean by "develop" is to try to make it as pure as possible. That is the only solution. That is the only way and it is a solution to bring peace either in this life or in our future life, the ultimate happiness or enlightenment.

Student: There is a slight confusion in language, there are three words: pain, suffering and fear. You use the word "suffering" and that either means pain or fear. That produces confusion; I think if you were to use the words "pain" or "fear" instead of "suffering" we would understand it much better.

Rinpoche: I use different words, I just use different words. We have pain, but keep in mind that the whole suffering is pain. Keep that in mind and then it doesn't become confusing.

Student: But that's a physical thing, if you've got your finger in a flame, you've got to pull it out. Everybody knows that.

Rinpoche: I don't mean only pain, you know.

Student: Mental pain is fear.

Rinpoche: I don't mean only the physical pain; I mean mainly the mind illness. That's also pain. But do you recognize all the wrong conceptions? Do you recognize your mind? You don't know? I see. Without knowing, how do you pull yourself out of wrong conceptions, out of the danger of wrong conceptions?

Student: I reckon that wrong conceptions are all from the root of fear. Not from pain but from fear.

Rinpoche: The usual fear that you have—you mean the fear you usually feel? What they are is all the wrong conceptions.

Student: Well, that's one word to describe all the things that motivate us in the wrong direction. That's the thing to overcome. Wrong conceptions come from fear, attachment comes from fear, wrong conceptions come from fear.

Rinpoche: So why is there fear? Why do you keep fear?

Student: I don't know. That's a good question, I don't know. If we got rid of fear we would be all right, wouldn't we? It's dangerous but it's not like pain. If we ignore pain we might damage our body, but if we get rid of fear it might be alright, I don't know.

[General discussion]

Rinpoche: Anyway, you check up. Your meditation is to check up why you have fear, the cause of fear. If you fall down from up there, you have fear. Why are you afraid of that? It would be worth checking, why there is fear.

Anyway, without cutting off the wrong conception, without cutting off the ignorance, without avoiding the negative actions, there is always fear. As long as these two friends of mine are not cut off, there is always fear. Why is there fear? Because of not having mind control is another way of saying it. What the Dharma does, what the Dharma practice or meditation does is, by cutting off all the wrong conceptions, it stops all the fears. There are different types of fears. Anyway, generally saying, fear is produced from the wrong conception, which projects the wrong view.

Also many times in our daily life fear comes by not really recognizing the nature of the object. By believing the projection, by believing the wrong view of the wrong conception, the false view of the wrong conception, then fear comes. So therefore, in a worldly way, in the worldly life, no matter if we try to stop the fear, it doesn't help; none of those methods cuts off the wrong conception. So, however much we try, the fear never gets stopped; always there is another fear coming. Once the Dharma practice is accomplished, all the fear gets stopped because Dharma completely cuts off the wrong conceptions.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 80]

Checking meditation: We, who lack the wisdom of seeing ... the belief that checking meditation is required only while listening to discourses and not during meditation sessions.

Generally, I'll just talk a little bit about the guru, the teacher, just a little emphasis. To fully follow the graduated path to enlightenment depends on the teacher who has the experience or perfect understanding of the path. Without that, only reading Dharma books—expecting to receive realization, expecting to receive enlightenment—it is impossible to receive enlightenment, it is impossible to receive the whole realization. It is impossible without depending on the guru. Also, not only that; that is the main thing but there are many subjects, much to talk about and it is very deep. There are many levels at which to talk and it is very deep. Why, without depending on the guru you can't receive the whole realization of the graduated path, you can't receive enlightenment. Maybe some other time it can be discussed.

Generally, teachings that have been received from the right teacher have more effect on your mind, more benefit to your mind. Also you receive a better, right understanding because you receive the right explanation with the right understanding. If you read by yourself and try to understand by yourself, then as your mind is so much obscured there is much danger of getting wrong conceptions.

Also many teachings are literally written. There are many subjects that you have to understand beyond what the words say, how the words appear. Even these days, many people study Dharma

but by not having the right explanations, not having the right teachers, due to their own ignorance, due to many things, people develop wrong conceptions by reading books, by reading different texts.

In the Buddhadharma it is explained that there are different qualifications, and what qualifications are necessary even to follow the Lesser Vehicle path, what qualifications the teacher should have. Also to follow the Mahayana path, what qualifications the teacher should have; and the tantric path, what kind of qualifications the teacher should have. As the path gets higher and higher, so the teacher who shows the path has to have higher and higher qualifications, deeper knowledge. To talk about that knowledge is not necessary now, at this time, and also each qualification, each knowledge involves much explanation. Therefore, this is just an introduction, sort of a very simple way of talking, just to have some idea.

Even the teacher who leads the disciple in the Lesser Vehicle path, if possible, should have the three fundamental, basic qualifications, the knowledge of the three higher trainings:

1. Conduct, which involves living in the morality,
2. Having knowledge of concentration such as *shamatha*, one-pointed meditation; having completed one-pointed concentration, and
3. Wisdom, which is called *vipassana*.

You may think vipassana has a different meaning from what I say. Vipassana is based on the realization of shamatha, realizing absolute nature. So it may be different vipassana from what you have been hearing.

These are the fundamental qualifications necessary for the teacher to have in order to lead disciples in the Lesser Vehicle path. Generally, it is like this.

There are about ten qualifications that are necessary for the perfect teacher who shows the Mahayana teaching to have, as is said by Maitreya, the buddha who will come after Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's period of teachings is finished. After the change of a certain eon, after many ages, then Maitreya Buddha, the future Buddha, will be founder of the future Buddhadharma in the world.

Maitreya said in his teaching, the text called *Do de gyen*:

The teacher is subdued and well-pacified, having greater knowledge, having energy and having many oral, verbal teachings, having compassion and avoiding a tired or upset mind.

Not having a tired mind, not feeling tired when the disciple wants teachings, not feeling so tired, not feeling kind of upset. Avoiding being upset or tired when they are asked to give teachings, because if they have that then the disciple doesn't get teachings; it is a hindrance.

So first, regarding the teacher we should rely on, we should depend on, this is the perfect qualification necessary to have in someone who shows us the Mahayana path, the perfect Mahayana teacher. It is like this.

In order to subdue other people's minds we have to subdue our own mind. With our own mind subdued then we can subdue other people's minds, that's how it comes. The first quality, being subdued, means living in the discipline ourselves, therefore our actions of speech, body and mind are subdued.

Subdued: abstained from negative actions;

Pacified: having a pacified mind away from mental distractions;

Well-pacified: having the achievement of vipassana realization;

Having great knowledge: the disciple may have these three realizations, living in the disciplines, having those realizations, but the teacher has greater knowledge than the disciple;

Having energy;

Knowing many teachings, having many verbal teachings;

Having realization of absolute nature;

Skillful in leading the disciple's mind in the graduated path to enlightenment;

Having compassion: if there's no compassion then they don't give teachings, they are not concerned for others, not concerned to release others from delusion, there is no concern to give teachings, therefore it is necessary to have compassion;

There can be no tired mind, when they are asked to give teachings.

Whoever has this knowledge is the perfect Mahayana teacher. Then again there is the tantra teacher, the Vajrayana teacher; they have higher qualifications, much deeper. There is so much to talk about and it also contains the subject of tantra.

Generally it is extremely difficult to find a perfectly qualified teacher. Also many times it is difficult because even though they are perfect, many times we cannot see them; our limited mind does not see that they are living in these qualifications. It is difficult for us to see that. How is it difficult to see that they are living in all these qualifications, all these realizations? That is because usually when we see people, we discriminate according to our wrong conceptions. The mind is a projector. Just as when we put on dark glasses, if there is shade, then we see every object, other people, as sort of dark, sort of black. We discriminate everyone is black, every object is not white but black, sort of like this. Usually we ordinary people have this problem. Therefore it is difficult to find a perfect teacher and even if there is, we don't recognize things like this; difficult to find.

If we make a mistake in finding the teacher, the guide on whom we completely rely all our life, on whom we completely rely—when we completely entrust our mind to them and we rely on them, on this method, we completely entrust also our body and all the rest of the things. Therefore that guide, that first thing, to find the perfect, correct, unmistakable teacher is the most important thing because receiving enlightenment, receiving ultimate happiness, the whole thing depends on the guide, the guide whom we have found. It depends on that. If that is wrong then everything becomes wrong, everything that we do by following them all becomes a mistake. On the basis of receiving wrong conceptions and by following the wrong conceptions, it wastes the whole life, not only this life but by wasting this life also many other future lives will be similar, very complicated and continuously having wrong conceptions, and in that way complicated.

[Question inaudible]

Rinpoche: ...so that's why it's called degenerated. The Dharma won't exist.

Student: This is going to go on for a long time, is that right? It's got a lot of degenerating to do yet?

Rinpoche: Yeah, I don't remember exactly, it can be several thousand years. There are a certain number of years; it is explained in the teachings but I don't remember. I can't put in English the total number, but I think several thousand years.

So then the question is, if generally this time is a very degenerated time and so it is very difficult for people to see teachers having that much knowledge and realization, if in so many ways it is difficult, then how to find the teacher? Even if the teacher doesn't have all the knowledge that is explained by Maitreya, even just having five: the first three, conduct, concentration and wisdom, and having compassion—having compassion is very important—and having the perfect understanding of absolute nature. At least how to find a teacher who doesn't lead the life in the wrong way, who doesn't make us mislead the life?

Student: Excuse me Rinpoche, wouldn't it depend on your karma whether or not you ended up with a person who was going to further your development or the wrong one who was going to set you back again? Wouldn't it depend on your past thoughts and your karma, which teacher you ended up with?

Rinpoche: Sure, sure, yes. It depends on karma, yes.

Student: So then it almost negates the necessity to work out which one. Maybe you work to the best of your ability, but the fact is that your fate is leading you towards one.

Rinpoche: Sure. So, even though there is a perfect teacher, we don't see them as perfect, we don't feel anything. Because of our previous times we didn't have contact or there is no karma created to take the teachings from them, even though they are highly qualified. There are many things like this. Lots of times, even though they are enlightened, there are a lot of wrong conceptions, there are a lot of distractions in our mind which disturb us to not take teachings, which find faults and mistakes in them. So, because of that we don't take teachings. That is mainly due to karma, yes.

There are stories, but I don't remember them. There are stories about the great yogis such as Marpa, Milarepa's guru. Marpa came from the upper place of Tibet to take teachings from the great pandit who had achieved very high realizations, the great yogi called Naropa who received enlightenment in the lifetime. I think Naropa, this great yogi had all the realizations and, as he had all the realizations, he had many other initiations and many teachings of the specific deities that he had achieved. So Marpa, somehow he had much strong karma, a strong feeling with this deity called Hevajra. Somehow in Tibet he had such a strong kind of wish to follow these teachings, to meditate and to practice these teachings.

First of all he came to Nepal and took teachings from some other Tibetan lama who went to India and learned Indian language and other things. First of all he studied under him. But that teacher only taught him language and didn't teach him much Dharma. I think that teacher was the same as him, so he came to Nepal and also took teachings from other gurus on the tantra teachings.

When he was coming from Tibet he had a friend who also wanted to go to India to learn Dharma, to receive initiations, but with a different teacher, not Naropa, but some other very highly realized yogi. Marpa asked him if he wanted to take teachings from Naropa. He said, "Naropa used to

explain teachings very much before, giving many commentaries and things like this. But now I have heard that he has given up these things and only takes the form of the life eating, sleeping and making *kaka* and *pipi*.” This is a specific Tibetan title called *Kusulu*. He said that Naropa was like this, therefore he was not going to take teachings from him. So that way of thinking disturbed him to take teachings from Naropa.

So they came to Nepal together but Marpa took teachings from other teachers and again there was a kind of similar thing, and his friend didn’t get to take teachings or to be at that place. The place where Marpa met the teacher in Nepal, they were having pujas, special tantric pujas and his friend didn’t want to go. Even though they came together from Tibet, somehow he didn’t have the karma to be there, so he didn’t face the teacher. Then they went together to India.

In Nepal, Marpa attended the puja and the friend didn’t attend the puja; somehow he had a different kind of thinking. Marpa’s attending the puja became helpful in taking teachings from the other teacher. Then they went to India and Marpa, after taking teachings from Naropa, taking many initiations, explained to Naropa that he had a friend, a companion from Tibet but that the friend had no plans to take teachings from Naropa.

Naropa said, “I have no karmic contact.” Marpa’s guru, this highly realized yogi said, “He doesn’t come because there is no karmic contact with him; therefore he doesn’t come to take teachings.” Anyway, there is much long story. So also how it works, these things depend on karma. Also, with whom you have karmic contact, the teachings, the relationship lasts longer and the teachings are more beneficial to the mind. Things like that are possible.

So to find a guru in the Mahayana way, even though we don’t see that they have all the knowledge, at least in such a degenerated time they should have this qualification at least. Even though they don’t have all the realizations, all the understanding of the Dharma, they should be qualified by the thought of cherishing others more than themselves, concerned with others more than themselves, thinking others more important than themselves. At least they should have this thought. Then there is no danger of leading the disciple’s life in the wrong way, there’s no such thing as leading the disciple to create negative karma, leading the disciple to create wrong actions, to waste time or life. Or even though they practice Dharma by being involved with actions for self, which is a hindrance to receiving enlightenment, which is a hindrance to receive the Mahayana path. However, there’s no danger if the teacher has this qualification of being more concerned for others than themselves.

At least, the very last thing, the most important thing, the fundamental thing that is necessary: the Dharma teacher should be more concerned for the future life than for this life. If they are only concerned for this life, how to take care of this life, how to do this life, if they are only concerned for the temporal happiness of this life, then the disciple also becomes the same. Whatever influence they receive from the teacher, they also become involved in the same way. So that kind of teacher, who is only concerned for the happiness of this temporal life, makes the disciple also concerned only for the temporal happiness of this life. Then in this way all their life is just the same as an animal’s life or just the same as an ordinary person’s life. It doesn’t make any difference; all their actions, all their efforts to gain temporal happiness of this life are all wrong actions. It only increases the negative mind, more attachment. Nothing of this becomes pure Dharma by following that kind of teacher who lets the disciple make business and do all kinds of things like this, only concerned with this life.

On the other hand, meditation is important, following the path is important to receive enlightenment, these things are important. But also in the beginning we need to be sure, to check and to be sure, to be careful, that is the most important thing.

[Dedication]

At two o'clock then again do the breathing meditation and watching the mind.

Lecture 3

The guru you follow should at least be someone who doesn't expect materials, someone who is only concerned about release from samsara, the bondage of suffering, by giving teaching and explaining these things. You can sort of put it to the test with things like that. If the mind is involved in not living in the practice but avoiding it, then what happens is that the disciple becomes the same; it is difficult because it becomes the same impression, the same print, the same picture, usually like this. Like a block, whatever is carved there, whatever picture is there, beautiful or ugly, useful or whatever, it gets copied. Like this it comes. At least [the guru should be free of] attachment, avoiding the actions that are done only to gain temporal happiness of this life.

So checking this way is the most important thing. Usually in modern times people don't know how to check up like this—we only check who has more reputation, who is more famous, who has more possessions, who is better looking, things like that, and we follow that person. With such a conception we follow without really checking the benefits of their teachings or without really checking the guru's life, their life's practice, how they lead others and benefit them. Without checking—there are many things, the guru may be very wise in poems, sort of speaking well, things like that, many other things—not really checking whether they definitely benefit us and help reduce or diminish the ignorance, hatred and attachment.

If the teachings we are receiving or the meditations we are practicing become the remedy to these delusions then definitely, if we do that, definitely it can benefit. It will be worthwhile and will benefit to the extent that we can do that meditation or form of practice. If it doesn't shake, if it doesn't change, if it doesn't make us recognize these poisonous minds as false thoughts, if it increases instead of decreasing them, there is something wrong in our practice.

For instance, the great pandit Atisha went to receive the teachings on bodhicitta from one of his gurus. Actually he had 153 gurus, I think, but Serlingpa, from whom he received the bodhicitta teachings, was special, in particular. Just by hearing Serlingpa's name, Atisha couldn't remain sitting on his bed. Just by hearing his name it made him get up from the bed because of such incredible deep devotion; just by hearing his name, all of a sudden it made him cry.

I'm not sure of the place where his guru Serlingpa initiated him. Maybe Indonesia, because his story says that he traveled by ship for twelve or six months. He traveled by ship for a long time, long time. I'm not sure whether Indonesia or Ceylon. He went with many other disciples, his own people.

Even though Serlingpa was very famous, his name very far-famed, Atisha didn't want to take teachings straight away, even though he had come so far. So before seeing him he talked to Guru Serlingpa's disciples about how they practice Dharma, how their daily life was and how the practice of Lama Serlingpa was; he checked in many ways whether it was pure or not.

Then Lama Serlingpa had a procession for Atisha, because Atisha was not an ordinary person, he was a prince. Lama Serlingpa's followers also made a procession for Atisha and then Atisha made offerings, a pot full of jewels, gold and other things. That was to make it auspicious, in order to receive any initiation or teachings from his guru Serlingpa as he wants. So afterwards he received many teachings on bodhicitta from his guru. He spent twelve years taking teachings on bodhicitta from his lama called Serlingpa.

This example, how the great pandit Atisha checked up on his guru Serlingpa, is how it should be. The guru should not be interested in receiving materials but interested in whether you practice Dharma, if you control your mind, if you discipline your speech, body and mind and try to diminish the delusions. At least the guru should be pleased by Dharma practice. All those previous gurus—all the lineage of these teachings, all the previous yogis, the previous great meditators—all their gurus were like this, not having interest in receiving materials but having interest in the other person having realization, living in Dharma practice.

Then from the disciple's side, once we have decided and take teaching, then we have to think of the guru as we think of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, as we respect Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The way of following the guru is just like we think of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. There is a way of following the guru, there are teachings on that, by knowing that we have to perfectly follow the guru.

Also the guru has to check the disciple before giving the teaching. Sometimes it's not always that the disciple has to request the guru. If the disciple is ready, sometimes it is possible that the guru gives teachings without them asking the guru, if their mind is ready. There are many stories of Guru Shakyamuni going to give teachings.

Also the disciple does not check, does not understand—there should not be such thoughts as this. The mind needs to be open. And the disciple has to have wisdom, knowing what is right and what is wrong, taking the good part, recognizing mistakes, having a mind capable of knowing these things, having wisdom.

Then having energy to seek and to practice Dharma; if there is no energy to seek or to practice Dharma, if we don't practice or continue to practice, then the teachings won't completely destroy all our delusions. The disciple has to make the teaching beneficial, has to make the teaching become the remedy to the delusions.

This is just a brief talk on the disciple and the guru.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 80–81]

If we spend our lives gossiping... This is called meditation.

Trying to make the mind become oneness with the object or become habituated with the object of meditation: that is the general meaning of meditation.

Buddhist meditation can be divided into two types: checking meditation and one-pointed meditation.

Most of the meditations on the graduated path are done in two ways: checking meditation and one-pointed meditation.

It is skillful to train in both, but many people of inferior intelligence suffer from the greatly illusory misconception that all meditation is that of one-pointedness ... Therefore it is important to first of all hear and then think about the correct subjects for the practice of meditation.

That means trying to understand the meaning of the subject. After you have the correct understanding, then make the checking meditation. Actualize like this.

As precious yogis have said, “He who meditates without first listening is like an armless rock climber.”

It is necessary to listen at the beginning. Try to receive the teaching as much as possible, because if we don't have wide understanding of Dharma, if we just know one meditation, one thing, one technique, our method is limited. Having one technique or meditation is not sufficient to solve all our life problems. As there are different problems in the mind, different levels of delusions, so also there are different paths that we have to follow. It is not wise, not skillful—the emphasis is this—it is not skillful or wise to try to be satisfied with one type of meditation, because there are other problems for which we have no method.

Also if we do not listen to different teachings, if we don't take much teaching, don't listen to many teachings, there can be many wrong conceptions. Even though we try to meditate, there can be many wrong conceptions in our meditations. There is a great danger of making mistakes in our meditation. Instead of receiving realizations, nothing happens. Then sometimes we can become kind of crazy; that can happen.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 81]

Listening to the Dharma is a greatly beneficial activity... ... The practice of the whole graduated path has three divisions, according to our level of intelligence.

I think since we are going to start the actual meditation on the graduated path from tomorrow, it is very useful, it is very important if we have the visualization of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, the Guru Shakyamuni yoga purification.

For receiving the realizations of the graduated path, just the meditation technique is not enough, not sufficient. There is a need for other help. The actual meditation is like the seed of the flower. Just having the seed planted without the help of the conditions such as the four elements—soil, wind, water and warmth—the seed alone cannot produce the stem, the flowers and fruit. The meditation is like the seed. To quickly receive the realizations of the graduated path depends on how strongly we purify the negative karma, the obscurations, how much we purify and pray to Guru Buddha.

There are three important things: purification, collecting the merits and praying to Guru Buddha—prayer means request—and then meditation. It is very important to understand these fundamental things. If the first two, purification and collecting merits, and the requesting prayer to Guru Buddha, are that much stronger, even if we don't do much meditation, the realization easily comes without taking much time; it comes without much difficulty.

There are so many stories of other meditators, how they easily received realizations by making purification, without the need of much meditation. There are many stories, which after some time can be told. For instance, the great yogi Milarepa received enlightenment in this lifetime. That is also because he made incredibly strong purification in his life; it is because of the power of that. Under the order of his guru Marpa he built a nine-story tower by himself, without the help of other people. Building and again destroying, again building and again destroying; several times like this.

There is a great difference between visualizing Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and visualizing or remembering ordinary people. There is a great difference between even seeing Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's figure, the example of his figure in paintings, pictures or statues; there's a great difference between seeing his figure in statues and paintings and seeing ordinary people's pictures. When we see figures of ordinary people in newspapers, in *Time* magazine or in movies, either we get angry or we get attachment. So when we see even a picture or statue of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, just by seeing it there is great effect, a great benefit to the mind. Just looking at it makes the mind so relaxed. If we really carefully look at it, somehow it has the power to make the mind become calm or quiet and sort of peaceful. Even just his position, the way he is sitting, the examples of the positions in which he is sitting, in the statues, is very beneficial, something which intuitively makes devotion arise, even just by looking at the position, the way he sits; just seeing the statues, even the figures done by artists, made by people. These are just examples.

This doesn't mean that Lord Buddha is exactly like that. Actually the shape of Lord Buddha's body is beyond all that. What we see here is just an example in order to create merit, in order for sentient beings to make purification. Such different examples of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, of the shape of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body, were given. This is why many statues exist.

The thing is this, especially in this degenerated time people don't have the fortune or the karma to actually see Guru Shakyamuni Buddha with his perfect, completed holy body, which has many holy signs. We are not aware, but each time we see the *thangkas* or statues of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, just seeing them purifies the obscurations of the mind, the negative karmas. All this is not because of the material, if it is made of gold or something, but because of the incredible, infinite knowledge that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has. That is symbolized by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha; it is because of his knowledge.

Also each time we look at paintings or figures of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, it creates the karma to meet the teachings of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha again or to meet and receive teachings directly from the Buddha in future lifetimes. Especially when we look at the figure of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha with devotion; as we have that much devotion the purification is that much stronger.

In previous times, one of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples, called Shariputra, before he became a disciple of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha in a previous lifetime, while he was traveling he stopped on the way at a sort of temple. It was nighttime and he was patching, sewing his shoe with a small light, keeping it in front of him. First of all he didn't see the beautiful painting of Guru Shakyamuni

Buddha which was on the wall, he didn't see it. Then as he was sewing his shoe, sort of resting sometimes, he somehow saw the painting there, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's picture, the figure of his holy body.

Then each time he looked it gave much pleasure in his mind. A great will arose, wanting to see that or wanting to be like that. He saw a very beautiful figure, such a holy being. Because of this karma, afterwards in future lifetimes he became the disciple of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, received many teachings from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and most of his life was with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Sometimes in thangkas there are two arhats standing, two disciples standing, with Guru Shakyamuni in the center. Two followers, one of them is called Shariputra.

There are benefits like this just even by seeing a figure, so it is always beneficial to visualize or even to look at statues or paintings, or make paintings of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, or to really see Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. At the moment, as our mind is so obscured, we make the visualization in order to purify. By this method, as our mind becomes more and more purified, the obscurations become less and less. Then gradually, as we follow the path, we can see, we can communicate with the buddhas, we can receive teachings from the buddhas. We can see the buddhas in different manifestations, such as those that are called *nirmanakaya* and *sambhogakaya*. This is even before we receive enlightenment, while we are following the path.

I think maybe you can try to visualize as I read. If I read what is said there in good English, you may find it much more comfortable. Then I think maybe the visualization becomes more correct.

Motivate with the pure thought of bodhicitta. Think, "I must lead all sentient beings into Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightened stage, by myself achieving buddhahood. Therefore I'm going to practice the Guru Shakyamuni yoga."

At the level of your forehead ...¹

So tonight do the breathing meditation and concentrate on watching the thoughts. Then do the Guru Shakyamuni yoga purifying meditation tomorrow morning.

Lecture 4

From the holy speech of the great bodhisattva, Shantideva, his teaching called *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, just before saying this good quotation from his teaching I'll give a very brief biography.

Shantideva was a pandit and great holy being, having achievement of bodhicitta. He didn't show himself as a great yogi, which means that people didn't see him practicing Dharma, they didn't see him doing any kinds of spiritual actions, even though he had achieved very high realizations. From their side, they didn't see that. They saw him as an ordinary person who didn't know anything, who didn't do anything.

¹ See *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 47–49.

This great bodhisattva, even at six years of age, even at such a young time had contact, communication with the buddha of wisdom, Manjushri, from whom the lineage of the profound path was handed down. The profound path contains the teachings on *shunyata* and absolute nature. I think he was also a prince born to a family of which the father was king. After some time the people in that country wanted him to take the throne, to take the place of the king, and however much he rejected taking the place of the king, the people didn't listen, so he had to accept. By looking at the faces of the people he had to accept. The inauguration was going to be the next day, and in the nighttime he had a dream that Manjushri, the buddha of wisdom, his guru from whom he received teachings, was sitting on the throne on which he was going to sit tomorrow. He was sitting on the throne and saying, "You, the one son, this seat is mine. I am your teacher, so you can't sit on the same place, the same throne." Then he woke out of the dream. He realized that he should not take the place of the king; he could not accept that. He escaped after knowing the dream.

Then he went to Nalanda, where there were thousands and thousands of pandits in the famous monastery, which we talked about before. I don't remember the name of the abbot of the Nalanda Monastery. He took ordination from him and lived in the monastery. As he was living there in the monastery, the monks saw him only sleeping, all day sleeping, doing nothing; lying down doing nothing, not saying prayers, not reading texts, not doing any monastery work, not doing any kind of spiritual action. So people thought he was a very lazy person, very foolish; other people were thinking like this.

The monks thought, "If he doesn't do anything and if he always spends time like this, he is wasting our monastery things. It is better for him to get out of this monastery than to live in the monastery eating and using things, just wasting." So they had to use a tricky method; they couldn't just put him out of the monastery without any reasons, there had to be something criminal or something which gave them a reason to get him out. The monks talked with each other about how to do it, how to get him out of the monastery. Then they proposed, "Since he doesn't read any texts, he doesn't learn anything, I'm sure he can't say any spiritual teachings by heart." Usually in monasteries they have learned many texts, they have to learn hundreds of texts by heart, especially the sutras and vinaya, the division of the teachings that only explains the discipline, the different levels of ordination. It explains the details of these precepts, so much detail. These are teachings that have many texts, which the monks should learn by heart and should recite at certain times, like on Wesak day. At certain times they have to recite by heart amongst many hundreds of monks in the assembly hall.

The monks talked like this: "If we do like this, if we ask him to say these sutra teachings by heart, he can't do that. In that way we can find a reason to get him out of the monastery." So they requested him to recite these teachings and he accepted to come. The monks made a very, very high throne with no steps to climb up, to see how he was going to sit on the throne.

That day they invited him and he came. Without any difficulties he went up and sat on the throne. Then he asked the monks: "What kind of teachings do you want to hear? Teachings that were given by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha or teachings that were not given by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha—what kind of teachings should I give you?" So the monks asked for teachings that were not given by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Then he started to give teachings from his heart. It is not that he had previously learned the sentences and prayers that were already in a text and then he repeated them. Not like this. As they asked for the teaching that wasn't given by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, all of a sudden he started to give teachings just by heart, like a whole book. Instead of writing a whole book

and then explaining, he started to give teachings, a whole book, full, like rain coming from the mind, without any difficulties and without any sign of being ignorant.

This teaching is called *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, I think *Bodhicaryavatara* in Sanskrit and in Tibetan *Jang chub sem pa'i jo pa la jug pa*, following the bodhisattva's actions or practice. This teaching is very fantastic, very clear; it contains very clear explanations and the methods to solve daily life problems. Actually it contains all the fundamental methods that are explained in the graduated path; the teachings of the graduated path are contained in this teaching.

He started the teaching like this: "Those who have gone beyond to the most blissful stage, having the achievement of *dharmakaya* and all surrounding sons..." He started to give the teachings like this, like rain coming, like water flowing from a pipe. As he was giving continuously teachings like this; actually the main subject of this teaching is method and wisdom. The part on the explanation of wisdom of shunyata comes after the last chapter. Before that he talked about how to train the mind to receive bodhicitta, the practice of bodhisattvas, the practice of the six paramitas. It contains many things and the benefits of bodhicitta.

When he was about to give the last chapter on the wisdom of shunyata, when he reached the sentence about the existence that is useful and transitory, and the existence that is not transitory, he flew up from the throne and dissolved gradually. He dissolved his body while he was giving the teachings. Then afterwards he was completely dissolved. The listeners couldn't see him, but even though they couldn't see him, his oral teaching was still going on as if he was sitting on the throne, the same as before.

Afterwards, since he had started to give the teachings, all the monks who used to complain before got a big shock, a big surprise, and then they felt sorry. So his usual character, his outward appearance to ordinary people was sort of like this. It was difficult to guess that he had achieved such high realizations, because the monks only saw him sleeping, eating and making kaka and pipi. They only saw this. Also they called him the name Bhusuku. However, he was a great hidden yogi, which means all the practice, the realizations were hidden, he didn't show that he lived in such practice.

Also for us to hear the great pandit Shantideva's teachings, which he has left, his experience, his realizations to benefit the other sentient beings and to achieve bodhicitta, for us also to talk on that teaching and to hear that teaching, I think is very fortunate.

From this highly realized bodhisattva's holy speech:

[1.4] Leisure and endowment' are very hard to find;
And, since they accomplish what is meaningful for humanity,
If I do not take advantage of them now,
How will such a perfect opportunity come about again?

"This perfect human rebirth is extremely difficult to find. If benefits are not created in this life, how can the perfect human rebirth be received in the future?"

Shantideva is explaining that: our present human body, which has the freedom to practice Dharma, is extremely difficult to find. Why we received such a precious rebirth this time is because we have

created the merit, good karma in many other lifetimes. We have not received such a precious rebirth before for many eons, for such a long time. But this time, it's sort of saying by chance, like something happened by accident, sort of by opportunity, we received this perfect human rebirth which has the freedom to practice Dharma.

While we have this precious human rebirth, if we spend the life empty, using this body only to obtain success, the actions of this temporal life—another way of saying this is only to gain the temporal happiness of this life and not create any good karma, any benefits—then there is no way to receive, to find again this perfect human rebirth in the future. It is impossible. So just as he said in his precious teaching, even if we want to be born again as a human being, having the freedom to practice Dharma, to work for ultimate happiness, to work for enlightenment also in the future, or if we want to achieve ultimate happiness just in this lifetime, the whole thing depends on creating the merit. We need to do some special actions, much higher and more meaningful than our daily life actions, which we do only to gain the happiness of this life with attachment.

As we met this precious teaching, which explains what is right action and what is wrong action, what is evil karma and what is virtuous karma; as we have the chance to know and as we have understanding, it is important for even the present action, even right at this moment, to make it beneficial, to make it transcendental, to make it pure, to make it become the cause of enlightenment. So it is necessary to cultivate the pure motivation before listening to Dharma.

It is necessary to think: “It is not sufficient that only I am released from the samsaric suffering. Numberless other sentient beings are living in suffering without guidance, without method. In order to release them from their sufferings and lead them to the most sublime, blissful stage of enlightenment, I must receive enlightenment first. Therefore I must complete the whole realization of the graduated path to enlightenment. Therefore I am going to listen to the profound teaching on the commentary of the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment is a Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate ones to enlightenment. It is well-expounded by the great philosophers Nagarjuna and Asanga, those who are like the sun and moon, like the second Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, in regard to explaining and spreading Dharma teachings in the world. This is a profound teaching, as the essence of the magnificent, unequaled great pandit Atisha's and the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa's knowledge was taken out. It includes the 84,000 teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and all this is arranged for the graduated practice of our achievement of enlightenment. This graduated path is the one through which all the buddhas passed, which means they received enlightenment.

This teaching has four outlines:

1. The knowledge of the authors to show pure reference.
2. The knowledge of the teachings in order for devotion to arise.
3. The way of listening and explaining these teachings.

The way of explaining the teachings: there are many disciplines from the side of the teacher or the person who explains the teaching. The basis is having a pure motivation as much as possible, especially as it is a Mahayana teaching. It is necessary for us to possess the pure thought, the beneficial thought for other sentient beings.

Usually in the world, in schools, there may be no such thing as the person who teaches sitting up high and the listeners sitting down, that sort of arrangement. It may look a little bit funny in the West. But there is a big difference between the Dharma work, when that teaching is given, and just teaching education generally. The whole idea is different, the whole motivation is different; even the fundamental mind, the way of thinking is different, just like the earth and space. There are many stories of when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was giving teachings, always in this kind of form, sitting on a throne and teaching others. There are stories, anyway, and these take much time.

However, such a way of listening to teachings and such a way of explaining the teachings is mainly to respect the Dharma, to respect the teaching. Generally it is to respect the teaching and also the person who gives the teaching; but here mainly the reason is to respect the teaching. The subject that we are listening to, what we are trying to understand, this method, these teachings, is something which eradicates all suffering and all the causes of suffering, all the delusions, and is the cause of achieving enlightenment, the highest goal, the highest blissful stage of enlightenment, and the enlightenment of other sentient beings. It is such a precious teaching method. So it is different from the common ways in the schools or in general.

Also all these things, this whole action, from the listeners' side and from the side of the person who is explaining, the whole of this action is supposed to be done on the basis of avoiding the delusions: attachment, hatred and ignorance. The whole movement is supposed to be positive and pure, not involved with these negative minds.

Also there are many disciplines for the person teaching: they should not have pride, a negative mind of sitting on throne; they should not have pride when giving teachings. Making prostrations before teaching is a method for them to lose pride. It is purification and a method to lose pride, and there is also meditation of making prostrations to the lineage of the teachings by visualizing them on the throne. And when the person sits on the throne then also meditation has to be done, in order to not use the negative mind. The teacher has to remember all existence as a phantom, as a dream, as a water bubble, as magic, as lightning, like a ray of sun, like a cloud—the cloud doesn't last a long time—all the changeable phenomena. So that's what I'm saying, it is completely different from general worldly actions.

Then from the listeners' side, if the listener is very sick or something, there are some exceptions, but generally there are disciplines about sitting and many things. According to the discipline explained in the teaching, the person who teaches Dharma should not explain the Dharma while the listener, the follower is standing; the person who teaches the Dharma sitting cannot teach the Dharma that way. The listener sits a little bit down and the person who teaches is a little bit higher. In that way the teaching has to be given. Also they shouldn't teach Dharma if the person is wearing a hat or has an umbrella on top, kind of disrespectful, unless there are particular reasons, like the person is sick or something, some physical thing, then that is the exception. Like this, there are many other disciplines.

4. Leading the disciple on the path to enlightenment by actually giving these teachings.

That has two parts:

- a) The way of following the guru who is the root of the path

b) How to train the mind in the graduated path by following the guru.

The first one, how to follow the guru who is the root of the path, is the most important thing to understand, but I think even though we try to talk about that, there's not much understanding of the following meditations, the fundamental meditations. Therefore, even though I will explain it, if we discuss and meditate on that, there wouldn't be that much strong feeling in this guru yoga practice. So we will just go through the fundamental meditation on how to train the mind in the graduated path, then if after some time there is time or a chance, some break times, we can talk a little bit about the guru.

The last outline, how to train the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment by following the guru, has two outlines:

1. Persuading in order to take the essence with this perfect human rebirth, and
2. How to take the essence with this perfect human rebirth.

The first one is persuading in order to take the essence, in order to achieve the goal. There are different levels of essence which can be achieved, which can be received with this precious human body. So in order to take that essence, first we need energy. If there is no energy, even if it is explained how to take the essence there's no feeling. There wouldn't be that much strong feeling and we wouldn't seek it continuously, we wouldn't try to take the essence. So first is persuading the mind in order to take the essence with this perfect human rebirth.

I think I stopped reading on page 81 yesterday. [Rinpoche reads from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 81–82]

The practice of the whole graduated path has three divisions ... the suffering of the three lower realms, refuge and karma.

Samadhi and penetrative insight on the basis of bodhicitta and the tantric path: usually penetrative insight and samadhi can be achieved without having the achievement of bodhicitta. Regarding samadhi, just ordinary samadhi achievement, other non-Buddhist religions, the Hindu religion and other religions in India also have the samadhi practice. Also there are many people who practice this, who achieve this realization, but just the general realization. They just have control over the mind, distractions and sluggishness and these things, but they don't have the penetrative insight, vipassana, realizing absolute true nature. This isn't in those other teachings, it isn't explained; many other teachings have their own different views, opposite to reality. Such beliefs, even though things are dependent, they have a doctrine or theory believing things are independent. Things like this; even though impermanent but believing it is permanent. Like this, there are many things.

But here in the text of the graduated path, shamatha and vipassana come after bodhicitta. That is because if you practice vipassana and shamatha with bodhicitta, your practice of shamatha becomes the cause for enlightenment. It never becomes the cause for samsara, it never becomes the cause of suffering; it becomes the cause of eradicating samsara or receiving everlasting happiness. The action becomes beneficial for all sentient beings if the practice of shamatha, this meditation, is practiced with the thought of bodhicitta. So in order to make the actions of the practice highly beneficial, to become the cause of enlightenment, the subject is set up after bodhicitta.

Actually, it's sort of necessary to discuss with each person, taking time to discuss their different conceptions and especially the mind. No matter how much there is pure logic, even though there is logic that really proves it and the logic is very profound, our mind is so obscured. Even though there is logic, we don't see it, we don't understand it. The logic itself is profound, but we don't understand it. The whole thing is difficult without the help of purification. By continuing the purification everything becomes easier and clearer. The mind at the present time is sort of foggy; with purification the fog is going away and the mind is sort of becoming clear.

What I am saying is that in this subject there are many things, there are many new subjects which you never heard before, which you cannot imagine with this present mind. It is not so impossible that you cannot understand; it is not an impossible thing which you cannot realize. Not like this. But there are many subjects that cannot be measured by this present mind. It's all dependent on purification, so there is a need for time and patience.

There are also things like this: besides the animal realms—animals are quite clear because we see them with our eyes—there are things like long-life gods and other living beings. In Western terms they are living on other planets, different sentient beings, such as those called *narak* beings, such as those called *pretas* and such as those called long-life gods. There are suffering beings that we see and also that we don't see. The worst of these suffering beings, either we don't have the karma to experience their suffering and to be in that realm, or we are not free, we don't have mind control and our mind is not purified.

When the mind is purified, when the mind has control, we can see all these suffering beings without the need of going to different places, different planets, without meeting them. With that psychic power we can see, no matter how far it is, we can see. They are like this, the suffering beings, the *narak* beings, the *preta* beings. The ordinary suffering beings, some easy ones, little bit light ones, can be seen. There are some examples given, there's an explanation of the worst sufferings, their life situation or how they suffer; that meditation comes afterwards. It is useful to read, even though that part of the meditation doesn't come now. It is useful to read that part of the meditation. It makes clear, you get some idea when you do meditation on the first part here; you have a clear idea, you have a feeling for it, you have the feeling. So your meditation becomes very effective, very useful for the mind.

The explanation of those different sentient beings' sufferings was given in the teachings by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha; not only by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, but also by many of his followers who have complete mind control, whose mind is completely purified of all dualism, with no obscurations. With their experience many of his followers, also high yogis, have explained this in teachings given to their disciples.

We cannot contradict other beings' experience because we don't have that experience. Generally it is a silly thing if we contradict other people's experience because we haven't experienced it, because we don't see it ourselves. Our contradicting other people's experience doesn't make other people's experience not exist; it doesn't make other people's realizations disappear because we don't understand it.

For instance, I explained to some Tibetan people how beautiful Australia is. If I try to explain how it is to the Tibetan villagers, that there are people who ride on the waves of the ocean, on surfboards and they enjoy it very much, they are so happy and they fall down, and they miss their boat,

[laughter] they lie on the sand and feel hot and again go in the water, they see if they can get cramps and pains and other enjoyments. Anyway, it's possible that if I explain the machines or some kinds of things that are in Australia, people may not believe it. It's hard to believe. Like if I explained to Indian villagers a rocket—like the box, the brain, the computer. We saw a computer in America. It was a big box containing a lot of wires, like threads that got mixed up. I tried very hard to understand by asking questions but I didn't understand clearly how it is working, by questioning the person how it is working. It doesn't sound like you can put any kind of questions, Dharma questions or anything, maybe only numbers or certain things.

If I try to explain like this, they might think I am dreaming or crazy or something, possible. But their not believing doesn't mean that what I experience is not true; it doesn't mean that, it doesn't prove that at all. And their not having the same experience, the same understanding, doesn't mean there's no Australia, it doesn't make any of these things non-existent.

Just like this, there are many other sentient beings. Even regarding living beings, there are many sentient beings that we see and there are many that we don't see. Only at certain times, when we have certain karma, can we see them. Or when we are born as those types of sentient beings, then we see them, and at different times like that. So regarding sentient beings, there are many different types of sentient beings which we see and which we don't see, who are living on different planets, which we cannot perceive with our mind. There are sentient beings living on the other planets who have a much better material life than human beings, and there are also more sentient beings who have much worse suffering than human beings.

Also regarding karma, it is possible that the experience of our life, the material pleasures can be much higher than this human life; much higher, much richer than this. There will be a time of having greater pleasure than we have in this human life. Also it is possible that even though we don't have as great sufferings as other beings such as animals, we don't have that now, but because we don't suffer now it doesn't mean we will always be like this, it doesn't mean this. Today I am well, but that doesn't prove that all my life I will be well, all the rest of my time I will be well and healthy, it doesn't mean this. So just like this.

At a certain time it is possible that our life will be much worse than this, much more complicated, with so much incredible mental and physical suffering. We cannot say that because we are well today, we cannot get sick tomorrow. This is a silly reason. Just like this, we won't get sick until we die. The suffering of death is also a sickness. However this is silly reason; this reason we cannot prove. Thinking like this is just silly. Even though we think like this, "I am clever, I can work and I can earn money, this and that," that doesn't prove at all that our life will always be happy. Even while we are working, while we are doing these things, our life is not happy.

If we check up, it always keeps changing, up and down, morning and nighttime. Always not equal. Therefore, the future changes that will happen may be worse than this or maybe we will be happier. Because we don't perceive it, we cannot say about our own life, our own experience, we cannot say what will happen. How can we contradict it when we don't have the mind to perceive that? How can we contradict it; how can we decide that something will never happen to us?

For instance, it is very clear that a situation changing does not depend on expectation. Many times, things happen all of a sudden without depending on expectation. For example, all of a sudden death comes; people don't have the expectation that they will die by their house collapsing, things like this.

There is no expectation before that; they always have a similar thought, all the time, they never think that such danger will happen. There's no expectation before that time.

For instance, also, like people traveling from one country to another. There's no expectation that maybe the airplane may burn in space or drop down or crash, things like this. There's no expectation before; doesn't depend on expectation. So when that happens our life is finished. It doesn't depend ahead of time on the expectation, our knowing the future, it doesn't depend on that. For instance, it's possible that one day the place we live in will be on fire, the whole thing becomes a fire place; with everything upside down. Just exactly like a fire place, maybe by atom bombs or things, even though we don't expect such matters to happen. So life is not always sure, not sure. We can't really say that because we're aware now and we're OK, that it will be like this every time. We can't say that. I mean, it is very clear; if we really think with intelligence, with wisdom, if we really check up, it is very clear. It is silly just proving this way, even though we think in this way, even though we feel in this way.

Student: Excuse me Rinpoche, isn't it that on one level we always determine what happens to us?

Rinpoche: Yeah. We determine that. All the experiences of our life are determined by our actions. All the future things that are going to happen are determined by our actions. But that doesn't mean we understand. That doesn't mean we understand. All the experience, such daily life as we are having at the present time, such enjoyments, each of these is the result of our previous actions. That was determined, that was created by us. The reason for having such a result now is because it is determined by the previous karma or the previous actions. But that doesn't mean we fully see and fully understand that all this is the result and all this is determined by our actions, created by us. How we created it, we don't understand.

Same thing with the future. If we really understand and are really aware of all our thoughts and actions and the effect of the actions—that the result is brought by the action—if we are aware, if we really fully understand then so many of the life problems are solved. This understanding is what we need. Not having this understanding is what makes our life complicated, always up and down, always unbalanced, always having developments in the mind. So without depending on this present life, without depending on this, there will be a different life in different times, which is determined by our actions in previous times or in the present time, which we don't know.

Therefore, by understanding the life changes that will happen in the future, as they happened in the past, by understanding that we create this, we have to stop the future danger. We have to stop the fear, we have to stop the future danger. The past is finished, the experience is finished; now our present responsibility is to stop the danger of the future life, the fear that will arise in future lives, in future times.

It is very clear that people who are rich in their early life never think, never believe that after some time they will be homeless and have to beg or become a refugee. They have no idea when they are rich, they never think. They think their life will always be like this, their daily life, because they have this and that, they have so many staff and this and that; always believing the wrong conception; always believing the conception of permanence. If their mind was completely aware, understanding the future, it would be possible to do something to stop all the future dangers. Because of not understanding and completely believing and following the wrong conceptions, when the life problems come there is no method, the time is finished.

Similarly, as there are also many changes in this life, even though we are human this time, it is also not sure that we will always keep on being born human, not sure. It's the same reason as there are many changes in this life. For instance, one person can have many life stories—sometimes way down, incredible, a beggar, not having any materials, very poor and very down, and sometimes very high, having much reputation and many material things. Just as that person's life is not equal and there are different changes in the life, similarly, we cannot trust the present situation. Same thing, we cannot say that even in the future life, we will always be born as a human being, we cannot say.

All those different lives, the bodies that we will experience are also determined by our actions, which are created with ignorance, with pure ignorance. We may think, "Creating actions with ignorance, how can that be possible? How can that be possible? I know I'm eating; I know I'm sleeping; I'm purposely doing this. I know I'm talking; I'm not ignorant." This is very possible, "I'm not doing ignorant actions." Reasoning like this, "I know I'm eating; I know I'm sleeping, working," we don't see that the action is done with ignorance. We think someone who says that action is done with ignorance is sick, they're crazy.

I'll give an ordinary example: a person is walking in a forest and then they step off the path. If they walk without looking at the road, if they put their feet in a dangerous place without looking, like the thorns or something, we would call that person foolish for not watching the road, for not looking carefully and just walking. Or, sometimes when people do some magic, the magician transforms something into money and the audience believes it completely as they receive the money, but when they get back home that changes. It was not actual money. Those kinds of things we usually think of as ignorant or foolish action, the mind not being aware.

So this, what we ordinary people understand, is ignorant action, foolish action. Similarly, even if we are aware of any action, walking, eating, sleeping, no matter what we do—I'm talking about ordinary people in daily life actions—even though we know we are doing that, as we don't fully know our mind, all these actions of our daily life are ignorant actions. They are similar mistakes. Even though we are aware of doing these things, "I am eating," doing these things—still there's a mistake, which we cannot see, and we can only understand if we understand the mind. We can only understand that mistake, that wrong action, is wrong when we realize or recognize the mind, the different types of mind.

This is the difference in the daily life actions, which ordinary people think are conscious actions. For the meditators, for the realized person who practices Dharma, who is living in the practice of Dharma, from their side it is a silly mistake, a silly mistake. The ordinary people thinking that their actions are done consciously is a silly mistake in the view of the meditator, from the side of the person who is living in the Dharma practice, who has an understanding of Dharma; especially who has an understanding of karma. From the side of the meditator, the ordinary person's actions of daily life are mistakes. From their side, all that ordinary person's daily life actions are unconscious actions. There are levels of unconscious that ordinary people understand and that they do not understand. It becomes more and more subtle.

Mainly because of what we think, no matter how the visualization is, even though it is not perfect or exact as we think of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha or any enlightened being—as we rely on that or request, and also depending on the devotion, it's possible that through this the Buddha communicates or that we mentally receive blessings. Through that it's possible that the visualization

can sometimes become very effective, according to our mind and the situation at the time. The visualization becomes very powerful and generally how it helps the mind—it depends on our mind, of course—mainly it is due to the power of the enlightened being, mainly due to their compassion. We want the Buddha to guide us from suffering, as we take refuge, as we rely on him. It is mainly because of the enlightened being's power and knowledge. That is how the visualization benefits the mind, purifies the obscurations.

Student: For Christian people, who feel a great relationship toward Jesus, would the same benefits be accorded to them, visualizing Christ as a living being? If the lamrim was converted into Christian terms, would it be of great benefit to them? Many of my friends are devout Christians and if I show them the meditations, which really show Guru Shakyamuni, is it the wrong thing to do, or would it be of value to them?

Rinpoche: Which one is more useful, are you saying?

Terry: They find it difficult to visualize or pray to Guru Shakyamuni. They would rather pray to, say, Christ. If we converted the meditations for all those Christian people to visualize Christ and take on the sufferings of Christ, that type of thing, would it be the same value?

Rinpoche: I see. That depends on their mind. Generally it depends on the meditator's mind; if the meditator doesn't really understand what this is then maybe something else. If they don't understand what this is, if they have no understanding of Jesus' knowledge, no knowledge of Jesus, if they understand Jesus is like the sky, that kind of thing, then it's not so effective, not really so useful. It's not so effective for the mind if their understanding of Jesus is like the sky, kind of sky, space. It is useful to think of this, kind of same essence, if they don't have much understanding of what Jesus is. If we look at it in the same essence as Guru Shakyamuni, then it is more useful.

Think, as I read, try to feel it.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 83]

From time without beginning until the present, in all my numberless previous lives, I have been dying and being reborn in the cycle of samsara, the six realms of suffering.

The six realms are the narak, the pretas, the animals, the suras and the asuras—the long-life gods—and the human beings.

Think: “In these six suffering realms, from beginningless lifetimes I have been dying and getting born; dying and getting born continuously in the six realms.” Try to feel this by thinking back and back in our previous life, like this.

[Reading, p.83, continues]

Now I have received a perfect human rebirth, which has eighteen attributes: the eight freedoms and the ten receptacles.

What is the Perfect Rebirth?

The eight freedoms (Tib: *d'ül.ma.gyā*)

These are conditions of existence out of the eight unfree states in which beings do not have the chance to practice Dharma.

Freedom from birth:

1. in the hells (Tib: *nyal na*; Skt: *narak*)

The narak realm is where there is the worst suffering. That is the worst suffering realm, the narak. Once we are born there, all the time until we get out of there, no matter how long we live there, there is not one minute, not one hour of rest from suffering. Once we are born in this suffering realm, we are either having cold suffering or experiencing hot suffering in different conditions, according to karma. The suffering in these narak realms, hot and cold, anything, is much greater, a thousand, billion times greater than any of the hot and cold sufferings that exist in the human realm. If we are born in these realms, there is not even one minute or one hour to have a rest, not having suffering. To have even temporal pleasure, there is not even one hour or one minute.

If we are born there, how can there be a chance to practice Dharma, in order to receive ultimate happiness? There is no chance to practice Dharma at all, no chance at all to practice Dharma in order to receive ultimate happiness. For instance, if there is a thorn going inside our body or a flame that touches our body and we feel incredibly hot, suffering, it is impossible to meditate. How can we meditate? No matter how much we are pushed, how much we are requested to meditate, how can we meditate? So if we are born in this realm there is no chance to meditate, no chance to practice Dharma. In the narak realm there no chance to practice Dharma at all.

Think, “Numberless times in previous lifetimes, I was born in the narak realms. Even the time when I wasn’t born in this suffering narak realm, I was born in preta realm.”

Once we are born in the preta realm, again there is no chance to practice Dharma, because of great karmic suffering, feeling hot and cold, thirsty and hungry. Most of the suffering is feeling hungry and thirsty, and having much fear, so much fear. Even when we see similar things here on earth, when we see starving people not having any food, looking extremely poor, faint; when we see that we cannot bear it. It is unbearable for us when we see that. When we see their suffering, their troubles, we cannot bear it. And these people’s suffering is not for a hundred years, not for a million years, just for a short time. But once we are born in the preta realm, for eons, for many hundreds of lifetimes we have to suffer from hunger and thirst, not finding food and always having much fear. So how can we practice Dharma? It is impossible. Even if we don’t get lunch one day, we cannot meditate, we cannot concentrate, we cannot keep the mind calm. So not getting food for many hundreds of years, with that much suffering it is impossible to practice the Dharma.

“I was born in the preta realm numberless times in my previous life, and even the times I wasn’t born in preta realm I was born as an animal.”

If we are born as an animal there is no chance to practice Dharma. For instance, there is no way to teach an animal to control the mind because, even if we teach the mantra, this very powerful mantra, saying it is very powerful for the mind, how good it is, how beneficial, the animals cannot understand, they cannot recite mantras. There’s no way to teach foolish animals such as cows these things—what is the pure mind and what is the impure mind. There’s no way to communicate; they are extremely foolish.

“I was born in the animal realm, the suffering realm numberless times in our previous lifetimes. Even the times I wasn’t born as an animal, I was born as a long-life god, on those planets.”

Because of having all those rich material enjoyments, everything, so many entourages, many thousands of wives as we wish, many beautiful parks, everything we need, there is great material enjoyment, so the mind is occupied, the mind is so attached in those things. The mind is occupied by this, always distracted by enjoyments, by material enjoyments, the objects of the senses. It is difficult to know suffering and there is no chance to practice Dharma. For instance, even on the earth, those who have so many possessions, so much enjoyment, who have everything, they have to think of these things. Because of the attachment the mind is always occupied by objects of the senses. They never find time to check their mind, never find time to meditate. Some of those sentient beings, gods, are cognition-less, unconscious all their life, however long they live, for eons. So there is no chance to practice Dharma if we born in those realms.

“I was born in those realms numberless times in my previous lives. Even the times when I wasn’t born as those long-life gods, the cognition-less gods, I was born as a human being but born as a barbarian, such as in an irreligious country where there is no Dharma. If we are born as barbarian, there is no chance to practice Dharma.”

We were born numberless times as a barbarian in an irreligious country in our previous lifetimes. Even when we were not born as a barbarian, we were born deaf.² The deaf person has difficulty understanding the Dharma and they cannot communicate; their mind is incapable of understanding so there is no chance to practice Dharma.

“I was born as a deaf person numberless times in my previous lives. Even when I wasn’t born as a deaf person, I was born as a person who has wrong view, a heretic. Wrong view, wrong understanding, believing that reality doesn’t exist, that things don’t have reality, believing there’s no Buddha, Dharma or Sangha existing, believing karma doesn’t exist, that there’s no such thing as karma, there’s no such thing as karma created by mind.”

Because of these wrong conceptions we don’t practice Dharma, they always keep us away from Dharma, away from understanding Dharma. So if we are born like this, there’s no chance to practice Dharma, to work for gaining ultimate happiness.

“Numberless times I was born as this person having wrong view, a heretic. Even the times when I wasn’t born as the wrong-view person, I was born in the black, dark time, when Buddha has not descended, the time when there is no existence of Buddhadharma. So if I was born in this time, there was no chance to practice Dharma because there was no one who taught it. Buddha had not shown Dharma, so how could it be possible to practice Dharma? No chance. I was born in such black times, dark times in numberless times in my previous lives.”

So now think, “This time I am free, I have received the freedom of not being born in the narak. How lucky I am, how fortunate I am.” Try to feel pleased, try to feel happiness. “I am not in such a realm and have the chance to practice Dharma.”

² The Tibetan word *’onpa* literally means deaf but in this context it means being born with defective mental or physical faculties, and being unable to understand or communicate. See *The Perfect Human Rebirth*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, pp. 50–51.

Think, “I have received freedom this time by not being born in the preta realm.” Try to feel happiness. “How fortunate I am, having the chance to practice Dharma.”

Think, “This time I have received freedom by not being born in the animal realm. Having the chance to practice Dharma, how lucky and fortunate I am.” Think of the difference between us and animals; how they are different, how they are foolish.

“I have received freedom by not being born as those long-life gods, whose mind is completely occupied by the objects of the senses, not having chance to practice the Dharma. How lucky I am to have the chance to practice Dharma at this time.

“This time I have received freedom by not being born as a barbarian, where there is no chance to practice Dharma, being completely ignorant regarding what is the positive action; completely ignorant of what is the virtuous action and what is the evil action, the cause of happiness and suffering. How lucky, how fortunate I am, having the chance to practice the Dharma, to know these things.

“I have received freedom by not being born as those persons having wrong views, where there is no chance to practice Dharma at all due to their wrong conceptions, no chance to realize the reality, the absolute true nature. How lucky, how fortunate I am that I have the chance to practice Dharma and to realize absolute true nature, to have met the teachings, which explain right view.

“I have received freedom by not being born as a deaf person [a person with intellectual impairment], who has no chance to practice Dharma. Look at many of the other people here in East and West. Look at those many [intellectually impaired] children, who cannot even understand language, even though they look good physically. They don’t know language, even ordinary things. How can it be possible for them to practice Dharma? How fortunate I am, how lucky, that I have the chance to practice Dharma; I have the chance to understand, my mind is capable.

“I have received freedom by not being born in such a time when there is no Buddha or where there is no Buddhadharma existing. How fortunate I am to have the chance to practice Dharma by receiving teachings.”

I think this afternoon from two o’clock either Ann or Nick will repeat this, and again like this you meditate, meditate. It’s better, it’s easier if someone repeats like this, then your mind doesn’t get distracted by something. These meditations are very new, so it is easy to get distracted by something. The mind wanders. Maybe for one minute or two seconds you start, then all of a sudden your mind goes somewhere else. Just like a butterfly, exactly like a butterfly.

Student: Rinpoche, does the Tibetan word *’onpa* mean in English “deaf and dumb” or does it mean just “not able to hear”?

Rinpoche: I see. It just means having a mental defect, a mind incapable of understanding Dharma. Generally, regarding the freedom, that also includes not hearing. Being unable to communicate is also included.

Student: Rinpoche, what does “not being born in the right time to receive Dharma” mean?

Rinpoche: There are certain eons. Buddhadharma does not always exist on the earth; there are not always Buddha's teachings. There are certain eons when no Buddha has descended and there are no teachings. Where there's no Buddhadharma existing and because there's no teaching, there's no way to hear, nothing, so there's no way to develop the mind in the Dharma. It's completely impossible. That's why it's called a dark age.

Lecture 5

What experience do you have? After the breathing meditation when you watch your thoughts, how do you feel?

[Answer not audible]

Rinpoche: Are they all sleeping?

Student: I think of my attachments after I've done the breathing meditation. I can't help it; they just come into my mind.

Rinpoche: I see. That's very nice. You are conscious of your attachment; that's good, very good, extraordinary. Even just recognizing it is very good. Even more students should recognize that they have attachment. This is the difference, the meaning of being a human being.

Actually, starting from "the mind is beginningless," all of these meditations are actually methods to eradicate attachment, to make it completely non-existent; and not only attachment, but all the rest of the delusions. Just by understanding the meditations you cannot eradicate attachment. First you have to understand the meditation then, by listening, by understanding well the technique of the meditation, you have to continue the practice. As you continue practicing, meditating, gradually it decreases attachment; your method of meditation becomes stronger and stronger and you lose attachment.

Did anyone concentrate on the thoughts?

Student: It seems to be like a series of thoughts coming. Each one always had a relationship to the one before; you can always find some relationship between the chain of thoughts.

Rinpoche: There's always relationship to other thought?

Student: The second thought arises only because there was something about the first thought that gave rise to the second thought. There was always some connection.

Rinpoche: That's interesting, very good.

Another student: Sometimes, like when watching the mid, the mind is there bubbling with thoughts, but also a great deal of pictures, like watching an uncontrolled picture show. What was it, was it ego watching the mind, or the self watching the ego? Just uncontrolled pictures, pictures, pictures.

Rinpoche: When you sit, you make pictures? You are asking is that ego, or what?

Student: Yes, is that ego I'm looking at?

Rinpoche: You mean the object, is that ego?

Student: Yes, it's like me looking at an uncontrolled picture show. Is that me watching the ego, or what?

Rinpoche: The watcher is the ego. The watcher watches. The subject is ego.

Student: Like watching a crazy television program, crazy pictures all the time. What are these pictures? What causes them?

Rinpoche: That's what I was going to ask, I think you stole my question. How is it explained by scientists? How is it scientifically explained, how thoughts come?

[Inaudible answers]

Rinpoche: Has there been any time when there are no actions? What about the period of sleeping? When you want to not think anything, when you want to be quiet, not arising any other thoughts or memories, but you can't. Why is that? How is it explained scientifically?

Student: I don't think they can explain it scientifically.

Rinpoche: I see. So without sleeping, there is no way for the mind to be quiet? Do you think it is a possibility that the mind can be quiet without arising any memories? Like wherever you are at the moment, your consciousness just concentrates on that, not rising any other thoughts. Like if you make plans for one hour and you concentrate on that, the concentration lasts for one hour, as you make plans, and then days or months like this.

Student: Just concentrating on one body, that's shamatha?

Rinpoche: Yes, shamatha meditation. I see, so it's not explained, the cause, which makes you have no choice. Like whenever you want to concentrate without any other thoughts rising up, you find hard. So why is it not explained scientifically?

Students: Because science doesn't see it as a problem. I think there are scientists who are experimenting with the mind constantly chattering. There have been experiments in the United States with sensory deprivation, where people have been put into a dark or semi-dark chamber or room with nothing to touch, except maybe they're lying in water. They float in saline water. So they get no sensory information coming to them as they habitually have had. The experiments were done with marines and army personnel, and they freaked out after a little while. They put meditators in and

people who had been experimenting with LSD and they stayed in there for long periods. Meditators and people who took LSD could stay there longer.

Student: I went in one of those tanks, which was devised by the man who began those experiments. It's a sensory deprivation environment: you had no light, no sound, no fear of drowning because you're in neutral buoyancy and half your face is covered with water, and the upper half of your body is above water. They put you in and they show you how to open the door, then they say they'll come back in an hour or so. I found that—I was in there about a year ago—I had a steady stream of consciousness the whole time. Most psychologists in the West talk about a stream of consciousness and they're not even thinking about trying to stop the stream. I asked John if he had any special tanks where not so many people went, because some of the people who go into the tanks freak out and then when you go in there they've left all these residual vibes. You can telepathically tune in to those spaces that other people have been in while you're in there. A lot of fear is there but I didn't feel that it was my fear.

Student: One thing a lot of people reported was the sensation of another body floating at an angle to their own.

Student: I find that my negative mind gets very worried and bored, and if I try to keep no thoughts there, I have an inner dialogue "Oh, something's wrong, you're sick of something." But if I only take one thought at a time and make it the right sort, if I put the unselfish thought for it to work on, then I don't have any negative thoughts.

Rinpoche: I see. So when you think, when you decide not to have any thought, that time you get scared?

Student: Well, the negative mind tries to make me scared.

Rinpoche: You are correct, that can happen because that kind of thing is new, so fear can rise because of the negative mind.

Student: Excuse me Rinpoche, is it possible to only have one thing in your mind at once? Because before we were singing mantras and as an exercise, while I was singing, I tried to write something as well and now I don't know whether I was writing in the little moments of space between the words when I was singing. Can you think of two separate things at once?

Rinpoche: It depends, that can happen. That can happen. Even if you are not conscious of each word of the song, even though you are writing, it is possible. If you have the habit, if you have trained, if you have repeated it for a long time, it can happen. Sometimes it's also like reading a text but your mind is paying attention to something else. But in regard to the consciousness on two objects, like if you are hearing something, if you put your whole energy to that sound, you are not conscious of the forms that you are seeing, even though you are looking at them with your eyes. You are looking at them, possibly not being conscious, not knowing the object, because the whole mind is paying attention to the sound. It can depend on how strong you put your consciousness, where you put it stronger.

There would be some kind of clarity when you are really watching the thoughts. If there are no distractions and your mind is not having much movement or much change—like in one second so

many pictures come, so many things happen in the mind, so many things are passing—when the mind is not in such a stage, when the mind is quiet, then when you watch, when you really find the object, things like that are possible. As you concentrate, sometimes, as you are continuously concentrating on that, you don't even feel your body. Also it is possible that as you are continuously concentrating on this, you feel much happiness, blissfulness.

This meditation is temporarily good, but it is not sufficient; it has to be related to something. When you find this right object you have to relate with it in the meditation, then that makes you realize the absolute true nature of the I or the mind. Anyway, first of all having experiences like this is very useful, but if you only spend your life like this, then that is not skillful.

Also, what you should check up is when you start to concentrate on watching the thoughts, check where the energy goes, where you are putting the energy—whether you are putting it into the feet or whether you are putting energy into the brain. Where does the energy go? One day maybe concentrate but try to find something, try to hold something; try to find the object, try to hold the object, that energy, that feeling, whether you feel it in the feet or whether you feel it in the brain.

Student: Do you recognize where the energy is going by the physical sensation?

Rinpoche: Oh, you can recognize.

Students: Do different thoughts relate to different parts of your body; like with embarrassment you get flushed or red in the face? By watching your thoughts, could you be turning the energy back into the thought so it dissolves into itself? So instead of reacting to it and carrying on, you're turning it within yourself, and it just eats itself up. If you watch the thought long enough, will it dissolve, or what?

Rinpoche: Dissolve what?

Student: The thought just runs out because it hasn't anything to grab onto, if you are looking at it as though it is not connected to your body.

Rinpoche: That kind of thing happens; this is one technique. There are many techniques, different techniques. It also helps control mind scattering. There are many different techniques that the meditators practice, use.

There's one technique: as your mind wanders around and thinks of something in pictures, objects, or many things happen, you can just run after that, but consciously. Just run after that; what the mind wants to do now, how much it's going to do, the superstition, which is many pictures, even in one second. You have to be conscious, otherwise it doesn't make sense, otherwise the usual scattering thought itself becomes the meditation and then it doesn't help.

Being conscious, for instance, if you remember some kind of previous thing, like making journeys, traveling to a country, then the mind goes from this place to that. The mind discusses different things, traveling, going from that place to that place; it thinks gradually like this. So you have to be conscious in following it, and being conscious, you just follow the superstition, which brings many pictures. This is one technique. Then while you are conscious, if you check like that, afterwards the superstition sort of stops. It just stops; it can't go anywhere. But that is not a very quick method.

Also, if you can't be spontaneously, continuously conscious, then the whole thing becomes distraction, scattering as usual.

The quick way, the meditation technique to stop the scattering thoughts arising, sort of seeing many pictures arising, the quickest technique is instead of looking at the picture, to look at the thought that projects the picture. Just hold it, watch it, just concentrate on that. As soon as you think of the subject, the thought, the picture the thought projects is stopped. So this is the quick way.

That's why after the breathing meditation, doing this meditation is useful at the beginning, to do this if you can. It helps to have longer concentration and it is very useful, especially for us. It is very useful for us to do research about our feelings, research about the mind. This is much better; you have the mind and you are checking with your own mind, which is existing, which is real.

Rather than reading books and trying to imagine what is in the book; to simulate with drugs, to imagine the mind or something like that—as you have the mind, you just check up what you have there. This is the most accurate way to check up, to make research; this is more fantastic than what people have experienced through drugs, those things. Also, there can be mistakes many times. If you check up with your own mind, which is existing, which you don't have to find outside, there is much more, you can discover a lot of things. There is so much to learn. There is a great deal to learn just from your own mind, within your mind. There's a great deal to learn.

This mantra: TADYATHA OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNAYÉ SVAHA.

TADYATHA means “like this.” It is also possible it means, for instance, that Guru Shakyamuni has great infinite knowledge, he has completely perfect power. Then, as it comes in the mantra, OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNAYÉ SVAHA, usually it means “sublime, best, jewel, treasure.” It has many different meanings, generally according to Sanskrit.

OM is composed of three letters. The first, AH, then long one (˜) and one zero on top, that makes OM. This contains all the infinite knowledge of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind. This is what the OM signifies or what it contains.

OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNAYÉ SVAHA, there can be different meanings on that.

MUNÉ: the first MUNÉ, having control over the wrong conception of the self, “I.”

MUNÉ: the second MUNÉ, having control over the self-cherishing thought.

MAHAMUNAYÉ: MAHA means “great.” MAHAMUNAYÉ means “great control over the dualistic mind, the subtle obscurations.”

SVAHA: means “to put the root of all happiness.”

Actually, what we are asking by reciting this mantra is to receive the power to control the wrong conception of the self, I, and the self-cherishing thought on the dualistic mind. Also another way, it's also possible that the meaning is as follows:

MUNÉ means “having freedom of not being born in the suffering realms, such as narak, preta and animal.”

MUNÉ: “having control, having freedom of not being born in samsara.”

MAHAMUNAYÉ: it’s possible like this: there is what is called *pratimoksha*. *Moksha* means liberation, nirvana; *prati* means individual or self. The arhats, who are out of samsara and have received everlasting happiness, because they have received this blissful stage, everlasting happiness, not waking out of that concentration, out of that stage, they live in that stage for eons and eons. But even though they are out of samsara, there’s still self-cherishing thought. So they don’t work for sentient beings as a bodhisattva benefits sentient beings, as a bodhisattva works for all sentient beings. Sort of like this: when we have very comfortable sleep, like in the morning time when we have such comfortable sleep that we don’t want to waken and get up from this, we want to continue sleeping. Sort of like that example.

Anyway, the bodhisattvas have freedom over this pratimoksha, the individual everlasting happiness, seeking only the everlasting happiness for oneself and living for a long time in that stage, not concerned and not working for other sentient beings like the bodhisattva does.

Student: Rinpoche, those people, would they still be creating negative karma by having the self-cherishing thought?

Rinpoche: They have finished their uncontrolled karma, they have finished that. They don’t have samsaric karma, they are out of samsara, but still by creating merits they can receive enlightenment.

Reciting this mantra, also if you remember the meaning, it is very effective, very powerful, and it becomes a request to receive these freedoms. This mantra has much power and all the buddhas of the past, present and future received enlightenment by depending on the path, which is contained in this mantra. Also, by reciting this mantra, eighty thousand eons of bad karma we have created—like in past times as we were talking about, so much bad karma has been created—reciting this mantra has the power to purify the negative karma we created in that length of time. The negative karma created in that length of time can be purified by reciting this mantra.

Generally it is useful to recite not only when you are meditating but also when you are working, when you are out. You can recite this mantra anytime—while you are working in the kitchen, while you are working in the house or while driving your car, outside—any time during these actions.

Also it leaves much impression on the mind if you are reciting this mantra, and if other people or other sentient beings can hear you, like animals, it benefits their mind so much, it has great effect. By hearing the sound of the mantra, because the mantra contains incredible powers and so much realization, the path, the knowledge of the enlightened being, therefore, by hearing the mantra, it leaves an impression on their mind. It plants a seed.

Just as some people find it very difficult to learn Tibetan—I’m just generally saying—but for some people somehow it is very easy to learn Tibetan, as if it is natural, quite usual, kind of not new. Also learning prayers, some people find it very easy and some people find it very difficult, extremely difficult. That depends on how strongly they had connection before, and that depends on karma. The

reason someone finds it so easy to learn, it seems sort of nothing new, is because in previous lifetimes, just before this present life, for some reason they had been in Tibet or they learned prayers, so they have much karmic contact. In their previous life they learned these things, they heard these prayers and it left an impression on their mind, so this lifetime they find it so easy, it just easily comes in the mind when they see this, when they hear this. Some people find it very hard and however much it is taught or repeated, they find it very hard to come in the heart. That depends on how much impression has been made, how much impression it has left on the mind.

In previous times the great philosopher Nagarjuna, who has written many teachings on absolute nature, or *shunyata*, when he was saying his prayers, the texts—this great philosopher achieved the undying realizations, long-life realizations, undying, not having samsaric death; he was also a great pandit having achievement of all the realizations, the general realizations and even the highest tantric realizations—while he was in a cave and reciting the many pages of his prayers by heart, there was a pigeon sitting just above the cave. The pigeon heard these prayers all the time, so after that bird died he was born in India and became a monk. He became a disciple of Nagarjuna, called Lobpön Loden, and he became great in writing the texts. He also wrote many texts on Buddhadharma.

Like this the mantra has much power, so it is always useful to recite. Especially when some animal or person dies, while they are dying, just at the time when the breath is starting to stop, just at that time, if we can recite this mantra very loudly, also that can benefit so much to make the life quiet, it helps a great deal. Of course it also depends on the person's karma, things like this, how much they understand, but still it helps a great deal to have less fear.

Student: Excuse me, Rinpoche. Is there any difference in power between this one and the other great mantra, OM MANI PADME HUM? Is there any time you would use one or the other?

Rinpoche: You can recite both. The other one is very beneficial. Yes, the two are the same.

For the nighttime meditation, you can spend a little more time in the Guru Shakyamuni yoga purification. Spend a little more time reciting that mantra, making very strong visualization of the light coming, the white light coming and purifying, then the knowledge and wisdom light. Spend more time on this. Then after the two lights have finished, do the absorption, then become oneness and concentrate on the emptiness. Actually this meditation is not simple, this Guru Shakyamuni yoga meditation contains many things; it is not simple. Afterwards as you go through the graduated path, you will understand. However, if you can do this, it is incredibly beneficial.

Anyhow, after making the purification and receiving the yellow light—the knowledge of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha—after that you concentrate on the meditation as we repeated. So you concentrate on the graduated path, the first part of meditation. Then after that, make the absorptions and concentrate really strongly when you become oneness with emptiness, at that time. Concentrate as strongly as possible for a little time.

When you do meditations on each of these freedoms, as you have each of these freedoms try to recognize the freedom, try to feel it. In that way, by recognizing the particular freedom, if you really understand, you will really feel great happiness. If you really understand, you will receive great happiness, incredible great pleasure.

Why we don't feel great happiness now, why we cannot make ourselves happy, why we cannot feel happy is because we don't recognize our freedom and those different un-free states. The different beings, how they are suffering—we don't realize this. If we realize this, if we know this, instead of feeling upset, worried, we can feel such great pleasure.

Actually, even if we had many worlds full of jewels, it cannot make us receive freedom. Even that many material things cannot make us receive freedom from being an animal or those other suffering beings. So, each of these freedoms, even just the freedom of not being an animal, is much more useful, much more precious than having galaxies full of jewels. Even if we have that many materials it doesn't make us receive freedom. Just having all those material things doesn't make that result. So, this is something, only we don't recognize it because we are deeply ignorant. The meditators who really recognize this feel incredible great pleasure, more than finding and possessing a whole world full of jewels.

Gradually as you make purification, the understanding grows.

Lecture 6

From the holy speech of the great bodhisattva Shantideva:

[1:6] Hence virtue is perpetually feeble,
The great strength of evil being extremely intense,
And except for a Fully Awakening Mind
By what other virtue will it be overcome?

“Without the virtue, the thought of full enlightenment, what other virtues can control the unending great powerful negativities? Therefore, check up on the powerless virtue.” Without the virtue of the thought of full enlightenment, what other virtues can control the unending great powerful negativities or sinfulness? It can be translated as sinfulness or negativities.

The meaning of the sentence, “Therefore, check up on the powerless virtue,” the quotation continues from yesterday's quotation, which was “Due to the blessing of the Buddha, in the main, very few worldly beings have the thought of fortune, happiness.” Then comes this present quotation. It explains why the worldly beings who have the thought of fortune are very few. How it is rare and what causes it. So Shantideva said in his present teaching to check up on the powerless virtue. That means the reason why there are very few worldly beings who have the thought of their fortune is because they didn't create the great powerful virtue of bodhicitta. Even if they have created virtue it is powerless, very little.

What he's trying to say is the reason why such a being, behaving with the thought of fortune, is very rare is because of not having created the greater powerful virtue of bodhicitta. Even if they have created virtue it is powerless, such very little virtue. Why is it this virtue they have created cannot control their negativities? Because their negativities are greater, more powerful than the virtue that they have created. So, as Shantideva was trying to explain to the ignorant sentient beings, the great

powerful negativities do not finish quickly, cannot be controlled, cannot be finished, cannot be purified by other virtues, without the thought of full enlightenment, bodhicitta.

What Shantideva is trying to say also is that if you want to purify as quickly as possible all the great powerful negativities—which have been continuing so far from beginningless lifetimes—and numberless negative karmas, then the most skillful, wise method is to try to cultivate the pure thought, which leads sentient beings into enlightenment.

The person who tries to practice bodhicitta, even though they don't know much about different art, philosophical teachings or different religions, even though they don't know different letters, even though they don't know other general education, like handicrafts, many things, since they are training their mind in bodhicitta, what they are doing is more skillful than any of those other methods. Their knowledge is the most useful, beneficial knowledge, more than any of those other common forms of knowledge. If the person wants to benefit others, the best way to benefit others is by having the pure thought of bodhicitta. Even if they want to benefit themselves, the best way, without one single action, in this life and in future lives, in all lifetimes, is by having the pure thought of bodhicitta.

As these teachings, these explanations are given by such great pandits with their experience and as we have the chance to hear these teachings, to talk about these things, and have the chance to practice meditation on this, instead of having a closed, narrow mind, it is better to open the mind. And while there's a chance in this short moment, while having this precious human rebirth, it is extremely important to train the mind in bodhicitta. It is something that can be practiced right away, right away.

In order for our action of listening to Dharma to become the quick cause of receiving enlightenment and a greater beneficial action to other sentient beings, it is necessary to be possessed by the pure thought. Therefore it is necessary to have at least a short motivation like this.

“It is not sufficient that I am released from all samsaric sufferings. Numberless other sentient beings are experiencing suffering without guidance, without a method. I must enlighten them by releasing them from suffering. To do it by myself, first of all I must achieve enlightenment. To achieve enlightenment I must complete the realizations of the whole graduated path to enlightenment. Therefore, I am going to listen to the profound teachings on the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The subject you are listening to is the Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate person to enlightenment. It is well-expounded by the great philosophers Nagarjuna and Asanga; it is a profound teaching as if the essence of the unequaled great pandit Atisha and the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa's knowledge, was shown. It includes the 84,000 teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and all this arranged for the graduated practice of our achievement of enlightenment. And this graduated path to enlightenment is the one path through which all the buddhas have received enlightenment.

This commentary on the graduated path has four outlines. The last one of these is the way of leading the disciple in the path to enlightenment. This has two outlines:

1. The way of following the guru, who is the root of the path.
2. The way of training the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment.

This has two outlines:

1. Persuading the mind in order to take the essence with the perfect human rebirth.
2. How to take the essence of the perfect human rebirth.

This meditation, persuading the mind in order to take the essence with the perfect human rebirth, involves three meditations:

1. Meditation on the perfect human rebirth, which involves the eight freedoms and ten receptacles.
2. The usefulness of the perfect human rebirth.

The meditation on the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth is categorized in three divisions:

1. How the perfect human rebirth is highly useful to achieve the ultimate goal, such as enlightenment, receiving nirvana, the cessation of samsara, and the temporal goals.

The perfect human rebirth is highly useful to gain the ultimate goal or even to gain temporal goals, such as being born as those samsaric gods, being born as a rich person or being king of the universe, the different continents. If we have a temporal goal, such as being born as a rich person, as a king, like this, it also includes perfect enjoyment, having great material enjoyments, having everything we need. The goal also includes material enjoyments, such as our surroundings, and if we wish to have many friends and don't want to be alone, we will always be surrounded by many friends, many servants or many helpers.

Generally thinking, between the lower creatures, the animals and human beings, even in this life human beings have much more freedom than lower creatures, even the temporal success to do with this present life. During this life, the temporal success, the temporal works, what has to be obtained before we die, if we make the comparison, human beings are much freer than the lower creatures, than other suffering beings.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 86]

Wasting this very precious human rebirth is many millions of times worse than losing universes full of precious jewels because:

1. It wastes the numberless lives spent trying to gain this precious rebirth which has resulted from good karma, created by morality and charity. These virtues have been practiced mainly in the human realms during several lives, each of which was the result of many others.

If you think in the depths of your mind, just concentrate on that sort of thing.

Think, try to feel that this present human rebirth is the result of good karma that has been created in many previous lifetimes, such as following discipline, trying to keep the precepts, keeping away from negative actions by surmounting the difficulties, also creating much charity. Don't think it has been done by God or some other people.

Think: “In many of my previous lives I created this karma. In many of my previous lives I’ve been trying very hard to create these karmas, such as to be born again with a perfect body. So, if I waste the present precious human birth, which is highly useful, which can be used to receive enlightenment in this lifetime, and also can be used to gain many other things, the great end, the pure end, to receive different levels of different realizations, such as release from samsara. There are many things which can be done with this perfect human rebirth. If I don’t use this present human rebirth in such a way, as it has such great meaning, using the present human rebirth for only creating negative karmas, meaningless actions—which make no difference between me and the creatures that are crawling around outside, on the ground, in the trees; always searching, seeking the comfort of this life, food and heat; not doing any meaningful actions, which are the essence—if I use my precious human rebirth in that way, I am wasting it. All my previous lives who tried to create good karma to bring this result, I am wasting all their energy.

“By not practicing Dharma with this birth, only doing meaningless actions, I lose, I waste a precious chance, all the previous chances to receive full enlightenment, cessation of samsara and nirvana, those higher realizations. I do not realize shunyata, my nature, and there’s no bodhicitta, no fully renouncing samsara, no good karma of observing morality and charity, creating charity, which makes to receive a better rebirth and meet the teachings again in a future life. I lose this by wasting this precious human rebirth, by using it for meaningless actions. I lose many precious chances, which sentient beings in other realms cannot obtain, many of the chances that they don’t have, by wasting this present perfect human rebirth.”

Think first of all: “If I use this perfect human rebirth only to gain the success of this temporal life, nothing to do with future lives, nothing to do with to receive everlasting happiness, if I use this perfect human rebirth only for that, only to gain the success of this temporal life—to obtain food, clothing, reputation, these three, and never practicing Dharma—I waste also many future lives, many future perfect human rebirths, which can be received by creating good karma with this rebirth. Also, with the future perfect human rebirth I can receive enlightenment and those higher realizations, those higher goals that I don’t achieve in this life. I also lose this chance by wasting this precious human rebirth.”

Think: “What is the difference between me and the animals? What are my actions while having this human rebirth, what higher actions do I do, which have meaning, which are higher than animal’s actions? What do I do? Actions such as stealing and cheating, animals also do. Animals can also steal. Animals are also wise in stealing. Actions such as killing others; that is nothing, all the lower creatures do that. Actions such as having sexual intercourse; all the creatures do that, all the tiniest insects, even these. Having ill will; that is nothing special. Having ill will, thinking how to destroy others’ possessions, how to give harm to others, like making plans for years and years on how to do that. How to be sneaky, how to destroy others with ill will, even the animals have, they’re much wiser. Even they have, not only human beings. Having miserliness, also animals have; the non-human beings also have miserliness, trying to collect materials, such as the temporal needs of this life, also animals can do. Even tiny insects, even the small ants, are so wise in collecting food, getting food, seeking to attain happiness in this present life.

“So, all my daily life actions, what I do from morning until nighttime, the purpose of all my actions from morning until night is nothing transcendent, nothing higher than that of those non-human creatures, their actions, their daily life actions. Nothing is higher, same thing, same thing. It’s only done to gain comfort of this life; nothing else. There’s no higher purpose, no higher goal. The same

thing, everything is done with attachment, all this, the works are done with attachment. Same thing, nothing, my daily life works are no higher than their actions. Even though I have the shape of a human body, the way I live, the way I act is the same as an animal. My mind is not controlled, not pure.”

Try to recognize the mistakes of the actions. Try to feel that since we received this body, how much of our human life has been wasted. If we think that animals can’t do handicrafts, paintings—that this is the difference—also there are many things that humans cannot do but animals can do, many handicrafts, many things. In regards that, there are many things animals can do that human beings cannot do. So, what meaningful action did we do since we were born until now?

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 86]

Numberless jewels, as many as could fill numberless universes, could never have the value of this present perfect rebirth. If all the jewels I have possessed in all my past lives could fill an infinite space, what good would that do? If I really think deeply about it I can see that no real happiness would come from that because it is of no use in controlling this negative mind.

Realize that you possess many universes full of jewels, you possess, “that thing that I have.” And then check, check.

“Even if I have many universes full of jewels, this doesn’t have the value of the present perfect human rebirth, which can obtain many high goals. Actually, if I count all the jewels I have possessed in my different previous lifetimes there wouldn’t be any space left; if I collect all the jewels that I possessed in my different previous lifetimes, there wouldn’t be any space left. I possessed that many jewels. But still, there’s no change, still the negative mind is not removed. Nothing has changed.”

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 86–87]

We must check up on our own past experiences or put ourselves in the position of a wealthy man to see how material possessions cannot help us put an end to suffering. It is important to deeply see and feel our own experience of such situations.

There are spirits called nagas, inhabiting the animal realm, who are very rich and possess many stores of jewels. (The naga spirits have bodies half-human and half-animal, or of other shapes; they can see humans but most humans cannot see them.) We ourselves have had the experience of possessing such stores of jewels numberless times; we have possessed enough jewels to fill an endless space, yet no suffering has been cured. In the narak there are similar experienced beings, in great suffering.

So, just as we have tried now to do meditation, it is very useful to do checking meditation like this. It’s very useful. What I said is just an example to give you an idea of how to check up but you can check better, you can check deeper. The main thing is not the action but the purpose of the action, with what type of mind we do the action. Mainly what we criticize is not the action but the purpose of the action; we create negative actions with a negative mind. That’s what makes no difference between humans and the lower creatures.

Even though our shape looks different [from animals], in regard to our life, if we really check up, it's no different—we don't find anything pure, we don't find anything meaningful in our life actions, we're just exactly the same. We may be living in a house or apartment, a good apartment, having many swimming pools, having many possessions, many stores of clothes, stores of things. Compared with the creatures that are crawling around that house on the ground, the animals who are living in the forest—we may think living like this looks sort of purer, higher, and others are sort of down, very suffering and very ignorant, but if we really check up we don't find it is any higher, we don't find it any purer. We don't find any difference if we really check up on the way we act.

So, you see, no matter how we look, it's just temporary, no matter how we look different from those creatures at the moment—a different way of acting, a different way of talking, a different way of going, a different way of living—just looking different, but our purpose, our goal is exactly the same. There's nothing purer, nothing higher than those deeply ignorant very poor animals, the creatures, nothing higher than them. Everything is done with ignorance, attachment or hatred. If we really check up, it's exactly the same thing.

No matter if we are flying airplanes, whether we're flying rockets, no matter whether we're watching a movie, no matter whether we're enjoying a beautiful park, no matter whether we're swimming in the river—what difference is there between a fish swimming in the water and a human? Actually, we cannot find any higher purpose. The purpose is exactly the same. Only that we don't look like fish on the outside, that's all. The level of mind with which we do the action is the same: the whole thing is searching, seeking comfort of this life. Nothing is done to release us from suffering. It is the same thing.

If we really check up, those who have many possessions, many things, beautiful apartments, many, many things, usually think they're much higher than other sentient beings. But from the meditators' side, those who practice Dharma, who understand Dharma, if we check up, those wealthy people are the object of compassion. They are so ignorant. With ignorance they think they're being high or they're doing some great precious, useful things, or their duties are higher than other sentient beings! They don't know the meaning of "human," they don't know the meaning of life, how to use the life; even though they have the chance, they're not being aware of the chance. So, from the meditators' side those people are really the objects of tears, the objects of compassion. If their situation is really checked up, it is really something that makes us cry.

In this way, it doesn't mean anything that we are born as human beings. If we continue to use our life in the same way, like the length of time that we have so far finished, our time in this human body is soon finished and nothing has changed. The energy is past, finished. If we continue to use our life like this, like animals, like those ignorant foolish sentient beings, then it doesn't make sense that we have this human shape, why we are called human beings.

First of all, I think I will read straight down to the end of the subject. [*Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 87]

The beginning of these lives is not even seen by the Buddha's omniscient mind let alone by the minds of ordinary beings, and if I continue to work for these things I shall continue to suffer in the circle of samsara.

Like this, if our previous life had a beginning, if there's something that can be pointed out, then it also would be the object of the omniscient mind. The omniscient mind would also see it. But the beginning of the previous lives, the beginning of the continuity of the previous lives, is not the object of omniscient mind. Why is it not object of omniscient mind? Because it does not exist. The beginning of the continuity of the previous lives does not exist, just like in the example of this life and the previous life. There has always been continuity, even though there are different bodies, there's always continuity. There has been always continuity.

The I, what we call the person, always exists, it's always continuous. As the mind is continuous, so the I is continuous. Therefore, if we were a dog previously, after the dog rebirth, after finishing the dog life, after the previous life, the karmic result of living with the dog's body is finished, then again we take a human body as we have created such previous karma. Like this, just like this, between the previous life and this present life there's no break. There's no break in the continuity of mind and there's no break in the continuity of the person. There's no break.

If there was a break, how could it be possible that we had a previous life? There would be no reason for that. The I or the person, which was a dog, would not be a continuity of this present person, this present I, because this present human mind is not the continuity of that previous mind.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 87–88]

Usually I am afraid of the slightest temporary physical sicknesses such as colds or headaches, of suffering from heat or cold, or of the pain of a too full or empty stomach; I find these things really unbearable and try to stop them by all kinds of temporal means.

On the other hand, I am not at all afraid of the greater sufferings I have experienced in past lives—those of rebirth and death and the many other unspeakable sufferings of the six samsaric realms that are caused by greed, ignorance and hatred. Neither to think or worry about these sufferings, merely trying to stop those of the moment, only creates the cause for more future suffering. Such actions are extremely foolish and nonsensical—like those of a crazy person. I can have human thoughts and actions, yet I behave as a dumb animal.

This part of the subject is very useful, very useful. Anyway, *I* find it very useful! Actually, this part is basically from Guru Tsongkhapa's teaching. Of course, for many of these things the essence is from Guru Tsongkhapa's teaching, such as outlines.

Why I often go through the outlines is because they have great purpose and also it is extremely useful because even just the outline titles have great meaning. They make so much sense. Even just looking at the title has a great beneficial effect on the mind. By going through and understanding the titles, the outlines, even though we don't go through the subject or come to the meditation, we don't participate in meditation, but just by understanding the titles we have a rough idea of the meditation, what type of meditation and what it explains, the essence. We can understand just from the outlines.

Also, the way the outlines are fixed is a very psychological method. It's so beneficial for the mind, to make the mind realized. Also by understanding the outlines it helps us to feel it's not too complicated. We don't feel, "The meditation is very complicated," or "There are too many

meditations,” or “I don’t know how to practice so many meditations, how to study it, how to begin the practice.” That kind of problem gets solved. Also, even though the commentary of the teachings has many pages, hundreds, three hundred, many pages, by understanding the outline, by having the complete outline in our mind, the whole subject becomes so small, becomes just very few. If we don’t find any complications, we find early on it’s so well set up.

In one house there may be all kinds of things, like clothes and kitchen things and all kinds of things, very messy, nothing is set up; then we think there are so many things and we feel very confused! Nothing is clear, it’s very confused, not clear. But if we put things neatly on the shelves—the piles of things, books, clothes, our paint, whatever, wherever it goes—then we don’t find any confusion. Even if we want to count our materials, we can count easily what is lost or not! Anyway, it’s much easier and our mind is so much clearer this way. So much clearer, no confusion, also we don’t feel it’s messy, even though the number of material possessions is the same, whether we put it all like this or fix it. Anyway, sort of like this example—it’s very useful, very useful, so useful, very, very useful.

Tonight are you confused about doing the meditation? It’s very easy to do meditation, very easy. You can expand the meditation or if you want to make the meditation short, through outlines you can make short, just brief meditations, or you can expand each of the meditations to the extent of the commentary. There are choices. When the mind is well-trained in any meditation, when you have clear understanding of the meditation, when your mind has been trained well for a long time, then if you have the realization of the meditation you don’t have to go through it with many words, you don’t have to go through it with many explanations, it doesn’t need that. Just by remembering the outline you don’t need many words; it just makes it very clear in your mind. Just thinking that, just remembering that, you can see the whole subject very clearly. You don’t have to go through it with many words, like now we’re trying; it doesn’t have to be like that.

In the beginning it is very necessary and so important to go through the explanations, which make things clear. The most important thing, the quick way, the quickest way to understand the previous meditation and to realize the meditation is on the basis of understanding the outlines, the titles of the meditations, the essence of the subject. Then you can check. You check. You do checking meditation. As you continuously do checking meditation, you will find you can see clearer and clearer and the subject goes deeper and deeper. Your mind becomes clearer and clearer on the subject. So you can make commentary by yourself. With your wisdom, you can make commentary. With your own commentary, you have a stronger feeling about what the book says. Just from the text sometimes you don’t feel much.

When the realized person hears the teaching, because their mind is tamed, they get much feeling. With an unrealized mind, an untamed mind we don’t feel anything when we hear the teachings or when we read, but sometimes, as we’re practicing meditation, the commentary that comes, the explanation is coming through our wisdom. With our own individual meditation practice, we get more feeling because somehow it came through our understanding. So, it has much feeling. Many of the notes—the titles and essence are from the teachings—but many notes are my own superstition: a crazy lama’s superstition!

Also it is very useful when we do checking meditation for it to be repeated, because in the beginning it is very difficult if it is not repeated again and again, it’s very difficult to do the meditation. Depending on our capability, sometimes that’s why we find difficult to do meditation. Even if we try

to read a book, perhaps our mind easily wanders around, gets distracted and we spend more hours in the distraction than in the meditation. We do maybe five minutes of meditation and spend two hours in distraction, even though our physical body is sitting there.

Therefore, I think, usually we don't repeat all the time in other meditation courses, but here I will do so to make it easier, to create attention. As it is repeated, you can try to understand what is being repeated, and as you understand, you can write down in your notebook the repetitions, like the essence of the meditation. The whole reason here is to think of the essence of the subject, when you make meditation on this specific subject, what you have to remember, which is useful. The whole thing is not just to understand but to use it, however it's not necessary to remember all the time.

As things are repeated that are not in the book, if you write them down, then afterwards, when you have time at home or any place, wherever you go, you can take it out when you meditate, then it is easier. You have the equipment. Just as when you feel hungry you have the food to eat, delicious food. So like that, it will be useful.

But when you do checking meditation by yourself, that time it is very useful, as you do checking meditation, you find deeper explanations within your own wisdom, as you continue with the meditation. At those times, as you find a deeper explanation, it is possible, as you continue with the meditation, the power of the mind, the knowledge of the mind, through the continued meditations all of a sudden the mind becomes open. And all of a sudden you understand things! Even though you didn't see the subject in the book, it comes. It's the power of mind as you continue the meditation. It comes also mainly because of purification.

When those things come, you can write them down in your notebook about Dharma, in the collections of the meditations: the book of Dharma. You collect all the explanations of the meditation subjects. Then, when you meditate again, you use the explanation that came, the understanding that came through your wisdom, again you use. Your feeling grows, your feeling, your understanding grows in that way. It becomes clearer and clearer with the explanation you found through your wisdom, you have such a strong feeling with it.

The main purpose of doing meditations in a fixed schedule, at a time of day, early in the morning—that's the method actually to make the rest of the daily actions aware and conscious. What you're doing and what sort of mind you have, and how you're doing it, to be conscious. By being conscious of what you're doing, there is a chance that your daily life is pure Dharma, there's a chance that all your actions become Dharma, not opposite from the meditation. Then, the specific subject of meditation is never lost, like this. So if you do like this, meditating for half an hour, doing meditation for a short time in the morning, then you make the rest of the day useful.

Try to remember the meditation and check up. Always try to be aware whether your life is Dharma, whether your actions are Dharma or not, always check up. Always check up, be aware. This way, your life becomes really meaningful, really practical and really pure. Then, even though you don't wear robes, even though you don't look like that, if you do like this, if your mind is conscious and trying to put all things in relation to Dharma, trying to become Dharma, all the actions become pure. That is the thing that really makes the life highly beneficial or pure. It's very useful, very useful, very useful.

Also, if you do like this in your daily life, there is much less confusion in your daily life, much less confusion, much less worry. Because of the nature of Dharma, if your mind is aware of the Dharma, it helps you to understand the nature of your confusion, the nature of your problems. So, the mind has much less suffering. Like this. It helps greatly. Even if something has gone wrong, your mind has much less problem, is more relaxed, happier. If you can do like this, no matter where you are, even though you go to your daily life job, whatever you do—excellent. The main thing is to take care of the mind, to check, to try to be aware of different states of mind and then try to keep in purity. That is the most important thing.

Just like the water source—the fountain or spring, the main place from where water comes into the cities—if it is poisoned, then all the water that is placed in the cities, the different villages, all becomes poisoned and gives lots of harm to all the people who drink it. Just like this, the mind is like that, therefore it is so important to take care of the mind. The mind is the thing from where all the actions come, negative or positive, those which bring confusion and those which bring happiness. The mind is like the main place from where all water comes in the city. The mind can be dangerous, therefore, the main purpose of practicing Dharma is to take care of the mind.

Lecture 7

Most of the time it is like this: all our solutions, all our methods, which we use often to stop the physical hardships of life, all the difficulties in life or future difficulties—all the methods we use to stop the different physical problems, many things—if we really check up, they are very confused actions, very confused.

Like, in our daily life: we get up in the morning and then we feel uncomfortable without washing. By washing, by getting wet, we feel clean. Also by not cleaning, by not fixing things and not washing, we look ugly. So just because of these reasons, to stop these problems, these sufferings, we wash. We wash with what kind of mind? With attachment, the eight worldly dharmas, the worldly dharmas. The evil thought of the worldly dharmas. We didn't have any higher, special reason, any pure reason to wash.

Then we have tea. All of a sudden, we think, "I'd like tea," we have desire for tea, attachment to the tea. That also doesn't have any special, pure reason or pure motivation. Then we just drink unconsciously, we just drink with attachment, with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. Then going for a walk, and then maybe breakfast—that's also the same, we don't have any pure motivation; again, we do it with attachment, without any beneficial thought. Then also, unconsciously, we eat.

Then we get ready to go to work, and we are very busy with work but there's no pure motivation, we're in such a hurry, with attachment. Maybe we think, "If I don't go to work, I'll lose my job and then my life will be unhappy." We're only attached to comfort; it's nothing to do with the practice of Dharma, nothing to benefit other sentient beings, nothing. No pure motivation is involved, something like collecting money for others. Instead our mind is concerned with only one thing, ourselves, all the time. A big I, a great big I—that is what is in the depths of our heart all the time if we check up.

Then, to collect money, with such a poor mind we go to work. We spend some hours there and while we're doing that, also there's no pure motivation. Maybe when we work there, all kinds of negative thoughts arise, such as hatred, when we see other people who we are jealous of, who we don't like, who we hate or to whom we're attached. There are all kinds of different problems coming in the mind while we are working. Then same thing with the lunch, same thing, no pure motivation, only attachment, working for ourselves. And same thing when we come back, when we drive home, same thing, there's no pure motivation, it's done with attachment, with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. Also, when we have supper, same thing—we eat with impure motivation, with attachment, we're involved with ourselves, only concerned with ourselves.

Then, maybe we do something like inviting people for a party or something. Again, there's no pure motivation, nothing is pure. Nothing is pure. Maybe we are attached to someone and therefore we invite them. Or maybe we want to get some material things from the person we invite, we expect to receive something from them, to use them for our comfort, not for enlightenment. It's for all our comfort, not for our enlightenment; it's for something else but not for receiving enlightenment. Or there's nothing to benefit them and inviting them is only to gain our own comfort, only for this life, to have a good reputation. We're involved with attachment, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. I think that's nothing pure.

Going shopping, same thing again, with impure motivation, with attachment, sort of deep in our heart, the big I, with attachment. Thinking "I want," seeking only the comfort of this life when we go shopping. And when we take our supper, same thing, when we go to bed, same thing. At first when we go to bed we're not controlled; when we go to bed there's no control! Our mind is very tired after doing many things, and that's why it's difficult to think of something [positive]. Anyway, again there's no pure motivation, unconsciously we think "I'm tired," and we seek only the comfort of this life, then with attachment we just go to bed. And then we become like a dead person! I'm joking.

Like this, we're not doing terrible actions—this is still just talking about the daily life actions that we do. Not even counting the actions that harm others, like killing. Like fishing or hunting, those things. There are many other things. Like fighting other people or things like that; without counting even those things. All these things are done with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, mostly done with attachment. If we really check up on how we think when getting up, drinking, eating, getting dressed, driving, working, sleeping, all these things are suffering, no matter what we do. Always these are done with attachment, the suffering of attachment, they're always done with ignorance, there's nothing conscious. Our mind is never conscious of our actions.

All these actions during the day are done with attachment. All these actions, which are done with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, such as attachment, do not bring a beneficial result, do not bring happiness. They do not become the cause of happiness. All these actions become the cause of confusion. All this is the cause of suffering; all the results that come from this cause are suffering. So therefore, we are suffering, like this.

These are the karmas. My actual talk on karma will come afterwards but some of the subject came here. So all these are karmas, which cause us to be born in samsara; all these daily life actions are karma, which cause us to be born in samsara again, in the suffering realms. The suffering results of these karmas are experienced in the upper realms and in the lower realms—as a preta [hungry

ghost], animal or narak [hell being]. Even if we are born in the upper realms there are certain suffering results which have to be experienced. But my explanation of karma will come afterwards, and then it will become clearer.

That's why I was saying yesterday, from the meditator's side, the person who is living in the Dharma, from their side we ordinary people, no matter how wise we are, thinking, "I know so much," psychologists, teachers—no matter how much we think, since we are not aware, since we do not know these different types of mind, since we are not really fully aware of our mind, there are always mistakes in our actions. That's why I'm saying, from the meditator's side, we ordinary people—however much we think we're educated, learned—from the meditator's side, we ordinary people are unconscious, completely unconscious; foolish, unconscious in the daily life actions. It's just like running in a dark room. It's just like running in the dark in the forest where there are ferns growing and rocks and all kinds of things—it's difficult running in the dark in such a place, like that.

Then, same thing, also, maybe on Sunday or Saturday, even though we have a holiday we don't do meditation, there's no Dharma. We don't know the purpose of meditation and even if we know the meditation we don't meditate when we have time. Even if we maybe know, maybe have received meditation [instruction], we never give ourselves time to meditate. We never have time. We have time to do other things, to do things with attachment, like going to see friends or going outside to do other things. We have more interest in doing other things, but we don't spend even fifteen minutes meditating, we don't get time.

So, tonight it is a little bit clearer. We do many things to stop the temporal hardships that we dislike but all the methods we use to stop the difficulties are done with attachment, as I explained, so they all become the cause of suffering.

Actually, how is it unconscious? Instead of following this method to completely finish the arising of daily life difficulties, the method that we use in daily life only brings more and more suffering. It only brings the result suffering. The more we create the cause of suffering it only brings more and more suffering. Therefore the hardships of life, the problems of our life do not finish; of course they do not stop, do not cease in this life.

In this way, by continuing such a life all the time, the daily life problems, the hardships of life that come in our daily life can never end at any time. Just as we experience them as we go through this life, same thing—even though we've been born a billion times in the human realm, similar daily life problems will always come. Why will they always come? It will always continue like this because the causes of those hardships were created in a life such as this, in other previous lifetimes. We think this method is the perfect method, the right method, that it can definitely help to stop the life problems. This is what we think with our wrong conception.

If you don't understand this, if you don't understand what I just explained, then think that by allowing attachment to arise, our deluded actions do not make that attachment stop. Or, by anger arising it does not make the anger stop. By anger arising it only plants more seeds in the mind to continue arising anger. Same thing with ignorance: creating the action with ignorance only plants the seeds of more ignorance. So that will produce ignorance.

One thing, the very first mistake is not knowing karma. We're ignorant of karma. Why we make so many mistakes in our daily life, why we're not aware, is because we really don't know, we're not

really aware of the cause of happiness and the cause of suffering. We really don't know. This is the biggest and the first mistake. Then, for some of us, even if we hear Dharma teachings like this, explanations like this, because we don't do continual meditation we don't have much feeling for it, even though we have intellectual understanding. So we don't care, we don't care, and we continuously make mistakes.

[Reading *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 88]

Shantideva said:

The perfect human rebirth, the most difficult to find and a greatly beneficial foundation is, however, received by opportunity. If, while having the wisdom to know practice and avoidance, one again leads oneself to the narak, one is purposely making oneself ignorant.

This quotation is not complete. After this quotation he also said it is sort of like having no thought, having no consciousness. Sometimes we say that when someone doesn't act properly or when they make a mistake, like if there are many people eating lunch and one person maybe falls asleep or something, their mind is not conscious, then maybe by mistake they eat from other people's plates. Anyway, when someone makes mistakes, we sometimes say they don't have a brain, they don't have a human brain, or they're not conscious. When they do something, when their behavior is outside the usual human behavior we say they're like an animal, they don't act like human being; we sort of use it in a worldly way, like this.

So Shantideva is saying that even though we have received such a beneficial precious perfect rebirth, which is extremely difficult to receive again, we have received it this time by opportunity, but while we have the wisdom to know what to practice and what to avoid—what is the cause of suffering and what is the cause of happiness; while we have the wisdom to know this and to avoid negative actions and to create the causes of happiness, the positive actions, but all the time we create the causes to be reborn in a suffering life—we are purposely making ourselves ignorant. He's saying that's like not having thoughts, not having mind, compared to the meditator, compared to a person living in the Dharma.

The meditation at two o'clock, I think, is the ten receptacles and their usefulness. We'll begin with the recitation of the mantra.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 88]

If I care so much about any momentary sufferings and sicknesses why do I not care about the tremendous, continuous suffering of my future lives; why do I not worry about and try to eliminate the true cause of suffering?

This is also true, if we check up. Usually our nature is like this. We're ignorant sentient beings, our nature is like this. Temporal problems, which are not really the big problem, the greatest suffering, we think are the biggest problem. That which is the worst, the greatest suffering, that actual greatest suffering, we don't care about! That [temporal problem] we try to take care of as much as possible. We try to keep it like a jewel in a box. Like keeping diamonds, like keeping jewels in a box! It's like this. When we understand a little bit about karma, if we check up how it is, then it is clear, we see it is really true.

Like this simple example of caring for a wound on the body—the wound is our greatest problem, we think it is the greatest suffering, but actually the greatest suffering is the cause that brings the wound. That is the worst thing. The cause of bringing the wound to the body, the cause that brings such a body, which makes such a body that is in the nature of suffering, which inflicts pain or is wounded—that is the worst thing. That is the greatest suffering. The wound is nothing. If we really think about it, a wound is nothing; even if our hand is cut off, that's nothing. That is nothing. Even if our head is cut in pieces or our brain is cut in pieces! That is just one-time physical suffering. That is still nothing. The worst, the greatest suffering is the cause that brings this, which results in this suffering and which brings a body that is living in the nature of suffering, which gets pain. That is the worst thing.

How is this cause worse than the temporal problems? That is because without this cause there wouldn't be this body, which lives in the nature of suffering. Without this body, how can there be problems? Feeling hot and cold, and in meditation time feeling pain in the back and legs, the body getting tired and things like that. Any problem of this kind comes because this body is living in the nature of suffering. It lives in suffering nature, the suffering realms.

This is a suffering realm, the body, which we always take care of. This is samsara, this is a suffering realm. So, the cause that brings this is the most dangerous, the worst thing. Usually it's like this. The results which are caused, such as little problems like stomach pains, these things, we exaggerate and we think they are a big problem. We are completely unconscious regarding the cause of this suffering, the main suffering. This is the worst thing. And what we do is, instead of getting rid of the causes, we actually take care of the causes as much as possible.

Actually the subject goes another way. For instance, the wrong conception of the self, I, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the attachment, which is produced by it—we take care of all those. We take care so much in our heart. Wrong conceptions stay alive and also the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the attachment, which is the servant of the wrong conception of the self. We keep them in the heart and always take care, we always try to feed them as much as possible. As they give orders, then they get new clothes, then they put clothes. Then they give orders: "Drink!" Then they get a drink. It's like this. We are the servant. We, the person, are the servant. We follow whatever they order us to do. If they say "Give me candy" then we give candy. We are completely their servant, their slave! We have no control, we are completely controlled by them. Just like a horse caught by the reins—if the horse does not run it gets beaten by the person, even though the horse has to carry so much heavy baggage, so many things.

We are completely controlled, but we think we are free. Free, nothing! Especially some young people think they're so free, they don't have to follow rules, they don't have to follow discipline, those kinds of things. They think they're so free, they can do anything, whatever comes to mind they try to do it. However, if we know what is right or wrong, if we are conscious, if we can recognize that, if we don't allow ourselves to follow the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, if we try to stop following the evil thought of the worldly dharmas and try to follow the positive mind, the wisdom—I think that is free. That's free. If we do that, we can say "I am free."

Why? It's logical. We are free if we practice like this, no matter if we look very ugly, terrible outside, heavy or whatever. If our mind is living in discipline, trying to stop the evil thought of the worldly dharmas from arising, trying to stop following and serving it, and trying to follow wisdom, the positive mind—wisdom that destroys the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, destroys the wrong

conception of the self, I—we are free. We are free, compared with what ordinary people call free in this life because they have all the enjoyments. “I have all enjoyments, whatever I need,” or “I have all the food that I want in my kitchen, all the clothes. I bought this and that, I’ve got everything.” They think, “I’m free.” That is not really free.

[We can be like] the crazy young man, who is recognized as crazy, but whose mind is living in such a discipline, who is actually trying to stop the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. We try not to follow the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, we try to follow the wisdom. Compared to someone who says they have everything, this and that, we are really free. Why? Because, instead of being controlled by and always following the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, we try to stop it.

Instead of being controlled by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, attachment, we can try to stop the attachment; we can keep away from the attachment. By following the wisdom, the positive mind, we try to stop attachment, we try to remove it. That is really free. It does not depend on whether other people see us as free, it does not depend on that. We have peace, we really make our life happy. And we have the right method; we are acting in the right way. We are actually creating the real cause of peace. In our mind, there’s peace.

Otherwise, we are completely under the control of wrong conceptions, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, attachment, the wrong conception of the self, I, those wrong conceptions. If we really think, if we really check the movie that is inside, if we check, we have to do this, instead of taking care of and serving the eight worldly dharmas, trying to get things, trying to suit attachment or the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. But there’s not only that problem: when material things are finished, whatever temporal needs, when there’s something wrong, when each gets destroyed, lost, finished or something, then again there’s another problem. So we are not really free. Not really free.

The worst cause is the wrong conception of the self, I, and the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the attachment, which we’ve been talking about this morning. This is the worst cause.

And also, the negative karma; the negative karma is one thing, the negative karma that is created due to the wrong conception of the self, I, and the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the attachment. One thing that we don’t care about is negative karma. We don’t care. We’re not aware, we don’t understand it, we’re not aware. Even if we do understand, we do recognize it a little bit but still, we don’t care. This is one mistake, this is one cause.

If we don’t abstain from these negative karmas, if we continuously create negative karma, then the negative karma continuously brings all these different kinds of life problems and upsets, in the future life and also in the present life. So if we are conscious of those causes of the sufferings and try to remove them, that is very wise, very skillful.

Instead of trying to stop the temporal problems such as disease or those other temporal problems, instead of curing these by creating the causes of more suffering, by creating another cause of suffering—we should try to cure ourselves of creating another cause of suffering. We should try to remove the cause of this suffering result. Caring more about the cause of suffering than the result, those small problems; caring more about the cause and trying to get rid of that, putting more energy to remove the cause, is much more skillful and wise.

Also, it is logical. If, for instance, we don't want the temporal, small problems that we are finishing now, if we do not desire them, if we want to get rid of that, same reason: we should get rid of the cause. We should remove the cause of these temporal problems, the cause of our sufferings, which will bring more suffering in the future. What was created in the past and what is created now—same reason, this cause should be removed.

For example, if we are having treatment to cure temporal diseases, it's the same thing, we should have treatment to cut, to remove the cause of these sufferings. It is the same reason. There is no reason why we shouldn't have treatment to remove the cause and have treatment only to remove the result, the small problems. It's the same thing.

So, it comes to the point. When we practice meditation, when we practice Dharma, when we try to understand, of course we will find it difficult to understand. When we do meditation and try to practice Dharma, of course we will find difficulties, like physical problems in the meditation time, things like that. What is more worthwhile?

For instance, we experience difficulties and there is always something not right. There's always something not right, such as feeling cold or feeling hungry. Even when we sit, if we check with regard to comfort, we can always find something not right there. Something is not comfortable, either the place, or we itch, we scratch, having lice! You know, the lice are biting or we have pain somewhere. If we sit, we can always find something. In our tent we're either feeling cold or uncomfortable, not having a soft bed, there's always something, some problem we can find.

Especially when we practice Dharma, the mind is kind of a little bit more aware of some things. Our mind is a little bit more aware somehow of less comfort, of obtaining the comfort of this life. Usually it is like this, maybe, the more effort and the more energy we spend in meditation, in practicing Dharma. If we seek problems, we will always find different problems. However, we should not be concerned with that, we should not think that our problems are so important. If we care about all these miscellaneous small things, the problems that we find, if we think about them, they become more and more important. The problems get bigger and bigger, bigger and bigger. They get bigger and bigger then, because we are so concerned, we can never find time to practice Dharma, we can never find time to meditate. Our mind is always occupied by attachment, seeking comfort.

It is very difficult, extremely difficult to practice Dharma because of these disturbances. However, without completing Dharma practice, there's no part of life, not even one hour, that we can be completely perfect, physically and mentally completely free. We can't solve every problem or have complete peace, complete freedom, with not one single problem or suffering physically or mentally; there's no chance of even one hour to be like this as long as we don't complete the Dharma practice, no way. Without depending on Dharma practice, this Dharma treatment, there's no way.

Therefore, it is more worthwhile to put energy into meditation, to put energy into Dharma practice rather than being concerned with each of the small problems. It's more skillful, more worthwhile to make ourselves strong, to encourage ourselves, and then continue with the meditation practice, with the Dharma practice, without caring so much about those small problems. In this way, our life is always peaceful and happy, without much distraction. If we don't care, if we forget the problems, if we don't care about them, then they don't become important; they don't really bother us.

This is the beginning meditators' experience. We should think it's natural. Whenever there's a problem, we should think it is natural. Instead of thinking, "This is new, I've never heard of this before. What to do, oh!" Instead of putting ourselves down, feeling embarrassed, we should think it is natural: "Because I'm living in the nature of suffering, why not? Because I'm living in suffering, because I'm sitting in the fire, why not?" Just like this.

If we don't know we're sitting in the fire then we don't know that is its nature. We have to recognize that the problem is the fault of living in the fire of samsara, that it's burning, uncomfortable, that all these things are our own fault, by putting ourselves in the fire! Then it makes us aware that we have to get out of that. So, like this, it is very useful, very useful. Very useful. "It is my fault that I am living in the fire of samsara, the samsara fire, it is my own fault; this means that I should escape from this samsaric fire." And in this way, even though we forgot to do meditation, we then remember our meditation.

If our mind is thinking like this, living in such a way and we're always correcting ourselves, then we don't get much distraction in our Dharma practice. We lead a pure life and we get less distraction. This is the way all those great meditators do it, how they started their life, how they spent their Dharma practice, how they tried to start to have a pure life is by correcting themselves like this, mainly by understanding the suffering nature of samsara.

So, my emphasis is that because the Dharma is the only method, it is more worthwhile to cut off the cause of the suffering, such as not creating negative karma, such as to not following the attachment, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, such as the wrong conception of the self. What I'm just talking about actually involves much explanation, so it may come up some time. It is wiser, more worthwhile to cut off the cause, rather than being so concerned about putting all our energy into trying to stop the result, the temporal problems.

What is the method? What is the treatment to cut the cause? That is Dharma. That is only Dharma, the Buddha's psychological method, the Dharma, by depending on the psychology of Buddha, no mistake, no mistake. In this way, by following his psychological method, every single problem that has not been stopped so far, from beginningless lifetimes, can be completely ceased without paying even one *paisa*. Without paying even one dollar! Anyway, like this. No mistake, no mistake, always useful, always beneficial.

Actually, if we really understand, even without particularly living in Dharma practice, but even if we have an intellectual understanding of these meditation techniques from the graduated path, I think, even though we're not living in the practice, even though we're not having realizations, we have a much more beneficial solution than psychologists, generally, to whom we would pay hundreds and hundreds of dollars, who don't know anything about the mind. I don't mean all psychologists but that can be one person who cannot really solve our problems, who cannot really see the nature of the problem. If they cannot see the nature of the problems, how can they really cut them off, how can they really solve the problems? If they don't know where the problems come from, how can they solve them? Even just having intellectual understanding of these meditation techniques is great. Having so much understanding, so much method, is very beneficial.

Especially the part on the bodhisattva practice, the different meditation techniques that the bodhisattvas practice, the bodhisattvas' actions and practices, those bodhisattvas' disciplines, their precepts. Especially, that part of mind training, especially that part. That is not only to make our

mind happy but also to make other people's minds happy, to bring peace in their minds. The checking meditation is a real psychological method because it really explains the nature of mind, the real nature of each problem. It explains very clearly where it comes from, what causes it, what it does, all the evolution, everything, and it gives us all the methods to cut off, to absolutely, completely cure the root of all our problems.

Of course that doesn't mean just intellectual understanding, that's not enough. We have to go through the practice. We have to go through the experience of this meditation thought practice. Just describing the taste of Coca-Cola, if we really want to feel the pleasure of that, if we really want to know, then we have to go buy Coca-Cola and drink it. Other people experiencing drinking, we cannot experience, we cannot understand the taste without our own experience. Something like this.

I think the meditation is like this:

Starting from the present action, your meditation, the present mind; that's now, the present mind. What is your motivation? Is it the evil thought of worldly dharmas, attachment, or what is it? Check like this. And before the meditation, "What did I do?" Try to be aware of what you did. Like, if you had talks, with what motivation? "What motivation did I talk with? Did I talk without the evil thought of the worldly dharmas or with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas?" Then check your lunch time, with what mind? Did you have lunch with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas or without it? Try to remember.

Whatever action you did, try to remember whether it was done with the evil thought or not, going back, starting from morning time, starting with checking up morning meditation. Whether you sat down with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas or not. Then you should check up breakfast time and also when you got up. When you got up, whether you got up with the enlightened mind. "How did I get up? Did I get up with the thought of evil worldly dharmas or not?" Check up, try to remember, try to be aware. This is very useful, very useful. Very useful.

"Last night, how did I go to bed?" Try to remember. Then check yesterday's life, then during the meditation course, the days here, as you can remember your actions, whether they were done with the evil thought or not. Then also check at your home, at your place, each work that you do, like your daily life job, "With what mind, with what evil mind did I do my job, or not? With what kind of mind did I go to work?" Try to remember. And whatever you did—driving your car or staying at home or cooking, whatever you were doing—try to remember the different actions you did, like shopping or doing things, business, and then, after remembering the action, try to remember the mind, what kind of mind it was: whether it was the evil thought of the worldly dharmas or not.

Then check back, this year and last year, the other years, like this. Also if you were traveling to other countries or you did many other things, check up like this. Check up like this back to baby time, as much as you can remember. Even if you remember your previous life, then you can check up, even if you remember beginningless life, you can go back to the beginningless. Anyway, so like this.

Then, if you find one single action, like today, if you find one action that wasn't really done with evil thought of the worldly dharmas, it's really something you can be happy about! Then you can thank yourself!

One follower of Atisha called Geshe Ben Gungyal, when he was in a cave doing practice of thought training, like the graduated path, meditating, at those times, every night he counted his actions, starting from the morning and trying to remember all the actions from the morning. He had stones, kind of pebbles, white and black, to count; one type was to count the negative actions and one was to count the positive actions. Every night he tried to remember his actions from the morning and counted each one. One negative action, done with the evil thought, he was checking and if he remembered, he put one black stone there. And then for every positive action, he put one white stone. In the beginning he didn't find many white, he didn't have much chance to collect white stones, only the black ones. Then gradually as he'd been trying very hard to practice Dharma, the number of black stones became less and less, and white ones increased more and more. Like this. He was a Kadampa, which means he was a follower of Atisha, one who was living in the practice of Atisha's teachings, the practice of mind training, by living a strict life.

As we find actions that were not possessed by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, as we find positive actions, then that's something that is worthwhile to feel happiness. As those are actions done without being possessed by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, it is something that makes our life meaningful. The actions done with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, actions possessed by this thought are wasting time; they are something that doesn't bring any meaning or value to our human rebirth. Because all the non-human beings, all the dumb, deeply ignorant sentient beings, those lower creatures, all their actions are possessed by this.

Lecture 8

From the holy speech of the great bodhisattva Shantideva:

[1:7] All the buddhas who have contemplated for many eons
Have seen it to be beneficial;
For by it the limitless masses of beings
Will quickly attain the supreme state of bliss.

“Even if it is checked for many eons what can bring benefit and happiness—Shakyamuni Buddha has discovered what brings immediate sublime happiness in the minds of the infinite living beings.”

The meaning of the quotation is that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha checked up for many thousands of eons what is the best thing to benefit sentient beings, what is the best method to bring peace, the sublime everlasting happiness. What Guru Shakyamuni Buddha discovered is only bodhicitta can benefit for sublime happiness, which means enlightenment, in the minds of infinite sentient beings. Even at the present time bodhicitta gives immediate sublime happiness to numberless living beings who are practicing bodhicitta, and also in the future.

“Immediate” means quickly. “The most sublime happiness” means there is no higher, no greater peace, no greater happiness beyond enlightenment. I mean there's no greater peace, greater happiness, there's nothing to gain beyond that, there's nothing to receive that is higher than that, better than that. In order to achieve this most sublime happiness of enlightenment quickly, the only

way, the best way is by developing bodhicitta. This has been said by many bodhisattvas and buddhas. As it is definitely possible, we should also try to cultivate bodhicitta.

Firstly, this time, from our side we have received the perfect human rebirth, so we have the chance to practice these precious teachings and to receive enlightenment, especially having met the teaching on bodhicitta, having met the Mahayana teaching which explains the practice of bodhicitta, the meditation on bodhicitta. Therefore, while we have the chance, it is extremely important not to lose it and to take the opportunity, by studying and meditating, to try to reach the level of bodhicitta realization as closely as possible. Even if we do not realize bodhicitta in this life, by making continual meditations, if we can become as close as possible to this realization, to this beneficial thought of bodhicitta, then it is possible that even though it is not achieved in this lifetime, in the next life we are born with compassion intuitively. We are born with compassion, great compassion. We are born with the great beneficial motivation of wanting to benefit others and not wanting to give harm to others; we are born with such a good personality. Then again we meet the teachings of the Buddha, again we meet the Mahayana teachings, the Mahayana guru, and again we continue with the practice of bodhicitta and we easily receive bodhicitta without experiencing many difficulties. So, by trying hard in this life, even though the realization is not received, it becomes so much easier in the next lifetime.

However, there's one most important thing is in our daily life. We have to try to keep the mind as generous as possible, as pure as possible, as beneficial as possible, all the time. Especially at such times when the thought of bodhicitta is of the utmost need because we want to make this action, this spiritual action, beneficial, pure. Not only is it beneficial to bring temporal comforts such as happiness, just to make today's life happy. It's not just to make our mind happy for one moment—that's nothing, that mind is so limited, just having a calm mind for one month or something like that. Not like this. We should make these actions infinitely beneficial, in order to be released from all suffering and receive the most sublime everlasting happiness, and lead all sentient beings into that stage by releasing them from suffering.

It is necessary to try to cultivate bodhicitta, this pure thought, as strongly as possible, with great deep feelings. Therefore, it is necessary to at least think like this.

“Only releasing myself from samsaric suffering is not enough, not enough. There are numberless other sentient beings who have extreme suffering, without a guiding method, without the wisdom to stop the suffering, to solve the suffering. Therefore, in order to enlighten them, to release them from suffering, I must achieve enlightenment first. Therefore, I must complete all the realizations of the whole graduated path to enlightenment. Therefore, I'm going to listen to the profound teachings on the commentary of the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The listening subject is the Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate ones to receive enlightenment. It is well-expounded by the great philosophers Nagarjuna and Asanga. It is a profound teaching as if the essence of the magnificent unequaled great pandit Atisha and the religious king, the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa's knowledge was taken out, was shown. It includes the 84,000 teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. All this is arranged for the graduated practice of our achievement of enlightenment.

This commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment has four outlines. The last one is the way of leading the disciple on the path to enlightenment. That has two outlines:

1. How to follow the guru, who is the root of the path.
2. The way of training the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment by following the guru.

How to train the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment has two outlines, which includes persuading the mind to take the essence with the perfect human rebirth. This meditation is included in the first of these two outlines: the usefulness of the perfect rebirth.

As part of this we've been checking whether our life has been useful or whether our life has been wasted, which is the most important thing to check. We really think about all the things we have done every day, since we were born until now, what we have done since the beginning of this life. I think the meditation of checking whether the life has been meaningful or whether it has been wasted—spending one hour or even half an hour on this meditation has greater meaning than any of those other actions done since we were born, like working for food or clothing, working for the temporal life. I really think this. Because by checking back like this, whether it's meaningful or whether it's wasted, by checking like this for twenty-five minutes maybe, it opens our mind, it helps us understand our life, it helps us see our life. Before, we didn't know our life—we tried some things but we really didn't know our life, we really didn't know our life, we didn't know the meaning of life, how to make it meaningful.

Many people don't know the meaning of life, why there has to be life. They're sort of curious, they think it is kind of funny to have life—I'm joking. Anyway, I really think that our spending twenty-five minutes here checking like this is more meaningful than any of the actions we did since we were born, taking care of the temporal life. The deeper we understand the nature of our life, the deeper we understand how it has been wasted, and as we understand it more deeply, the positive thought, the wish, the energy comes to make the rest of our life meaningful, useful, beneficial. It opens the mind and gives us energy. From this then starts the action.

It's totally like this: we were born, we took this higher rebirth as human beings to do what? To gain higher peace and happiness and to stop the suffering. Not just to stop temporal suffering, not just to stop it temporarily, that's not the meaning of life. Just using the life to gain temporal happiness, to stop the temporal suffering temporarily is not the meaning of life, that's not the meaning of taking this human life. The meaning of the human life is to completely cut off the whole root of suffering and to achieve ultimate happiness, which does not change, which does not end, which does not finish.

But so far, how we've been using our life is to create suffering, only to create more causes for suffering, as if we were especially born to create more suffering. To create more suffering we don't have to be born as human beings. It's not necessary, not necessary, not necessary to be born as a human to practice greed, ignorance or hatred. Whatever we were in our previous life, when we were lower suffering beings such as the lower creatures, there was no need from there to take a higher rebirth in order to only practice greed, ignorance and hatred. Any of the lower creatures, even the tiniest of them, which we cannot see with the eye, even they practice greed, ignorance and hatred. Even they can create the cause of sufferings.

So now do people have some understanding of what Dharma means or should we carry on for one month? Actually as I explained, the actual meaning of Dharma, the practice of Dharma, what

Dharma really means should be the same in other religions. It should be the same not only in the Buddhadharma but these Dharma, how to make it pure. If a person understands it should be the same in any other religion, even in the Christian or Hindu religion or whatever—spiritual action, Dharma or spiritual action. I think if the people understand, it should be the same meaning, it has to be same.

If actions done with greed, ignorance or hatred are pure—if these actions done with negative mind are pure—then anything can be pure, nothing is impure. If that is true, if all the actions done by these three minds are really pure actions, then all this ignorance, greed and hatred, all this should be pure mind. Purified of what? If we recognize the actions done with anger and attachment and such as pure, spiritual actions, then all the minds have to be pure. Then it has to be pure of something.

Student: Self?

Rinpoche: Self? Why self? You mean self is impure? It has to be pure or impure, doesn't it?

Student: Self-existent self is impure. Self-existent I is impure.

Rinpoche: I see. On your way of thinking, self-existent I is not pure, isn't it? You're right. [Laughter] Minds are pure? Our minds are pure. So self-existent I is impure?

Student: The mind that holds on to its self-existent I is one and the same thing. If I hold on to my idea of myself, then I can't say it's separate, I can't say they are two things. A mind that has a wrong conception is wrong conception.

Rinpoche: I see. Mind that has wrong conception is the wrong conception? I see. Are you wrong conception? Are you conception?

Student: I don't know. I wouldn't be here if I knew that.

Rinpoche: You wouldn't be? Are you conception? Are you thought?

Student: Yes, I must be.

Rinpoche: Ah. Quite new—I see. So you have one thought or many different thoughts?

Student: I may have different thoughts, following each other.

Rinpoche: What's your name?

Student: Peter.

Rinpoche: I thought you said "Pretia," [Laughter] Peter, Peter. I'm sorry. So there are many different Peters? Not another person but just at your place, while you have so many different thoughts, just with that body, there are many different Peters—many different Peters? I see. So hundreds and hundreds of Peters are there, billions of Peters? So if one Peter thinks, all Peters think? When one Peter gets angry, do all the others, billions of Peters get angry?

Student: I'll check up.

Rinpoche: Then you check up. Also you say that, when you're thinking, you can say "My thought, my conception." Why do you say that? Isn't that a mistake?

Student: Yes.

Rinpoche: Which one is a mistake? Both cannot be mistaken; I'm sure. Anyway, like that. So what I'm saying is this: if you recognize, if you point out without checking that the actions of these negative minds are pure, positive, then that means the creator of these negative minds of greed, hatred and ignorance all have to be pure, all these have to be pure. If they are pure, there is no other wrong conception, no other false thought. Also if it is pure, it should be pure of something else; otherwise there is no way to call it pure. There is no way to call it pure. It has to be pure of something; it has to be pure of the impurity. For instance, if the impurity did not exist in the past and does not exist in the present, then it does not give meaning to "pure." The meaning of pure is pure of something, free from the impurities. However, it's like this.

Clearly saying, if all these are holy minds, all the minds—greed, ignorance, hatred—are pure, then all the minds have to be holy, pure. Nothing is impure; not one single thought is impure. Everything should be holy and pure. If all sentient beings' minds are pure, then why should there be suffering? Why do we have to suffer? What makes us suffer without choice? There has to be a reason; there has to be an evolution of the suffering. Is it created by God? Is it created by one person? Not by one person? Is it created by God? Yes?

Student: I think the reason for that is because of the nature of life, therefore God has a problem too. In as much as we help ourselves, we get help too.

Rinpoche: I see. Is all this suffering that we experience without choice? Is it something that has a solution to completely cut it off or is it something that does not have a solution?

Student: It has a solution. For every positive development you need a negative aspect. Once in my life I suffered loneliness; that was my suffering. I went into it and I no longer suffer loneliness. My suffering made me conscious.

Rinpoche: Then? You are feeling like any of that suffering is conscious?

Nick: He felt lonely, went into it and it stopped.

Student: If I explain with an example of a raincloud ... [long explanation] In other words, without our suffering there would be no light. Therefore suffering is very necessary to life.

Rinpoche: Yes, I think that is quite a good experience. I think that's what I explained just before; I think that becomes correct. I said before that we were born to create the cause of suffering. That's the same, isn't it, same with your experience?

However, it's like this. If all our greed, ignorance and hatred, these three main impure minds, are pure then all minds would be pure. There would be no impure mind; all the sentient beings would not have any impure mind. If that is so, then there's no reason for suffering to exist because there is

no cause of suffering. There's no cause of suffering. The impure mind—which is the creator, which is the creation? Even scientists don't believe that it is created by God. Logically, just straight talking, if it is created by God, if God has created suffering, then God should stop creating sentient beings. If the God has created sentient beings, then why should he create suffering? Why should he make sentient beings suffer? Why should he make us suffer? Is that a compassionate God or an uncompassionate God? Since God has created the sentient beings, our suffering, how can God have compassion? There's no meaning to compassion, even though we say it is compassion.

If God does not have compassion for each of the living beings, what is the meaning of God? The meaning of God is lost. In that case, any enemy who gives harm, who always criticizes us, who always does something should be God, can be God. There's no reason why that person cannot be God. They don't need compassion to be God, they don't need to have great love, they don't need to have great love and great compassion, all these things. So all these people who bother us, even the mosquitoes, bugs, all these things that bite, who give problems, can be recognized as God, they are all God and we don't harm them.

I think even if we think in this way—that the sentient beings who are eating us, bothering us, all these things, thinking that they are God, that the suffering is given by God, by his kindness, so we don't give them harm—I think this way is more useful because if we think in this way, we dare not give harm, we don't give harm. We don't have problems and we also have peace. I think this is a more useful way to think of God. Anyway, it becomes like this.

Then all the enemies become God in that sense; there's no reason why they cannot be called God. Same thing: they don't need to have knowledge, compassion, love; they don't need any higher knowledge. If they are created by God then God becomes our enemy and God is the source of all our suffering. So in order to stop all our suffering what we should do is destroy that God as much as possible, as quickly as possible. Anyway this is logical, even just straight talking that's how it becomes.

Actually, we should also check up; actually it is clear, it is clear. Why does God have to create the sentient beings? Why? Even just this question, this first question normally people don't check up. I think that is very funny, not checking; I think that is really funny. Even just this very simple question: why has God created the sentient beings? If God is the creator, why has he created them? Better he did not create. If he had not created them, then all these different worlds would not be in conflict, fighting with each other. Same thing with each sentient being, it would be better not to exist. Like India and the world, how some countries are full of problems; it would be better if they did not exist, it would be better if they were not created. It's very simple. These questions do not depend on having knowledge or anything. Very simple. Anyway, like this. So check up.

Student: If suffering did not exist, then would there be any reason for the Dharma?

Rinpoche: That's right; you're right one hundred percent! Dharma was shown only because there are problems for sentient beings. The sentient beings had problems and that's why Dharma was shown. No other method can see, can completely cut off the problems. That's why Dharma was shown; that's all. You're correct. Once all the people, those who are here, once we have all received enlightenment, there is no need to practice Dharma. There's no need to practice because there's nothing to gain—there's not one single wrong conception, not one single problem. The sufferings are completely finished even before receiving enlightenment. Even before receiving enlightenment

the suffering is finished, by following the path. When we receive enlightenment there is not one single wrong conception, not one single dualistic mind; there is no higher realization to gain, no knowledge that has yet to be received.

Student: Have you got any ideas of how we first got out of ignorance? How I first got out of ignorance?

Rinpoche: You mean how to be released from ignorance?

Student: How was the first being, how did the original Buddha come?

Rinpoche: Do you want to find the original Buddha? I think you have to find that by yourself.

Ann: How did the first person enlighten himself?

Rinpoche: I see. Simply talking, there is no such time. Infinite sentient beings received enlightenment before. Does that make it a little bit clear? Infinite sentient beings received enlightenment before. There have been infinite buddhas because infinite sentient beings received enlightenment. OK?

Student: Has it been beginningless? Would you say that buddhas have been beginningless?

Rinpoche: It depends on how you think; this can be answered as “beginningless.” Anyway the answer to this question contains this subject. Therefore, think there are infinite buddhas because infinite sentient beings have received enlightenment. The answer to this subject actually comes when you really understand guru yoga. When you understand the essence of the guru yoga practice, then you can understand; you can find the answer to these questions.

Anyway, therefore, check up as I said before. Usually we imitate what other people do, this and that; we copy and things like this. So now with your understanding of the actual meaning of Dharma—spiritual action, Dharma action, how it is pure—with that understanding, which is not possessed by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, with that you check up.

In the West, what people actually think—going to church thinking that they are doing some spiritual action, thinking, “I’m a religious person, I’m doing something positive, a spiritual action,” and things like that. Now check up, check up whether we have a real understanding of what is spiritual action, whether we really have an understanding of pure actions. Check up. Since there is no understanding of what is pure and impure, what is really spiritual and what is not spiritual, Dharma—same thing, spiritual action is the English word and Dharma is a Sanskrit word, that’s all—without understanding this, how can we live in pure action?

How can someone be a pure religious person? Check up. Really I can’t say they are absolutely not existing but if it is really checked, when this point is really researched, checked inside, in one country, like Australia, I’m not sure how many you can find who *think* that they are religious, always doing spiritual actions, and are really sincerely, purely living in the spiritual life, creating the spiritual actions.

Why I am saying this is that even in other religions, the meaning of spiritual action, the pure action, has to be the action that is opposite to the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, which is not possessed by attachment, the evil thought of worldly dharmas. It has to be.

Why? Otherwise, no matter what the religion is called, any action that is done is the cause of suffering. Any action done with these negative minds—no matter if we recognize that and call them pure spiritual actions, this and that—as long as we have done that action with the evil thought of worldly dharmas, that is the cause of suffering, which does not bring peace. If it does not bring peace, how can that be a spiritual action? How can that be a religious action? Then all the actions of the lower creatures, the animals, dogs, cows, pigs, all those foolish animals, all their actions can be called religious. There's no difference; no difference from those actions done with attachment, no difference from those actions done with anger; all those can be called religious actions. Like this.

This is very important to know. Many of us do like this, thinking, “I’m doing some religious, spiritual something, I’m living in a kind of discipline.” We eat once only, like a diet, having certain discipline with food. Even that does not mean our life is pure, it does not mean that. Fasting, eating only one time, living in that kind of discipline, certain things we eat or don’t eat, many things—even if we are living in such a discipline, that does not mean we are a religious person. That does not make our mind renounced of the worldly dharmas. It is possible that we follow these disciplines with the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. It is possible, definitely possible that we are following the discipline with attachment. So how can that be religious action, spiritual action? We are just the same as someone who doesn’t follow the discipline. We are doing things with attachment, so same thing. We are just doing another extra action but there’s nothing higher. Same thing, both the person who doesn’t have discipline, who doesn’t fast, same thing as the person who fasts, having external disciplines with regards to food, like no liquid.

There are many things. Many people do like that, making various kinds of disciplines, sort of like not taking liquid or making some sort of other discipline, taking one thing, not taking another thing, perhaps. I don’t know how to call it in English, many things like that. But they never check up on that, they only take the action, they copy the action. They never check the mind, which is the creator of peace. They never check up on that; they never check. Such people are completely ignorant.

For instance, we can understand that usually the people who do these things, who think they’re doing something, they never talk about the mind. Do they talk about the mind? They don’t talk much about mind; they don’t talk about attachment, they don’t talk about the nature of attachment at all. I’m not sure whether they can even remember, whether they’ll think of this ever in their life—the nature of attachment or the nature of ignorance.

So you see, actually it is extremely difficult to be a pure, religious, spiritual person who is living in pure action, without understanding these fundamental things, without renouncing attachment, without understanding the shortcomings of attachment.

The great yogi Milarepa said to his disciples: “Today there are many people who have great fortunes (which means having great enjoyments) and they eat poisonous food; they eat the poisonous food of delusion. They wear their clothes (something like) with attachment. Their actions are done with negative mind and yet they’re called Dharma or spiritual. However, they are always running only to obtain the temporal happiness of this life.”

Milarepa gave instructions to his disciples and one of his disciples called Rechungpa asked him, “If one has given up this life, as I said yesterday, if one has renounced the evil thought of worldly dharmas, attachment to the happiness of this life, then is it possible to have enjoyment sometimes? Is it possible to have enjoyment some time if one has renounced the evil thought of worldly dharmas, attachment to the happiness of this life? If one has renounced this then can one have enjoyment sometimes, can one have much enjoyment?”

Then Milarepa said, “It’s extremely difficult, extremely difficult. It’s OK to have enjoyments while living, by renouncing the evil thought of worldly dharmas. It’s OK, but it’s difficult, it’s difficult.” Then he said: “First of all, it’s more important to subdue your own mind before subduing other people’s minds, other living beings’ minds. Once your mind is well-subdued, enlightened, then since there are infinite sentient beings, you can work for other sentient beings at any time.” What he means is without a mistake, with complete knowledge, with control over the mind.

Just as Milarepa says, if we check, we can never find the same number of the people who go to church, who wear uniforms and who do things that signify “I am a spiritual person, I am this and that.” If we really check, we would never find the same number as it looks like outside. They become much less.

So far we’ve been trying to check our own life, whether it is higher than an animal, whether we have a higher mind, whether our mind is more pure than the lower creatures, whether our everyday actions have been more pure than animals. You see? It is difficult to find any actions that have been more pure, higher than the actions of the lower creatures, the lower sentient beings. You see, it is difficult to find; we don’t find much. By seeing, by carefully checking like this especially, with our mind, the way we lead our lives is exactly like animals, nothing higher.

We think: “I’m human, I’m this and that, I’m wise and clever, I’m so much,” but what meaningful thing did we do in our life? What was the meaning, what gave meaning to our life? You see, we find nothing. Actually, if we check up as I described yesterday or the day before yesterday, if we really check up, it is something that makes tears come out. Life has no essence. What essence is there? All the time we do essenceless work, which does not benefit to receive everlasting happiness.

So just briefly talking on this, from yesterday’s talk, generally, we should not have great expectations of the temporary happiness of this life. This is the thing. Great expectation, great attachment to the temporal happiness of this life is what makes our life up and down, always changing, depressing; always the mind is puzzled.

If there is pleasure coming you can use it, you can enjoy the pleasure without clinging. You can take the chance without clinging. The main problem is clinging—not the pleasure but the clinging. When there is pleasure, the useful thing, which makes fewer problems, trying to not cling as much as possible. If there is less grasping then the mind is less confused, not so puzzled. Especially if you expect this pleasure will last longer, believing that you will always receive this pleasure, you know, clinging, expecting the same thing. If it worked like that, if there was pleasure that did not decrease, that would be something else. But it does not work like that. That is the nature of worldly pleasure: it does not work as you expect, as you believe. All the time it is opposite.

You get the feeling the first time, thinking, “Oh, this is fantastic.” Then second time also, “Oh, I’ll receive the same,” third time, fourth, fifth time, however, the actual nature of worldly pleasure is

that it decreases. It continuously changes, second by second it continuously changes, continuously decreases. It gets worse and worse and worse. It changes, then afterwards, when you discover the great change of feeling, that pleasure is no longer existing, then your life is down, your mind is so depressed, so upset, unhappy. That is how the attachment has betrayed you, cheated you.

Also it is useful to think its nature is change, that the nature of the pleasure that you receive at first does not last, it changes each second, in a split second it decreases. After you realize the indefinite nature of pleasure, that it does not always exist, it is just very temporal, for a very short moment, and even in a short moment it continuously changes and gets worse and worse, it decreases. It decreases, it gets worse and worse, it ends each second. We don't recognize that because we don't check up, we're not checking. We don't have the wisdom to check, so therefore we don't realize that. Actually, it decreases in each second.

So thinking that it is very temporary is useful to not cling; thinking that the nature of the pleasure is suffering is very useful. The main basic technique is to be aware of the nature of the pleasure, which is always suffering. That makes you to not cling, to not grasp. If your wisdom is not aware, if your mind is not aware of the real nature of the pleasure, which is only suffering, when your mind is not aware, if you're not checking, then your attachment exaggerates the pleasure. Believing that you would receive the same pleasure all the time, you keep on doing the action. So, the basic technique is that. When your mind is aware of the nature of the pleasure, that much more you understand; the mind is less complicated, not so much grasping. The mind is in peace.

Actually there are many other techniques, there are so many ways to think in order to not cling, in order to not grasp, to not arise attachment. There are many ways to think, there are so many techniques.

For instance, like this, one idea—maybe it will come after some time in the meditation, the third meditation—this is one very useful, clear understanding. When we carry luggage, we feel so much pain here, we feel so much pain; and then we change to here. When we change, when we put the luggage here, we change here, we feel kind of pleasure. We feel kind of pleasure: the pain decreases, the pain goes down, goes down. Before, there was big pain, so as it goes down a little bit like this, decreasing, that is called pleasure; that is what we call pleasure.

If we really check up, we cannot find a single pleasure there; just the pain is a little bit going down and that we call pleasure. The pain has not even completely ceased. Next time, when we feel pain there, we put it here, then check: again the pain comes. It went down a little bit, it's not completely finished, ceased—that's called pleasure. Then this a little bit went up; so we move again here, again the base of the pain is here. Before a little bit down, then after we moved here, the pain increases, increases. When it increases more, that's called suffering. That's all, like this, same thing, same thing.

We sit for a long time, feeling pain, getting tired, pains here in the knees and things like this, getting very tired. Bones very tired, very tired. Then, "Oh, it would be better to stand up and walk." Then we stand up and walk, and all of a sudden we feel kind of light, kind of empty or, not empty but kind of light, you know. Then we start to walk, we stand, and at that time the tiredness decreases. When we stood, that decreased, it went down a little bit, but did not completely cease because the root, the base is there. As it goes down a little bit, that is called pleasure. Then we walk, and at first we think it is so comfortable, so good. Then we walk for hours, hours and hours. Then, maybe it

doesn't take even one hour, after a few minutes walking, we find problems with walking. Then again tiredness, pain, tiredness comes. Again we think, "Oh, it is better to sit down, it's better to sit down again." Then we sit down, thinking it's better to sit down, and the tiredness of walking decreases a little bit. That's again called pleasure. So actually, just because it is decreasing, going down a little bit, that is called pleasure.

I'm just giving examples; more details will come afterwards. But somehow this is one clear way to check up. Usually there are many techniques. This is really scientific, really how it is, the real nature of our pleasure. I'm just giving examples but it is the same thing with everything. It starts from the head down to the feet—every temporal pleasure that we recognize, all the samsaric pleasures that we recognize as real pleasure, being really happy.

Same thing with the food, same thing when we feel hot and cold: first of all we feel cold by being inside, so cold. The cool energy is increased and becomes suffering. So when we go outside, all of a sudden when we are outside in the sun, because of the energy of the heat the cold energy decreases a little bit; it goes down a little bit and the cold energy suffering is a little bit decreased—that we call pleasure. We stay longer, saying, "This is really pleasure." We stay longer and longer, then the heat energy increases more and more. Again there's another problem, another suffering, so then we come inside. As we come in, because the cold energy comes, the heat energy goes down a little bit, so that's called pleasure. That's all.

You know, sometimes there can be sound that can be beneficial for the mind, which causes us to lose attachment, which becomes opposite to the negative mind, which causes us to lose pride, to lose anger; action that becomes a remedy to the negative mind. It can be this way. However, usually as the attachment arises in pleasure—interesting sounds or things like this—it is useful to think, to try to be aware. Usually at any time try to be aware of it, whether attachment is arising and as attachment is coming then think, "My action of listening to this sound with attachment is only a cause of suffering. It never helps to bring happiness. Therefore, there is no reason why I should be attached to this sound, which does not diminish the negative mind."

We can think in this way: "I'm creating the negative karma of being attached to this sound." In that way, if we think that we are creating negative karma, the cause of suffering, which will bring the suffering result, then our attachment will go down and it does not grasp the object. So in that way our mind gets peace, by losing the attachment.

Also when there is unpleasant physical suffering, when there are displeasing sounds or things like that, it is useful to think as before: "It's natural because I'm living in samsara. That's why it is natural that I suffer, that I feel unpleasant sensations, hear uninteresting sounds, these things."

One very, very useful thing to think: "The suffering that I'm experiencing now and these uninteresting words, these things such as not receiving material things, other people criticizing, blaming—all these things, all these problems are the result of my previous karma, my previous negative karma that is created by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas." In this way we become aware.

These problems are caused mainly by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. So if you think like this: "These problems are created by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, so if I dislike these problems, why don't I dislike, why don't I renounce the evil thought of the worldly dharmas? If I

dislike these problems, I also should dislike the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, because this is the thing that has brought all these problems. If I dislike these problems, why do I take care of the evil thought of the worldly dharmas? Same reason: I should renounce, I should get clear in my heart.”

Thinking in this way is very useful, very useful. In this way you can see much more clearly how the problems are caused by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, how it is all the fault of the worldly dharmas. Then in this way you have always energy to renounce the evil thought of the worldly dharmas without difficulty, without difficulty, without problem. You can easily renounce the evil thought of the worldly dharmas.

Sometimes when you have big problems like disease or pains or anything, also thinking like this makes it much less; sometimes it makes you forget, it makes much less. Instead of thinking, “I’m suffering, I’m suffering,” think of karma, this evolution, as I explained.

“From beginningless lifetimes, this evil thought of the worldly dharmas has been obliging me to suffer; always, all the time. Why should I suffer this now? I must give it back, I must take revenge on the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. Let *them* suffer!” Then give your problem back to the evil thought of the worldly dharmas.

Sometimes you forget, if you are thinking strongly, feeling this very strongly. First of all you think of the problem but when you think like this, you really give it back to the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, you see the evil thought of the worldly dharmas as the enemy; like you are fighting another person, an enemy. Not just joking with the words but seriously, like you are fighting with another person. When you think like that, giving back to the evil thought, it decreases, the feeling goes down, the feeling of this somehow decreases, I’m not sure why.

Sometimes you are meditating and you feel very thirsty, almost you can’t stand it without a glass of water or something. Then you think: “Attachment, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas is coming. Who brings this problem, who makes me suffer this? That’s the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. Why should I accept this suffering? Why should I put it on my head? Why should I experience it? Let them suffer—give it back onto their head, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas!” Then you completely forget your thirst! It’s much better than drinking. If you drink with attachment you again become the servant to the evil thought of the worldly dharmas; it becomes a help, a service to the evil thought of the worldly dharmas.

However, thinking of karma, how it is the fault of the evil thought of the worldly dharmas and by understanding it’s the shortcoming of the evil thought, then think, tell yourself: “This is the fault of the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. So therefore if I don’t like this, I must renounce the evil.” It’s very useful, very useful, even though you can’t do it another way, another kind of experience you can’t do.

There are many techniques but whatever you understood, the ways to solve the problems, whether you write them down or keep them in your mind, it’s very useful, extremely useful. If it is used, if it is practiced it is extremely useful, extremely useful. These kinds of life problems have to be stopped, have to be avoided. It is something that has to be avoided.

After lunch, from two pm, the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth. Especially the last one, how the perfect human rebirth is highly useful even in each second, even in each minute.

How it is useful, that is very important, that is very important. By understanding that, especially by understanding that, it causes us to take care so much of the life, even each minute, how to make it meaningful, how to make it worthwhile, beneficial for other sentient beings—or to receive enlightenment, which is the same. It's very useful, very useful.

Sometimes when I'm lazy, I just think of the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth. It is very useful. Then we dare not waste our time by being lazy or through meaningless actions or even thoughts—doing something that has little meaning, as I said yesterday.

After that, do the Guru Shakyamuni yoga meditation. After the light, doing purification and receiving knowledge, do meditation on usefulness. After that, when you do the absorption, concentrate on the emptiness, being in oneness with Guru Shakyamuni's blissful omniscient mind. At that point, at that stage, concentrate for some time.

It is said in the teachings,

For the wise, skillful person who knows Dharma, even if the negativity is great it becomes small to them; but for a foolish person, even a small negativity becomes great. For an unskillful, ignorant person even if the negative karma is small, it becomes great.

That means that the wise person who really knows Dharma—who knows different techniques, who really knows karma—they know the karmic evolutions they know how negative karma can increase if it is not purified, confessed, right away. Also they know how to quickly purify, what is the benefit, what is the most powerful way to purify. Therefore, even though they have created very heavy negative karma, it becomes small, very little, by using skillful methods, powerful methods to purify.

But the deeply ignorant, unskillful person, even though they don't create that much heavy negative karma, even though they create very little, because they are ignorant in the methods of purification, not knowing how to purify and not knowing the evolution of karma, therefore, even though they create very little negative karma, it increases. Day by day, month by month, year by year it increases like the branches growing on a tree. Because they don't know the powerful methods and don't know the evolution of karma, the negative karma always increases; even though they create small, it becomes bigger and bigger, the longer they don't make purification.

[Reading from *Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 90]

The rarity of the perfect human rebirth

I can understand how the perfect human rebirth is difficult to receive by considering the way sentient beings are distributed throughout the six samsaric realms.

The vast majority of sentient beings are in the narak. Thus the number of upper rebirths is smaller than the number of lower rebirths, and the number of perfect human rebirths is the smallest of all.

The number of the narak living beings is like dust on the earth—so many, so many, unimaginable, cannot be counted. The number of animals is also unimaginable, like the sands of the Atlantic Ocean; so many, something which cannot be easily counted.

Thinking like this can be very useful, for instance, the number of Australian people and creatures that are on one small mountain. There is a certain population here, a certain number of people, millions maybe. Definitely the number of animals is many times more, the lower creatures just on one hill, and on the mountain, on the bushes and in the grass, there are all kinds of different insects, different flies. Many of the insects, the creatures, don't have legs, nothing, just dragging their body; many creatures have wings, have legs, all kinds of different types; so many just on one hill, tiny, all kinds of sizes and things, which can only be seen through a microscope.

Just thinking of the number of Australian people is nothing compared to the number of insects on one hill. There are many hills in Australia, without thinking of the insects in the desert, in the oceans; just talking about the hills. We can never compare, never compare, never compare. Just even in one handful of dust there can be so many tiny, tiny ones, which we hardly see with our eyes; there are many creatures like this. And besides on the ground, also in the trees there are so many tiny insects which have the karma to live in the trees, on the leaves, laying eggs, living there, many things. Then even the birds flying in space. There are all kinds. There are many different kinds of flies; so many that they cannot be counted. Then without question in the oceans, without need to talk about them. There are so many incredible numbers of these creatures, all kinds of different sizes, many things, so tiny, on the beach. Even in normal water there are also tiny insects, many things. Even in people's houses there are insects crawling; without talking about outside—ants, small ants, fleas, even in buildings. Sort of like there is almost no place where there are no animals.

If you think of the number of ants in the whole of Australia, how many creatures are there, then the number of Australian people gets lost. Nothing. Almost like not existing. And, for instance, if you don't preserve things, food in the refrigerator, things like that, if you just leave meat or fruit outside for one or two days it goes rotten and gets worms inside. It easily becomes full of worms. And then meat, if you leave it without keeping it cold, like an animal that is dead, if the body is left there—also it depends on the weather—after three days, sometimes even two days, the body easily gets full of worms inside. Mainly I'm talking about the number of creatures; it is too great.

Why is it so easy for thousands of worms all of a sudden to be born in meat, hundreds of germs in the food? How is it so easy? That is because in the previous life they were maybe also an animal or maybe a human being, or a samsaric god, preta or narak being, and they had created much karma to be born as animal.

Then there is the intermediate state, after the death and before the next rebirth. Even in the intermediate stage there are incredible numbers of sentient beings who are ready to take animal rebirth, who are seeking a place to take birth, to take a body. There are an incredible number of sentient beings whose mind passed away from other bodies and who are in the intermediate stage to find another body, to take an animal body. There are so many of them seeking a place. Therefore when food or something is a little bit off by not taking care, it easily becomes full of worms. When it becomes a condition, then easily they come there. That's why it is so easy, why there are so many. That proves that in the intermediate stage there is a great number of sentient beings who are seeking a place, who are going to take animal rebirth.

Also pretas: the number of pretas is so great, like when there is rain we cannot count each raindrop. Like snow, each tiny flake of snow is incredibly difficult to count. This is just to give you an idea, to emphasize the incredible numbers.

The meditation from two o'clock is to do the Guru Shakyamuni yoga meditation. Then after the light, meditate on the difficulty of receiving the perfect human rebirth, checking through the examples of how it is difficult to receive, from the side of the example. As I repeated, you can follow the meditation.

The important thing is the number of sentient beings, continuously thinking of the insects, the creatures and the human beings. Thinking like this is very useful.

Then one of the most important things is the precepts—sort of checking within your mind whether it is difficult for you, how it is difficult. Checking like this. As I explained, generally in the world there are less people keeping precepts, less people keeping morality. Like this, slowly check up the different levels of ordination. Then check with each one. Among those keeping the precepts there are less people who keep them purely. There are less people who are keeping these different levels of precepts purely. There are more people keeping precepts but less people who are keeping them purely.

Even to take and keep one precept is difficult. Especially check with your own experience how it is easy or difficult. Otherwise, if you don't check on yourself, if you check on some other person, on their mind, then you don't see how this is difficult or easy. The main thing is to help you discover how difficult it is to receive the perfect human rebirth.

Lecture 10

The number of creatures there are, as we can clearly understand, is much more than the number of people in the country. Just like this, it is the same with other suffering sentient beings, such as the narak and preta suffering sentient beings. Comparing the number of sentient beings who take rebirth in the evil destiny, in the lower suffering realms, and those in the upper realms, more sentient beings get born in the suffering lower realms. Fewer sentient beings, a much smaller number of sentient beings get born in upper realms, in these realms of the sura, asura and humans.

As Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said in his sutra teaching, "The number of sentient beings who get born in the upper realms is as if we take as much dust as we can get under our nails." When we take the dust under our nails it is very little. Between the dust that we receive under our nails and the dust on the earth there is nothing to compare. It is very little. Like this, the sentient beings who get born in the upper realms are very, very few, so few. And among the sentient beings who get born in the upper realms, generally the sentient beings who receive the perfect human rebirth are very few. Receiving the perfect human rebirth is extremely difficult. That is the rarest rebirth. That is the rarest rebirth to receive. So this is checking, trying to discover how the perfect human rebirth is difficult to receive, even from the side of the numbers.

The third way of checking in order to discover how the perfect human rebirth is difficult to receive:

[Reading from *Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 90]

Analogies illustrating the difficulty to receiving the perfect human rebirth

The chance of gaining the precious perfect human rebirth is that of a blind tortoise, swimming in a vast ocean and surfacing only once each one hundred years, putting its head through a small golden ring floating somewhere on the surface.

It is more difficult than throwing grain so that it sticks to a glass wall or lands on the point of a needle.

The example is this. Let's say there's the Atlantic Ocean, then there's a golden ring floating around. There is a reason why the ring is called gold, it has its own meaning, this just an example. Then there is a blind tortoise who, after each hundred years, comes up once from the bottom onto the surface. As the blind tortoise comes up, its neck comes out of the surface of the water. The golden ring doesn't stay in one place all the time. It always moves around on the surface of the ocean, so even though the golden ring was here last time, even though it was here, the blind tortoise, when it comes up after a hundred years, his neck doesn't come through the golden ring. Maybe when he comes up his neck is supposed to come through the golden ring, but he comes up in another direction. The golden ring is here but he comes up in another direction where there is no golden ring. And then maybe after another hundred years he comes up here but that golden ring is in another place. It always floats around, in another place. So it's extremely difficult. If the blind tortoise comes every day that's something else, but it is only once every hundred years so at that time it is extremely difficult to put the neck through. Even to be near the golden ring, but especially to put his neck in that golden ring is extremely difficult. So just like this.

The blind turtle is an example of the samsaric sentient beings. Down there at the bottom of the ocean is like keeping or taking rebirth in the preta, narak and animal realms, again always taking rebirth, always circling around in those suffering realms. Even after finishing the karma to be in the narak for a certain length of time, even after that is finished, again being reborn as an animal. Even after that there's another karma which has to be experienced in the preta realm, so becoming a preta. Like this always taking rebirth.

While a sentient being is born as an animal—being born as an animal is the result of previous karma—while the sentient being is an animal they create so much negative karma in that life because they are deeply ignorant and there's no chance to practice Dharma. Again they create negative karma, so again there is more cause to be born in those suffering realms. So therefore, the sentient being keeps on taking rebirth down there in the suffering realms. So it is extremely difficult. And the same thing, in the life of the animal, they are always creating negative karma; the same thing in the preta and narak realms. So it is extremely difficult to receive an upper rebirth, extremely difficult.

The golden ring is the teaching of the Buddha. Each time, even when we take human rebirth after a certain incredible time, after such a long time, even though we get born as a human being in the upper realms, we don't meet the teachings. We don't meet the teachings. We are not born in a country where there are the teachings, where we can meet the teachings, practice the teachings and follow the teachings. Putting the neck in the golden ring is like putting the golden ring on one's neck like an ornament. So that is like, besides being born at such a time in a country where the teaching exists, we are actually following the teaching, practicing the teaching, meeting the teaching. So the

blind turtle putting the neck in the golden ring is like being born as a human being in a country where there are teachings and we are practicing the teachings. This is the meaning of that example.

Actually, if it is really checked up, the example is still nothing. If it is really checked up, the meaning is more difficult than that example. If it is deeply, carefully checked, the way we act in our life, the way we lead our life, if we carefully and deeply checked, even though we are human beings. Of course, if we are born as those suffering beings there is nothing to talk about regarding how our actions are mostly negative. So therefore, checking like this we can discover the difficulty of receiving this perfect human rebirth.

For example if we throw grain at glass, it is extremely difficult for it to get stuck there, to stay on the glass. Or if there is a needle put like this on the floor and we throw grains of rice, it's difficult for them to sit on the point of the needle. These examples give a kind of feeling, they make clear how the perfect human rebirth is difficult to receive. However, the main way to check is through the causes, charity and morality, and how, in the world, it is difficult [to create the causes.]

Making meditation in these three ways makes it very clear and is very helpful for the mind. It gives us incredible energy. As we continue the meditation, it causes us to build more and more energy and we're no longer lazy to continuously practice this meditation. Through the continual practice of the meditation, trying to continuously make practice on this first meditation, the perfect human rebirth, then the more happiness we feel, how it is more and more precious, how it is precious. Feeling this means our meditation is working, progressing. Then there's such incredible strong feeling of happiness, feeling the preciousness of this rebirth so strongly. It is just like a beggar finding a diamond from the garbage in the street. When the beggar finds a diamond in the garbage unexpectedly, they have an incredible feeling of happiness, an unbelievable feeling of happiness because it is so precious. Understanding that the diamond is so precious; discerning that they have found the diamond and it is so precious. Like this, such a strong feeling of happiness arises when we experience this meditation.

Especially when we really try, when we really practice this meditation, it is also useful to think of each of those richnesses, each freedom—like being a human being, receiving a human rebirth, etc.,—comparing each of these to a world full of jewels. Then comparing these two—which one is more useful to practice Dharma, to receive enlightenment—comparing these two. Then as we have received each of these, because it is easier to understand about materials, which is more precious and which is not precious, it is easy to get a feeling. As with this example then with each one; as we find that we have received it we have such a great feeling of preciousness, there's a great feeling of being so fortunate, so lucky. In this way I think it is easy to receive realization, to see clearly, the feeling arises so strongly. In this way the experience is easier to receive.

Actually when we really meditate just on that meditation, the usefulness comes from there, everything comes from there. Anyway, now maybe it is a little complicated but actually when we really meditate like this, we can feel like that just by making meditation on the perfect human rebirth; counting each one, feeling the preciousness. But somehow, the way we think also becomes a meditation on usefulness, and it all comes together, sort of.

Then when we continuously make meditation on the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth—just as Guru Tsongkhapa said in his lamrim teaching, “When one realizes the great meaning of the human life, passing the time in meaningless action ...”

When we have received the experience of the meditation on the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth, even just for one minute we can't stand, we dare not spend our time on meaningless actions, doing meaningless actions, such as creating negative karma, negative actions. We can't, we dare not spend time to create negative actions, such as meaningless actions that are only to do with this life. And even if we waste one minute or half a minute we feel great, incredible waste, like a person who loses billions of dollars, that incredible feeling of wasting or losing the great meaning of the human rebirth—even though we spent only one minute or half a minute. Just as we talked about the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth even in one second or one minute, we have the experience of this meditation.

So the usefulness of this meditation is that by experiencing this it helps us a great deal to avoid using the life for meaningless actions, even for the shortest time. Due to the experience of this meditation all the time, wherever we are, if we have the achievement of this meditation our mind is very skillfully always in the Dharma, always making the life meaningful. Because there's no way to get distracted, we can't stand to spend time in meaningless actions.

Also Guru Tsongkhapa said in his teaching about experiencing the meditation on the difficulty of receiving the perfect human rebirth: "When one realizes the difficulty of receiving the perfect human rebirth, one cannot stand not doing something, not doing anything."

"Not doing anything" means without practicing Dharma, without doing an action of Dharma, without creating virtuous actions, we cannot stand it. Then there's not much problem of feeling lazy. Also this basic meditation helps so much for those many negative minds such as attachment, which cause us to create negative karma; for those negative minds to not arise, so we do not create this negative karma.

[Reading from *Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 90–91]

How should we make of perfect human rebirth highly meaningful?

We should use this rebirth to free ourselves ... which ceases all problems.

Part of this subject is actually how to make the human life meaningful. We can understand from the second meditation, the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth. From there we can understand how to make it meaningful. But still, just following the proverbs above, how ordinary people sacrifice their life, dedicate their life for such small things; for such little, essenceless things they dedicate their whole life, this kind of example. It is very useful to cause us to continually practice Dharma and also, in this way, we will get the energy to control the distractions to Dharma practice.

Then the next one—this one especially is very useful for the mind to think, especially when we have time to meditate. Let's say we are working during the day and the time has completely passed, so there's no time. In the morning there is a little bit of time, before breakfast and things like that. But then we are lazy to get up—there's time but we are lazy to get up, we don't want to get up early. So there's no time left for meditation because we cannot meditate by renouncing breakfast, those things. We can't meditate instead of having breakfast. Before breakfast there is a short time free, but our time is spent by sleeping or taking much time for washing, things like that.

However there is time. We can make time, even half an hour or something. We remember the meditation but we feel sort of very tired, it's hard to get up, very difficult to get up. That is due mainly to not having much interest in meditation. We remember to do meditation but there is not so much interest in meditation, not so much interest. There is more interest to lie down because that is much more comfortable and easier.

At such times it's useful to think that our problem or laziness is not really difficult. It's not really like physical hardships such as having to carry big luggage, not like that. The difficulty of getting up because of feeling tired, feeling it's hard to get up—that is just a mind conception, and it's not even as difficult as carrying heavy luggage or something. At those times it is very useful to think like this, extremely useful.

An example of this is when there are distractions to Dharma practice, when we are wasting our life, then think, “From beginningless samsaric lifetimes I have been dedicating my life to creating the cause of suffering.” Like I'm sitting here, but I'm just trying to make clear. “Not just in one of my previous lives, not just in two of my previous lives, but in a great number, in numberless of my previous lifetimes, I have always been dedicating my life to creating the causes of suffering, which I have been experiencing from beginningless lifetimes until now. For example, the sufferings of the naraks, pretas, animals, also the sufferings of the human realm, and the sufferings of the sura and asura realms. I have been experiencing all these sufferings but I cannot dedicate my life [to this anymore.]” So think, “How foolish I am. It's very silly.”

Actually, all the hardships, all the troubles that we experienced before are wrong. The hardships, the problems that we experienced before are completely wrong, always wrong, always for suffering. For suffering we surmount the difficulties. To create the cause of suffering we surmount difficulties, we experience hardship, we dedicate our life to this. Usually like this. We never dedicate our life, we never surmount the difficulties for practicing Dharma. This is what we ordinary sentient beings usually do. Even if we know a little Dharma, this is very true.

Then think: “To practice Dharma, it doesn't matter how difficult it is. It doesn't matter how much suffering has to be experienced in order to achieve the Dharma practice.”

Why doesn't it matter? Even if we have to experience hardships for practicing Dharma throughout our whole life, still it is nothing. Still it is nothing, still it is nothing. For instance, our sleeping time is just one good example. There are problems when we practice Dharma, when we make retreat or practice Dharma, doing something like this. There's the problem of food; something is not right, it's not desirable food. There are many things, uncomfortable things that are not desirable according to attachment and which bring conflict in the mind. I don't mean you have to eat poison or you have to eat stones! You should not understand in that way. Even though generally there are all kinds of practices and techniques which have to be done according to the level of your mind. However it doesn't mean that way, it should not understand in that kind of silly way.

Generally there are things like this but it's OK, it doesn't bother your body, actually. It's not desirable food but it doesn't bother your health; if you eat that it doesn't bother you, it doesn't cause death. Even though it is OK for the body it is just not desirable, it's not what you like. So this kind of mind conception becomes a big confusion, a big problem to the mind, a big problem for you, a big disturbance and a big hindrance to the Dharma practice. Anyway, there are many other examples, many other uncomfortable things, many other things that our mind makes difficult.

In between the meditation times you feel a little bit tired, and because you feel a little tired you give up the meditation. There are many other things. Even if it is not so big a problem, your mind exaggerates it into a big problem. Then you give up because of attachment. The evil thought of the worldly dharmas wants to make an excuse, it doesn't want you to meditate, it doesn't want to allow you to meditate because if you meditate it bothers the attachment. When there's that problem, it's very easy to lose your Dharma practice, very easy to not continue your Dharma practice. So therefore during those times you need great understanding, during those times your mind has to be very strong. Your mind has to become strong to control these things.

Therefore, thinking of techniques such as these, thinking like this is extremely useful, extremely useful. For the Dharma practice, even for many lifetimes we have to think like this. However I think we have little minds and if I talk too much there's a risk we will explode! Anyway it's like this: for our Dharma practice, even if we have to spend many lifetimes and in each lifetime our body is cut into pieces, even if we have to suffer that much for Dharma practice, still it is nothing. Nothing.

Why still nothing? Why still nothing?

There are two reasons. Because even if we have to experience suffering for the Dharma practice, once we have achieved the Dharma practice we receive enlightenment and all the suffering which has been experienced from beginningless lifetimes is finished. It is all completely finished. There's nothing to come up, nothing to experience, not one tiny single thing left. This is the great profit. This is one of the reasons why it is worthwhile, however much we have to experience suffering for Dharma, for the Dharma practice, because Dharma practice has an end. All the beginningless suffering that we have had from beginningless lifetimes is because of not practicing Dharma, therefore it is not still finished, still we are experiencing it, still we are involved.

So thinking about these two things, "From beginningless lifetimes we have been dedicating, sacrificing our lives to suffer and to create the cause of suffering. However, by bearing the difficulties to practice Dharma we will finish quickly the whole suffering and receive enlightenment." Thinking of these two things is very useful to stop the laziness, to control those distractions to Dharma practice.

Then, the usefulness. I think you have some idea as we have talked about this so it doesn't have to be repeated. This outline, "How should we make our perfect human rebirth highly useful?" Actually this title "how to make it meaningful" is just made in this book but is not according to the outline of the graduated path. We don't have to follow the outlines but this technique, this way to think, is very helpful for the mind.

The reason why the expeditions and things like that happen is because many tourists come from the West to the mountains near Everest in Nepal. Many times they come to make expedition, to do a trek. So many people die on the mountains, not only the Westerners but also the country people, the Sherpa people, the mountain people. They go as porters, carrying luggage. In that country, carrying luggage for the tourists is the main business to bring money into the home to make the family rich. Think of similar actions, like this example, which put the life in great danger but don't have any essence and yet we completely dedicate our lives and make sacrifices for such things.

The main aim in coming there is, for instance, to get a title or a name, to have a good reputation in their countries, in the world. Thereby perhaps they get maybe *baksheesh* or money by receiving such a reputation in their country, from the government or something. That is the only thing, the only aim. It's nothing to do with other lives, it's nothing to do with the future life, it's nothing to do with enlightenment, nothing to do with ultimate happiness. It's just that thing, which is only to do with this life. And for this reason they have such incredible expenses, such as buying things in the West, buying all the clothes, all the food, everything, so much expense.

Then they come and on the way they meet so many expenses for such a small goal. Then they come up the mountain. If the whole trip was very comfortable, if there wasn't any difficulty at all, that is something else, but there are many difficulties, many costs of having this reputation. Again pride comes. Even if they use the money to do some positive action, maybe that is again something else, but still that's nothing. And that reputation is maybe just for a few years. If it lasted for a hundred years or for two hundred or three hundred years, then they would be existing and enjoying the reputation, but it's not like this. There's no choice. After one, two or three years, then shortly, quickly comes the time of death. Since the whole thing is done with attachment, the life doesn't have one single essence—it's completely empty. All the problems that have been experienced are for nothing. Like this there are many other examples.

As the perfect human rebirth is so highly useful and extremely difficult to receive again, for these reasons, if we can also make the normal daily life actions into Dharma actions—even just actions such as eating and sleeping—if we can make them virtuous then it makes the life meaningful, it makes the life rich. We have created some good karma during the day even though we didn't purposely arrange some action to create good karma, some kind of specific thing. We don't have to think like that to create good karma: “Now, today, this time I'm hoping to create good karma,” then doing some kind of special arrangement. We don't have to think in such a way; we don't have to do like that. Our normal actions, whatever we do, if we can do them purely, positively, with Dharma understanding and thought, with wisdom, then the whole thing becomes virtuous and makes the life meaningful. That itself becomes beneficial. Also it depends on our motivation, how wide and pure our motivation is.

One thing we can do is this: because we eat many times—two or three times a day—we eat in the morning, in the afternoon and at night. Then we drink many times. So actually if we can make all these actions virtuous, positive Dharma actions, then because we eat every day—we don't have to worry about not eating or not drinking, that is no trouble—then automatically we create good karma; it easily happens. As we eat and drink every day, so every day we have created that much good karma, profit. By that much the life has been made meaningful, even with normal actions. In this way it is easy, because we have to eat and we have to drink; we cannot stand being without it. So at that time if we can be careful, if at that time we can be really careful with ourselves and with our mind be aware; if we can be really careful all the time, then the action really becomes good karma. We don't have to purposely arrange it, we don't have to make special preparation or arrangements to create good karma.

At other times, without relating to daily life actions, at specific times to do something especially, like maybe making meditation or doing some prostrations, making offerings or something is difficult, difficult. To do something like this purposely with our time—something which doesn't relate to our daily actions of sleeping, eating and these things—is difficult because it doesn't relate to our daily life actions. These other things are specific, so the mind finds it very hard to start; the mind feels sort of

tired. Even to start is very difficult. Like this. So while we are eating or drinking, which we do every day, at those times, if we can take care of our mind, I think that is very useful.

When we are eating we can do like this. Generally, there are so many visualizations; there are so many different ways to make meditation according to our practice. There are so many different techniques. Also in tantra there are very profound ways to make meditation with the daily life actions of eating and these things. There are specific, very profound techniques, many different techniques. However the simple thing, the very simple thing which we can do is greatly, infinitely beneficial.

At the beginning the most important thing is the motivation, as I often talked about. We can think about this without it being complicated. At the very beginning it is more useful to check our mind. We can start the motivation right away and then eat, but sometimes it just becomes intellectual, like we are reading or like a tape recorder. It just becomes intellectual, with no feeling, nothing, like a Tibetan man repeating the English language, repeating the motivation in English language without understanding the meaning of that. Sort of like that.

First of all, check your mind. How do you feel about the food? What kind of mind is there? Then if there is attachment, think: “Oh, I have attachment; this mind with which I eat this food is attachment. I should not have attachment, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas; I should not have this. I should not eat with this thought, creating negative karma, which causes me to be born in the preta realm, therefore I should not eat with attachment. Then also I should not eat with a selfish motivation.” There are many ways to think but I think they are complicated, so just think, “Why should I have a selfish motivation? This pleasure, which I receive by eating this food and all these things, is received by me due to the kindness of the sentient beings. It is received only from the kindness of all the sentient beings.”

If you think like this, the selfish motivation goes down, it doesn’t become so strong. If you think of the kindness of sentient beings like this, then the thought comes, you want to do something to repay their kindness and you feel guilty about eating this food just for yourself, you feel a little guilty. When you think like this, the thought comes to do something to repay the kindness or to do something for sentient beings. It comes. So it’s easy to dedicate the action of eating for sentient beings—we receive the pleasure, the food and these things, only by depending on the kindness of all sentient beings.

Then think, “In order to receive enlightenment only for the sake of the mother sentient beings, I’m going to make this offering. I’m going to offer this food to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. I’m going to dedicate and also make charity with this food to all sentient beings!”

Then you visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha in your heart here, radiating light, in blissful nature, in blissful nature radiating light. Then at the heart of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, as you visualize, you recite the mantra and purify sentient beings, sending beams from the mantra. Also visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha here at your heart, the lotus, moon disc and in the center the letter OM, same thing. Then on the edge of the moon you visualize all sentient beings. You can visualize them in the form of human beings, like many people. “This food belongs to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and to sentient beings. It’s theirs, not mine.”

When you have such as this feeling, when you have dedicated that it completely belongs to them, then the idea of your offering, your charity to sentient beings, also becomes stronger, becomes easier. When you think, “This is mine, it belongs to me; only my share,” then the idea involves self and gets possessed by attachment. By deciding completely that it belongs to them, it completely belongs to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and all sentient beings, there are prayers which can be said. Then there’s also a prayer to make the offering. It’s very useful to say the prayer (grace) before offering.

While you are eating, also be conscious: “I am offering to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and making charity to sentient beings.” Then each of your actions, no matter how much you take with your spoon from the plate, that many actions become virtuous and Dharma actions, especially if they are possessed by the pure thought of bodhicitta, that motivation. It has great benefit because you are doing each of these actions.

As you dedicate your actions for sentient beings, to receive enlightenment only for sentient beings, each time you are eating you are making offering to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and making charity of these actions, so it benefits all sentient beings. The benefits of the action cover all sentient beings. However many sentient beings, there are that many benefits. So if you do this practice with strong motivation, the pure thought of bodhicitta, it has incredible benefits. Each of these actions has incredible benefits, unbelievable benefits. It becomes great purification.

While we are eating we can be conscious and when we finish the food, then that is fantastic! We have made our life highly meaningful if we can do that much. Then the more food we have on our plate, the more good karma we collect. So it’s better to have as much as possible, if the stomach doesn’t get pain.

Lecture 11

There’s another way of checking Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s holy body which is also very useful, very effective for the mind.

In the world, all the ordinary beings and even the followers of the Lesser Vehicle path [one class of follower is called Pratyekayana, the other Sravakayana], including even these, the followers who have achieved this Lesser Vehicle path. Including all the beings—all their fortunes, making that one big total—gathering all these ordinary beings in the world, even the followers who have achieved those Lesser Vehicle paths, even all their merit and all the ordinary beings’ merits. All the merits collected, multiply that big total by a hundred times, a hundred times the big total. The merits that were created by ordinary people and the followers who have achievements of these Lesser Vehicle paths, totaled and multiplied one hundred times—that much merit becomes the cause to receive one of the pores of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s holy body, one pore, the tiny place where the hair grows, such a tiny particle of his holy body. A hundred times that collection of merit becomes the cause of just one particle of his holy body, one pore!

Now, in Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s holy body there’s a certain number of pores, each created by a similar cause. Each pore is received by creating such a cause, that much merit. So now the cause,

that big collection of merit, which brings each of the pores, put together and multiplied a hundred times, becomes a cause of one of the eighty minor holy signs, called *pe ja* in Tibetan; just one of the minor signs, one sign. It doesn't become the cause of all the minor signs, just one.

There are eighty minor signs, such as the hairs. The teaching about this is in the *Abhisamayalamkara*, the teachings given by Maitreya to Asanga. Each of these and all the causes are explained in these teachings, also in the commentaries.

Some examples of minor signs are the hairs not flat but standing up, hairs staying up. Even the feet: ordinary people have feet sort of empty here [under the arch] arched like this. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's feet are not like ordinary people's feet, they are full, the whole foot is full. The fingers are very long—not kind of fat and short, but very beautiful and very long. The nails are very clear, having the color of copper. The skin is not like ordinary people's skin—it has golden color and is very thin. This is talking about the form of the sublime body of transformation, which they call *cho kei du*, the manifestation that Guru Shakyamuni took in the aspect of a monk. There are many examples like this.

So there are about eighty minor signs. Again, I think, a thousand times the cause, all the merit that brings the minor signs, one thousand times the merit that brings each of the minor signs—that much merit becomes the cause of one major sign. There are thirty-two major signs. One thousand times the merit which makes to receive each of the eighty minor signs becomes the cause of just one major sign.

A major sign is, for example, having the chakras, intuitively, the chakras on the hands and under the feet. The hands are not empty between, having webs between the fingers; also having the double crown. There are many other things. So anyway, of the thirty-two major signs, this merit becomes the cause of one of these.

So now, all the merit which makes to receive each of the thirty-two major signs, total that and multiply by a hundred times a thousand [100,000]. One hundred times a thousand of that much merit is the cause of receiving the forehead center hair, which is curled. The center hair, if it is pulled, comes out like rubber, I think about half an arm's length—I'm not sure of the length that comes out—then again like rubber it goes back and stays centered. It is called *zol pu* in Tibetan, the name for that is *zol pu*.

I think the numbers were a little mistaken. One hundred times a thousand the total merits that make to receive one of the thirty-two major signs being the cause of the central forehead hair—the number should be ten million, in Tibetan one *che wa*, ten million.

Ten million—one hundred thousand and one hundred times—the merits that make to receive the double crown, in Tibetan *tsuk do*. That much merit becomes the cause of receiving the Buddha's holy speech.

Then again the cause—now it becomes so many numbers—the cause, the merit which brings the Buddha's holy speech, many times again that merit becomes the cause of the Buddha's holy mind. So like this.

So each holy sign of Buddha's holy body is the result of so much incredible merit. For instance, just checking the very first one—even such a small thing, one pore, one small particle—even to receive that, we have to create merit hundred times all the merits that are created by all the ordinary beings in the world and even the followers who have attainments. Just to achieve one tiny particle of his holy body, one pore. There are a great number of pores. So to receive each of the pores we have to create each cause. In this way, by checking like this, we can understand that the Buddha's holy body is the result of creating such incredible, unimaginable merit, good karma. It is not easy, like receiving rebirth in the human realm or receiving rebirth in the sura and asura realms. Checking like this, thinking like this is also very useful to discover how much merit we have to create to receive the holy body.

Then the last checking meditation: how our vision is not definite. This is very important. It's so helpful in many ways, in many ways so helpful. Even in our usual daily life, this checking meditation is very useful. By understanding this it stops us from creating so much negative karma. By understanding this we don't trust [what we see.] When we see something negative going on, when we see someone who is sort of negative or something that causes our mind to be unhappy and we create so much negative karma by the negative mind arising. Then not only the negative mind arises but with that we act, creating negative actions of body and negative actions of speech with that object, with that living being, by believing that object as we see in our view.

We need to remember that our vision is not definite as it is, as we see things. If we remember this, then as we check, as our mind is thinking this, then there is doubt, even though we cannot see right away that it is not their nature, that it is not their mistake but our mistake. We can't all of a sudden see that, but even though we cannot think in this way—seeing them all of a sudden in purity, faultless and seeing it's only our own fault, only our own mistake—even though we cannot see in this way, we cannot change our view by thinking, by remembering that our vision is not true, not definite. By thinking this, definitely doubt can rise.

We can think, “Maybe it's not true as I see in my view, the way they act, their negative action, why they do those things to me like this, I cannot be sure, cannot be sure. It doesn't mean that they are negative, it doesn't mean they are negative. Who knows? I cannot realize, I cannot see, I cannot perceive their mind, I cannot realize how their mind is, on what level they are, I cannot see this, so how can I judge? Maybe they are an enlightened being. Who knows? Not sure. If they are an enlightened being, I'm not sure that I see them as an enlightened being. And because Guru Shakyamuni Buddha says in the teaching that he would manifest in different ways according to the level, he even manifests as an evil person, having the aspect of being crazy, all kinds of different aspects, according to sentient beings' level of mind. Therefore, I'm not sure.”

Also think like this: “If they are an enlightened being, even though they are enlightened it is not sure other people will see them as an enlightened being, because...” then remember the stories of Marpa and Tilopa, as well as Milarepa and Naropa, those things.

Also think of the previous time, when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was living in India and had a follower called Lekpai Karma, a bhikshu, a monk called Lekpai Karma. He was living with the Buddha, he was always with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, begging. At the time Guru Shakyamuni Buddha went to beg in the villages he always went with him, always together, but this follower never saw Guru Shakyamuni Buddha as enlightened. He was always together with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha but he didn't see him as an enlightened being. This follower, this monk, always saw Guru

Shakyamuni Buddha as false, as a complete liar. He didn't see anything really pure, he didn't see that, even though a great number of other followers, arhats, many great numbers of other beings saw Guru Shakyamuni Buddha as real, in the aspect of sambhogakaya. They saw him as a holy being, as really pure, having infinite knowledge; having not one wrong conception, no delusion, no ignorance; no such thing as creating negative actions, impossible. He was actually an enlightened being, having the appearance of a monk, the sublime holy body of the transformation of all the infinite buddhas. Even though it was like this, Lekpai Karma, this monk who always went with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, saw the Buddha as a complete liar.

When he went with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha begging in the villages, every time a benefactor offered to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, always Guru Shakyamuni dedicated the merits and, with his omniscient mind, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha would predict the benefactor's [future life.] As his omniscient mind fully saw the karma, "Due to this karma of offering food, such things, you will be born in such a realm and next time it will be like this," he always predicted like this. After the benefactor had made offering, the Buddha always told those benefactors this. "You will be born in such a place, you will be born like this and you will meet the Dharma, always born ... receive enlightenment," explaining the future result of that specific karma.

Lekpai Karma, when he went together with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, always saw him as cheating, telling lies to benefactors. He didn't see that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha had an omniscient mind. He always thought the Buddha was telling lies, all the time. He had another teacher who had wrong conceptions, who was of another religion, not Buddhadharma. So he believed that teacher more, somehow he believed in a founder who was really not true, who was not free of karma and samsara. He had more trust in him. This was due to the evil karma, obscurations.

So like this, just here there are numberless buddhas that we can see right away, just in front of us, just here. But until the mind pollution, the obscurations of the evil karma, are discontinued, while this is not removed, not cleaned, not purified, even though there are numberless buddhas, and even if all the buddhas came to help, if all the buddhas came in front of us, we couldn't see them, we would not see them. We wouldn't see them because there is no karma, no fortune to see them.

If all those obscurations of the evil karma are purified, even just on one grain, on one molecule or atom, we can see all the buddhas. It doesn't depend on changing the place, moving the place, making a journey to travel somewhere. It's like this example, the monk Lekpai Karma, who was always with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha but never saw him as an enlightened being or pure. There are many other examples.

In previous times in Tibet there was a man who killed many horses in his life, whose name was Aredoba. He came from the lower place of Tibet to Lhasa to see the very, very famous temple in the center of Lhasa, the city. There is an Avalokiteshvara statue formed a long time ago, it is called Jowo Shakyamuni. Poor people and rich people, everyone goes there no matter how difficult it is or how long it takes. Even if it takes months and months to walk there, they come to see this. It is recognized that anyone who sees this statue is very fortunate. Anyway, the statue is so precious, there is such a long story of how it is precious, how it happened, a fantastic story.

However, this man came from a lower place in Tibet to see the statue, Jowo Shakyamuni. Every day in this holy place there is a crowd of people coming from all over Tibet to make offerings and to see the statue, to make butter lamp offerings by carrying much butter and other offerings. It's always

crowded. All the people line up, they come to see it all the time, every day like this. In the presence of the holy object there are many very big, very wide, golden butter lamps, very big golden butter lamps, so many in front and around, with so many jewels, all over the statues and also around.

So this man came to see the holy statue from a very far off place and at first he didn't see anything. He came into the room and didn't see anything, whatever the other people saw, the statue and all those things. He saw just darkness, darkness. He didn't see anything in there, so he felt very upset, incredibly upset.

Then he went to see one very high lama, whose name is Gyaltsen Rinpoche, and he asked the lama to make observation. He explained he went to see the holy statue and he didn't see anything, so he asked what should be done. Then the lama explained to him that he should make confession and purification. So he made much confession and made offerings of butter lamps, much purification and confession. Then after doing like this, again he went to see the holy statue. Still he could not see the statue, he saw only the throne and the golden butter lamps, that's all. He still didn't see the statue. Things like that happen due to karma.

Also another person who had very heavy negative karma came to see the statue, but they couldn't see the statue. What they saw was piles of dried meat. Instead of seeing the statue on the throne, there were piles and piles of dried meat, heaped up like this.

Because of these reasons, like this we also have not exactly the same heavy karma, but we have obscurations of evil karma, therefore it's not sure what is seen by our mind. We don't know exactly what's pure or not, an enlightened or unenlightened being. What we see is full of mistakes, and that doesn't mean it's true, it's not always sure.

There's one lama, Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, who was the founder of the Sakya sect. There are four sects in Tibet, and one of these is the Sakya sect. He was a very highly, greatly realized lama, the head lama of this sect. There are so many fantastic teachings of Sachen Kunga Nyingpo. When he was with his teacher, who was sick for a long time, even though he didn't have time for eating food or sleeping, in spite of all this, in spite of all these difficulties, all the time, day and night he was just one-pointedly always serving or looking after his teacher.

Afterwards, his teacher gave him the guru yoga practice of Manjushri, the buddha of wisdom. All the buddhas' wisdom in one specific manifestation is called Manjushri, the buddha of wisdom. His teacher was called Manjushri, the buddha of wisdom, so his teacher gave him the guru yoga practice of Manjushri. Then he practiced this guru yoga. By practicing this guru yoga practice, even though he didn't see his guru before in the manifestation of Manjushri, after working for a long time, serving like this, dedicating the whole of his life like this—after he received guru yoga practice, by practicing this he saw his guru in the complete manifestation of the Buddha Manjushri, he saw oneness. He gained incredible wisdom. Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, this very high lama of the Sakya sect, gained incredible wisdom.

Even the king of China during those times, who had such strong power, much reputation, even his mind was controlled by Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, this very high Sakya lama. He was invited and gave teachings to the king of China. Many people heard he had gained incredible wisdom. Besides general knowledge, like drama or poems, he also became a highly learned person in the whole philosophical aspect, in all Dharma subjects. He became oneness afterwards by practicing this guru yoga practice,

he became oneness with Manjushri. However, all these things, all his knowledge, seeing his guru as oneness with Manjushri, all this knowledge that he gained, Dharma knowledge and all these things, also giving teachings to others, controlling others, even those who have much power, achieving the guru yoga practice of Manjushri—all this was due to purification, due to purifying the obscurations of the evil karma.

It is very useful to think, to remember these examples when we make checking meditation. They are simple examples, simple logic, which prove we should not always trust our views; it's simple logic. For instance, many times we make mistakes in our views. Like we see something very far away, if there's a rock or something, it looks like there's a person standing there, sort of, many times we see something. When we come nearby, we prove it is completely wrong, "It's not true what I saw before." Many times it happens like this. So, even just in a simple way of talking.

Also in regards our life, it's impermanent but we often think, "I am going to...." We ordinary beings think like that, even though we are going to die tomorrow. Until that certain death, that condition comes, the idea, "I am going to live for a long time," many years, thirty, forty years, is always there, until the moment of death, until that time. It always carries on. So there's nothing to trust in what we think, what we believe, because it doesn't happen, it doesn't work in that way, it doesn't work as we believe. That is also a mistake. It also proves that there's nothing to trust as we believe.

Same thing, another way of talking, we ordinary people see everything as independent—thinking we are always independent, always self-existent, always independent. As we see our I, same thing with every object, we see things as independent. As the object appears, when we look at it, it appears to us as independent, self-existing, existing by itself without depending on anything, any creator, any part, any time, anything, any mind; just existing by itself.

For instance, the new baby we get, it's given a name, let's say, anyway I'm joking, let's say Maitreya. We call it Maitreya, we believe Maitreya is the baby's name. We understand this way. We have an intellectual understanding of this name. Now when we think intellectually, we know its name. Then after the name is given, we decided on Maitreya, then we tell other people "Maitreya," and then parents and other people all believe in this independent, self-existing Maitreya. We believe in an independent, self-existing Maitreya self-entity. That is the feeling, how we perceive it, how we view it, how we believe it, how it appears—independent, self-existing, which means the same thing. Then how we believe is the same because as it appears, we believe. So it is completely a mistake. It's a lack of checking why this belief comes, mainly by not being aware, not realizing its nature, not being aware of it. But if we check it, if we seek the independent self-entity, if we check we cannot find it anywhere, we cannot find any particle, even on the atoms of the baby's body. We cannot find the independent self-existing baby, Maitreya, anywhere. We cannot find it. Even if the name is given by the parents we cannot find it in their mind. We cannot find anywhere, we can't find anything to point out this is self-existing. The independent Maitreya cannot be found.

Even though it doesn't exist at all, anywhere, we strongly believe in it as self-existing, as it appears to us. Just even in a simple way of talking, this is why our own vision is not definite, things are not always true as we see them. Even with material things, believing impermanent things are permanent, even this we don't realize. The nature is truly there but we don't see it, we don't see it. So it's easy to discover, easy to figure out how difficult it is to see an enlightened being as an enlightened being. From this we can discover, we can figure out from this example of not realizing reality, absolute nature, even if it is there.

These examples that I'm talking about now are very useful. Examples about life and those things are very useful. About absolute nature, not realizing it even if it is there is not the fault of the absolute nature. It's not the fault of the object; it's only the fault of our mind. It's only the fault of our mind, not seeing that. It's not the fault of the object, it is always there. It's not like this: "Absolute nature, usually it doesn't exist here but when we meditate, by meditating, after making purification, absolute nature comes here." It's not like this. It's always there. It's just mind, in our mind; it's the fault of our mind not seeing it due to the obscurations of the evil karma. Like this, those stories are very useful, especially for those who want to understand guru yoga.

PRECEPTS 1

Motivation

[We should set a bodhicitta motivation for] the action of taking ordination to become a cause of receiving enlightenment, besides becoming Dharma.

"The evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the wrong conception of the self, I, the self-cherishing thought, this negative mind has been obliging me to experience the whole samsaric suffering without choice, numberless times from beginningless previous lifetimes. There is not one particular samsaric suffering that I have never experienced. If I still follow this wrong conception without removing it, I will have to endlessly suffer samsaric suffering again in the future."

By thinking of our past experiences and what will happen in the future, the situation is such that, according to this, we dare not stay, we dare not spend even a minute without trying something, without trying to practice Dharma to stop experiencing the future sufferings. If we really try to be aware, if we really check up on our past experience of suffering and what will have to be experienced in the future continuously, there is no time—not even a second or a minute—to create samsaric actions, to do only the actions of this life, to follow the samsaric pleasures even a little, even as small as a sesame seed.

"Releasing myself from samsara is not sufficient, because there are numberless other mother sentient beings who are extremely suffering, having no wisdom and method. They are the field from where I receive all my past, present, future happiness and perfection; even the perfection and happiness of enlightenment.

"At the beginning of my Dharma practice, I have to depend on the kindness of mother sentient beings. Even in the middle of the Dharma practice, I have to depend on the kindness of sentient beings. Even at the end, receiving enlightenment depends on the kindness of the mother sentient beings. Without them there's no way to achieve all this, no way even to hear the Dharma. They are the principal relatives, who are extremely kind."

[Precepts ceremony]

Since we took the ordination in the morning, especially by motivating to take the ordination for the benefit of all the sentient beings, we repeat the motivation. If we have really dedicated for that, if we have motivated that way, then during the day if the precepts are broken—even if we're not

motivated for sentient beings but just to purify our own negative karmas, just to not be born in suffering realms, even if there's such motivation like this, because we made visualization of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha surrounded by numberless buddhas, by thinking, "In the presence of all these buddhas I'm taking the vows," if the precept is broken it becomes telling lies or cheating. As we made a vow, thinking like this, in the presence of them, then it becomes sort of like telling a lie to each of them. Also, especially if we have motivated by thinking, "I'm going to take ordination for the benefit of all sentient beings," we have made the vow to do this for all the sentient beings. So if we break the precept, it is like cheating all sentient beings, telling lies.

This is whether we are being conscious or not being conscious. Even if we don't have a pre-arranged idea "I am going to do this," even unconsciously breaking them. But especially if we consciously break the precepts, not caring, in spite of the karma, not respecting the karma, not caring about the karma; not because we are free of karma but because of being ignorant, not understanding karma. Not understanding our suffering nature, not having that much deep sincere desire to seek peace, to seek everlasting happiness, to seek enlightenment. Even if we have a deep wish to seek ultimate happiness, enlightenment, this deep wish, wanting to receive, that makes us careful of the karma, because observing karma is the foundation, like the earth. This is the main foundation, the main thing, the first thing in our practice. It's the very first thing. Just like if we're going to make some paintings, it's like the base, the paper or cloth or whatever is. Observing karma—without that there's no way we can make a beautiful painting, no way we can paint the different colors, no way to draw.

If we break the precepts consciously it's very heavy, very heavy. The negative karma is very heavy. Consciously breaking them is very heavy, without respecting the karma, very heavy. That's if we purposely breaking the precepts, it's much heavier. We have made a vow, then again purposely broken it. Clearly we can see that's cheating all sentient beings, all the buddhas.

It is necessary to always remember the number of precepts and to be careful. We think it is difficult, but it is not difficult. For instance, if we have not been keeping precepts, we are not keeping precepts to be released from the whole of suffering—all the suffering we know and the suffering that we don't know—to be released from all these sufferings and to receive enlightenment, ultimate happiness. We have not been keeping the precepts since we were born. We have not been keeping precepts. Are we going to keep precepts until death time? No. We're not going to keep the precepts for a whole year, we're not going to keep precepts even for half a year or even for a month. So just for a few days we're keeping precepts for that reason, to achieve that incredible, great, such a high goal.

Actually if we desire to achieve such a goal, it is something for which we will have to keep precepts for many lifetimes, for a hundred lifetimes or thirty lifetimes. The work we do to achieve that goal, keeping precepts for one month or even one year is nothing, nothing. Even keeping them for just one lifetime is not sufficient. So keeping precepts for two weeks or just for a few days is nothing. It's really nothing.

Therefore, even for such a short time as a few days, while we have the chance to take ordination, while we have the chance to keep precepts, it's important to be as careful as possible. Try to be aware, conscious as much as possible. That's very important, very important, very important. Why do we break precepts consciously? No reason. No need to create extra negative karma. We don't have to worry about *not* creating negative karma, because we continuously create negative karma, day

and night, all the time. Even though we cannot avoid creating negative karma, we should not create extra negative karma.

Other people won't experience it. *We* have to experience it, we have to experience it. For instance, if we don't work for money, then who will suffer? Not other people who have money. We who didn't work will have to go through the difficulties of life. So, it's just like this, it's easy, same thing with karma, exactly the same.

If we always make purification, that is something else but to always have the chance to make purification is very difficult, very, very difficult. Therefore it's more skillful to not create the extra negative karma, to not break precepts, as much as possible.

In previous times, even breaking just a tiny precept, such as one monk who was going around a tree that belonged to the Sangha, the monks, and his head knocked a small branch of the tree. Just his head knocked that, he got very angry and he broke—he didn't kill human beings or anything—he just broke the tree that belonged to the Sangha. Because of that, because of such small karma, breaking the tree with anger, after that life he was born as a *naga*, animal.

One day, when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was giving teachings to people, his followers, one very, very rich-looking person came in the uniform of a king. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, because of his omniscient mind, fully saw whether it was true or not so, and he asked that being, "You must show your own shape, your own nature, your own shape. You cannot come here by transforming." So the next day he came in his own form in the presence of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. When he was coming with his actual form, the karmic result, when he was coming inside, the actual shape of his body was a long snake, an incredible, huge snake. Even the head reached in front of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and the rest of the body, even the tail was very far, even at the village, very far. Such a long, huge snake and in the head there was a tree growing, the tree that he broke before. In the head the tree was growing, such a huge tree was growing and all the roots were in the brain, something very terrible like this. All Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples, to whom he was giving teaching, ran away. They all scattered. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said there was no need to be scared, so they asked and Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained, "You don't have to be scared because this is the one who came yesterday in the uniform of king, in the appearance of king. Today he came with his karmic shape, the karmic result, his actual body."

They asked Guru Shakyamuni Buddha why it was, and Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained the karma, why he had to be born like this. In a previous time he broke precepts—even breaking small precepts, not killing or these four basic things—but just even with anger breaking the branch of a tree.

So karma is not easy. Also the tree was blown by the wind and all the branches were moving. While the tree was blown by wind, when the tree was moving, it stirred his brain, in his head. He always had incredible pain as the tree was blown by the wind, as the tree was moving. That person in a previous lifetime was a monk and in the next lifetime he had to suffer incredibly.

Negative karma is mainly due to ignorance. We create negative karma without being conscious. Also even if we are not creating negative karma consciously, by not fully knowing karma, not really knowing and not having fear of the suffering result, then it's because we are doing like this, unconsciously doing things. Also we are consciously creating negative actions even when we know it

is negative. By doing this we always keep on being born in samsara and suffering—always circling round like this. No matter how much there is a desire for no suffering, to not experience suffering, it comes without a choice. That's all.

Lecture 12

From the holy speech of the great bodhisattva Shantideva:

[1:23] Do even fathers and mothers
Have such a benevolent intention as this?
Do the gods and sages?
Does even Brahma have it?

[1:24] If those beings have never before
Even dreamt of such an attitude
For their own sake,
How would it ever arise for the sake of others?

[1:25] This intention to benefit all beings,
Which does not arise in others even for their own sake,
Is an extraordinary jewel of the mind,
And its birth is an unprecedented wonder.

Even the father or mother, do they have such beneficial thought? Or even the gods, Brahma or *tsangpa*—this is Tibetan name, the Sanskrit title I don't remember, the name of samsaric gods, tsangpa, in whom Hindu religious people take refuge. If even the gods, Brahma and tsangpa, in previous times didn't dream [of such an attitude] for themselves, how can it arise for the living beings? It doesn't happen, it doesn't rise. Thinking to benefit others is the special mind jewel, the most sublime; a wonderful thing is born.

The meaning of this quotation, “Do even the father or the mother have such beneficial thought?” “Beneficial thought” means bodhicitta, which we were talking about yesterday. Bodhicitta, wanting to cure all the sentient beings' sufferings and wanting to obtain all the knowledge [in order to benefit] the minds of all sentient beings. This quotation follows from that.

The quotation is saying that because there is such great benefit, therefore it is worthwhile to try. Also it is emphasizing how it is rare, how it is difficult for it to arise. Then explaining that even the father and mother don't have such this beneficial thought, do they? Also, even the higher samsaric gods, who also have much material power, who control many other surrounding gods, and even Brahma, the gods such as Brahma, the king of the gods. Brahmins are the type of people who never tell lies and whose speech is very, very powerful. Their speech is very, very powerful, thus whatever they pray for becomes successful because of the power of their speech. They never tell lies. Also Brahmins, the Indian caste, Brahmins, in previous times these people also had much knowledge of foretelling, they could foretell the future and past. Even tsangpa, these samsaric gods, don't have this beneficial thought.

The next quotation [*Bodhicaryavatara*, 1: 24]: “Before, in previous times those sentient beings didn’t even dream” These sentient beings, the parents, those samsaric gods, Brahmins, these sentient beings in previous times, in past times, didn’t have the thought wanting to be released from all the suffering even for themselves; they didn’t have such a beneficial thought even in a dream. For instance, usually people say, “You must not think to kill your parents, you must never think that and never do such a thing.” Then the person may say, “Besides never doing it, I would never think it, even in my dreams.” This way, saying this, trying to prove it’s impossible, saying “I would never do that.” Sort of like that, same thing in the West.

Student: I wouldn’t dream of it.

Rinpoche: Yeah, same thing. So, “These sentient beings, in the past they wouldn’t ...” according to how it comes in the quotation, “Even for their own purpose, didn’t get dream ...” So what he is saying is that in past times these sentient beings, the names I’ve just mentioned, these sentient beings, the beneficial thought wanting release from all suffering—even this they didn’t dream of. It is saying this. In past times, those sentient beings haven’t even dreamed of the thought wanting to release themselves from suffering. They didn’t even dream of it. So, the beneficial thought wanting this for other sentient beings, for others—even just the thought, in the past times, wanting to release themselves from all suffering, they didn’t even dream of it—so the beneficial thought wanting other sentient beings to be released from suffering, how can this arise? How can this arise for other sentient beings? It’s impossible. How can it arise? It doesn’t, it’s impossible. It doesn’t.

The next quotation [*Bodhicaryavatara*, 1: 25] is saying that one who is thinking to work for other sentient beings has received the most sublime, wonderful, special thought-jewel. This verse is explaining the objectives of the bodhisattva, the person who thinks to benefit others. Mainly, the main thing it is talking about is how rare it is for this beneficial thought—wanting to release other sentient beings from suffering—to arise. The main subject is how it is rare. Then saying it doesn’t arise for the sentient beings, therefore whoever has the thought arising to work for the benefit of other sentient beings, in that person’s mind the most sublime, wonderful, special thought-jewel is born, is received.

The same thing, the second way of saying this, the emphasis is that it is very rare. So the sentient being who has this thought is special, remarkable. It’s such a wonderful, most sublime, special thing; it is the jewel of thoughts.

This explanation of what is contained in Shantideva’s *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* gives us an understanding of how rare bodhicitta is. Even the sentient beings, those samsaric gods with such material power and high enjoyments, even though they have that much power, and even those Brahmins—even they don’t have bodhicitta, not even the thought of releasing others from all suffering. So, by thinking of them, for us even to hear the teaching of bodhicitta is very fortunate, very, very fortunate; and besides hearing the teaching on bodhicitta, having the chance to practice the meditation, the techniques.

However, it is necessary to train the mind in the pure thought of bodhisattva right this moment. Also, for the present action of listening to Dharma to become the cause for enlightenment it is necessary to cultivate this pure motivation as strongly as possible. So it is necessary to think, “It’s not sufficient that only I am released from samsara. I must achieve enlightenment in order to

enlighten all the mother sentient beings. Therefore, I'm going to listen to the profound teaching on the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The listening subject is a Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate ones to receive enlightenment. It is well expounded by the great philosophers Nagarjuna and Asanga. It is a profound teaching. The essence of the knowledge of the great, unequaled, magnificent pandit Atisha and the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa, was extracted from this. It includes the 84,000 teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. All the teachings are arranged for our practice of the graduated path in order to receive enlightenment. This graduated path to enlightenment is the only path through which all the past, present and future buddhas received enlightenment.

This commentary to the graduated path has four outlines. The last one is how to lead the disciple in the path to enlightenment by showing these oral teachings. This has two outlines:

1. How to follow the guru, which is the root of the path,
2. How to train the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment by following the guru.

The second one has two outlines, of which the last one is how to take the essence of the perfect human rebirth. That one, the method is divided into three:

1. The graduated path of the lower capable being.
2. The graduated path of the middle capable being.
3. The graduated path of the higher capable being.

This part is from the first outline. That has two outlines of which the last one is following the method which brings happiness in future lives. This has two parts:

1. Going for refuge, which is the holy door of the teachings, and
2. Rising devotion to karma, which is the root of all perfection and happiness.

Refuge has five outlines:

1. Taking refuge by depending on what object.
2. By what cause taking refuge.
3. Definition of taking refuge, with how much understanding.

This part of the subject is from that third outline: Taking refuge by knowledge of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

We briefly talked about the knowledge of the Buddha's holy body, just like a drop of the ocean. Still, that is nothing. The knowledge of the Buddha's holy body, what we talked about is nothing, the amount of knowledge that the Buddha's holy body has, the infinite knowledge of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body. Every single knowledge of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body is not the object of even the higher bodhisattva's mind—besides not being the object of ordinary beings—even though the bodhisattvas have psychic powers, great knowledge to see past, present and future, or to read other sentient beings' minds. Even many beings have this. Such subtle, every single knowledge of the Buddha's holy body is only the object of Buddha's holy, omniscient mind. The

bodhisattvas can see each other, can fully understand each other. Even the higher bodhisattvas who are close to the Buddha, who are close to receiving enlightenment, even they can't see every single knowledge of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body. It is the same with the holy speech and the same thing with the holy mind.

However, if we wanted to explain about the Buddha's holy body, if we were going to explain each detail, we would never be finished. Also in the teaching, there is so much explanation about the knowledge of the Buddha's holy body. It's something unbelievable, something we cannot comprehend, that we cannot figure out.

Regarding the knowledge of the Buddha's holy speech, it can also function, it can act as his holy body and can also function as the holy mind; it can also be an action of the omniscient mind. Also there are incredible numbers of different manifestations of the holy speech and each of these manifestations of his holy speech can do the actions of his holy mind, his holy body and his holy speech.

Also, regarding the power of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy speech, if each of the sentient beings asks Guru Shakyamuni Buddha a question, he can give an answer to each of the sentient beings according to the level of their question. He gives a different answer to different questions according to the level of their mind, as it benefits. If it doesn't benefit, he doesn't give. If it is not the right time, that which benefits, he doesn't give any teachings, he doesn't give any answer, he keeps quiet without giving an answer, yes or no. So if the time is not right, if the person's mind is not ready, even if Guru Shakyamuni is asked questions, he doesn't give an answer and just keeps quiet.

However, his holy speech is so powerful that even if each sentient being asks a different question—without depending on giving the right answer, the correct answer, without depending on the knowledge of giving the right answer—he gives the answer according to the level of the other person's mind. The Buddha's answer is not depending on his knowledge or knowing the answer but depends on the level of the other sentient being's mind.

For instance if someone asks, "What is shunyata?" then the Buddha gives an answer according to the level of that person's mind. He gives the explanation, not the actual meaning, not the real meaning of shunyata—that which cuts off the ignorance by meditating on it. The actual thing, he doesn't necessarily explain the actual meaning of that. Without depending on his knowledge, his understanding of the actual meaning of shunyata, he gives an answer according to the level of that person's mind so that the answer benefits them, that answer benefits their mind.

The actual answer, the answer of the actual subject, which explains the real meaning of the absolute nature, shunyata, because he sees that if it is explained it doesn't fit, that person doesn't understand, they misunderstand, so it becomes hindrance to their Dharma practice, it becomes the cause of rising wrong conception. If he sees this, then according to the level of that person's mind he gives an answer. Slowly, he even gives another answer. He even gives an answer maybe about self-existence. Instead of saying shunyata is non-self-existent, according to the level of the person's mind the Buddha might say it is self-existent. If their mind is not capable and they are not the right person, not the right object to explain the meaning, such as non-self-existent; if it becomes a cause of wrong conceptions and a hindrance to Dharma practice, to leading them in the path to enlightenment, if this becomes a hindrance saying like this, straight; if it becomes a hindrance to following in the path to enlightenment, then he gives whatever method suits them.

Sometimes he said like self-existent. By showing as self-existent, somehow that person doesn't get scared. Because their level of mind is so low, so ignorant, so foggy, they find it easier to accept that things are self-existent. Also, through this, by giving this answer, they understand karma is existing. They don't give up respecting karma. The renounced mind trying to understand the nature of suffering, the samsaric suffering; they don't give up the mind that renounces samsara. They don't give up respecting karma, they accept the evolution of karma. In that way they understand, they find it easy to understand the samsaric suffering, samsara, the nature of suffering and the law of karma. It is easier and also they respect that, so they observe karma in that way.

However, for some highly intelligent people, for that person's mind even this answer is wrong to them, completely wrong. So first, giving an answer that it is self-existent. Then afterwards, they try to understand how samsaric nature is suffering and slowly a renounced mind of samsara arises and also they respect karma. Through this, gradually, slowly the answer that it is self-existent becomes the cause of understanding that the whole of samsara is non-self-existent. The person, enlightenment—everything is non-self-existent. This becomes the cause of realizing shunyata, realizing shunyata by understanding karma and the nature of samsara, samsaric suffering. Then through this—by understanding karma, the samsaric nature, suffering—their mind becomes more and more ready to realize how enlightenment, the whole of samsara, the whole thing is dependent, how it is non-self-existent. The mind becomes more ready. Then, as their mind gradually becomes ready, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha shows the teaching that it is non-self-existent. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's first answer becomes the cause of realizing shunyata. So it's incredible how it becomes the cause of realizing shunyata, like this.

For instance, even if we try, we don't know, even by giving an answer in the wrong way, in such a way, we're not sure, we can't see how it will benefit the other person. We can't see the future. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha fully sees the future; how by giving an answer that is actually opposite to what is existing there—absolute nature, what is existing—Guru Shakyamuni fully sees how it works, how it is, realizing non-self-existence.

That's what I mean, he gives an answer not depending on his knowledge, his understanding of what real absolute nature is. He gives the answer according to the level of the other person's mind, whatever benefits. If nothing benefits, he doesn't give any answer. So he doesn't necessarily always give teachings. Not giving teachings doesn't mean he has no compassion; it doesn't mean that at all. Because he has compassion he sees it is better that he doesn't give any teaching. He doesn't give any answer because it is more beneficial that way. Because of that compassion he takes whatever action is more beneficial.

Even if sentient beings ask different questions, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gives different answers according to the level of the sentient being's mind. Also the answers don't have to be given at different times. He gives an answer once. When he gives the answers, he gives them at one time. At the same time, he can give answers to each sentient being. He doesn't need to give answers at different times. When we talk at different times, we do not have the power and capability while we answer one thing to give answers at the same time to each of the different people. Guru Shakyamuni can do this, even if each sentient being asks a question. While he is giving one answer, he gives answers to each of the sentient beings at the same time, according to the question, the level of mind, in their own language. Also in their own language, whatever language they have.

Because of the omniscient mind, the buddhas don't have to teach Dharma by giving answers in different languages, in the languages of the different sentient beings. They don't have to go to school and university, things like that. Before receiving enlightenment and following the path, that itself is going to university, school and everything, learning geography, science and language; that itself is learning everything. That is the method of realizing all existence, every single existence. Just by one method it is finished, the whole thing, everything. There is nothing left. There is not one atom left that they don't see, doesn't understand. Not one single existence, not one single existence.

In India, seven days after Guru Shakyamuni Buddha received enlightenment, he requested Kungawo or one of his followers; he realized it was the right time to give teaching. While he was giving teachings in Sarnath—near Varanasi, the holy place at Sarnath—while he was teaching the first wheel of the Dharma on the four noble truths, for the lower capable beings there, at the same time he was giving teachings in Rajgir, for the middle Dharma wheel, for those disciples with that level of mind, subjects such as shunyata. At the same time, while he was giving teachings at those two places, at another place,³ I think quite close to Bodhgaya, maybe around Bodhgaya, at the same time, in that place, he was giving the last wheel of Dharma, for those disciples who had that level of mind, about the Madhyamika subject. The three Dharma wheels—this is not tantra, this is just sutra teaching.

The first Dharma wheel he gave in Sarnath is for lower capable beings. The last Dharma wheel, which he gave in this holy place, [Shravasti], is kind of more profound. The teaching he gave in Rajgir, on the Madhyamika, the middle way, shunyata, those things—that is the main thing, which is the right explanation of the evolution of nature. So generally the way of studying is like this.

As Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gave teachings to various levels of disciples, so the general way of studying is also like this. First of all to try to understand the idea, the philosophy, what Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained to those lower capable beings at Sarnath. That makes clear, makes it easy to understand the philosophy or the idea, the explanation of the teachings that were given by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. By understanding this it is more profound. Studying this, understanding these ideas, this philosophy, makes it so much clearer to understand the real explanation, which is according to the two truths—absolute truth and the illusory truth—according to their existence. The right explanation of absolute truth and the illusory truth he gave in Rajgir.

By showing these different philosophies, these different explanations of things, of the path of evolution, he even gave different explanations, different philosophies. As I said before, showing first of all even self-existence and afterwards realizing non-self-existence. The disciples first of all understand this, then by understanding the first philosophy they easily understand the second part. By understanding the first philosophy, they easily understand the second philosophy, that part of the teaching. Then by understanding that, the mind becomes much more ready to understand the middle way, the actual thing, the actual answer, the actual explanation, which is the actual way that things really exist, the whole existence. Then through this they realize shunyata and are gradually released from samsara.

So these three teachings were going on at the same time. At the same time as he was giving three sermons in different places, he was giving tantra teachings in the southern part of India. At the same time, at another place, with a different manifestation, he gave Vajrayana teachings for those followers who had the highest level of mind, in the manifestation, the aspect of the deity called

³ Rinpoche may be referring to Shravasti, a city in ancient India, located in present-day Uttar Pradesh.

Vajradhara. In tantric deity aspect, sambhogakaya aspect, like those we see in thangkas, having a blue color body, adorned by skeleton bone ornaments. Not in the aspect of a monk, sometimes embracing a female aspect. In such a sambhogakaya manifestation, in the aspect of a tantric deity, he gave teachings to those followers whose mind was ready, who had a higher level of mind.

On the basis of having received the fully renounced mind of samsara, bodhicitta and shunyata, to those who already had these realizations he gave all the Vajrayana teachings and initiations, all of them. All these teachings were given at the same time. So like this, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has incredible knowledge and with his holy speech, he could give different teachings at different places for different sentient beings' level of mind.

Also, when he was giving teaching in Sarnath, for those beings who had a lower level of mind, when he gave an answer to one person, Kaundinya, one of the five disciples to whom he had shown the four noble truths for the first time on this earth. Kaundinya was the name of one of the followers. When he said to Kaundinya, "This is impermanent, this is impermanent," other followers understood "This is existence, this is existence" or "This is true suffering." And someone else received the teaching "This is emptiness." So then you see, at the same time, they received different teachings like this.

Also, one time while Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was giving teachings, his follower named Maudgalyayana, who had very high psychic powers, tried to check up with his psychic power how far he could hear Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching. He tried to check up. So Maudgalyayana, no matter how far away he was, he could always hear Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching, which he was giving at one specific place in India. Maudgalyayana, this arhat, even though he tried to go very far he still heard the teaching; even though he went to another planet, the sun, the moon, with his psychic power on the planets, he could still hear the teaching. If the other being's mind is ready, the Buddha's action is so intuitive, giving Dharma, that his speech can reach even that far.

So that was briefly, the knowledge of the holy speech.

Next, the knowledge of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind, the omniscient mind. As I explained, it's also useful to think that there's no such place which Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind doesn't cover. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind covers all existence and because of that, there's not one tiny atom where Guru Shakyamuni's holy body doesn't exist. Same thing also, Guru Shakyamuni's holy speech covers all existence, as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind covers all existence.

Also, talking about the knowledge of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind, as his mind covers every single atom, the whole existence, there is no such time, after this omniscient mind is received, no such time, not even one split second, not even a tiny split second that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's omniscient mind doesn't see the whole existence, because there's no such time that the omniscient mind ceases. There's no such time that the omniscient mind stops or degenerates; there's no such thing. So there's not one split second, not even the shortest second, that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind does not see the whole existence. There's not even one particle in existence, no such time, not even a split second, the shortest time, that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy mind—which sees all existence—doesn't see this tiny atom, something which can be pointed out. It's impossible. As many existent things as there are—when the object is existent or when it is non-existent—his omniscient mind always sees them.

Also, for instance, we cannot read, we cannot tell another person's level of mind, what they think. Even one person, we cannot tell what they think, what level of mind they have. We cannot understand, we cannot see that. But Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's omniscient mind fully sees each sentient being's thoughts all the time. For instance, while Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's omniscient mind is reading, it is fully seeing our thoughts, whatever we are thinking. While his omniscient mind is seeing clearly our thoughts, at the same time he fully sees each of the other sentient beings' thoughts. So even in a split second, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha fully understands what each of the sentient beings is thinking, even in each split second, in just one tiny second. This is still nothing: the period of a finger-snap can be divided into many, as the scientists even say this can be divided into thousands. However, even each of those thousand thousandths of a second, such a tiny particle of time, even in each of these Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's omniscient mind can read all the sentient beings' thoughts. He can fully see, without getting mixed up. Without any mistake he clearly sees each one—what level of mind, what they think—at the same time, even in the smallest particle of time.

We think of the Buddha as kind of very far away from us, far away, kind of like a dream—just like talking about last night's dream. Like something we have a dream of, something we cannot see, something we talk about, which doesn't exist but we can talk about it. Sort of like that, like a fantasy. It is not like this, never like this.

For instance, many people who believe in God talk about God, they talk about God but if they really check in the depth of their mind, if they really check way down, it's like God doesn't actually exist for their mind. If they actually check very deeply. On the surface they believe in God and sort of talk about God but actually, when thinking deeper in their mind, God is like the sky, space, emptiness. Emptiness, space, like that. If it is really checked deeply it comes to the point where God doesn't exist, because there's no proof, no explanations, no understanding.

However, Buddha is not like this; never like this. When we are meditating, even if our mind is creating a negative action, no matter what is going on in our mind, all the time he sees us. All the time. It's not like us ordinary beings, who can see by day but at nighttime when it is dark we can't see anything. Anyway, just joking. There's no such thing. All the time, no matter even if we think the omniscient mind doesn't exist or the Buddha doesn't exist; no matter what we think, the omniscient mind can see all the time, fully seeing all sentient beings' thoughts all at the same time, in the smallest particle of time.

It is actually like this. As the omniscient mind is all over our body, the omniscient mind also exists on our mind. So you see, when we eat food, when we visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha here, we should not think, "There's nothing to receive from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, I am making sort of fantasy," as if it doesn't have any benefits. We should not think there's no such thing as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha just because we can't see him. Definitely there's benefit. If we think of the omniscient mind then the place where we make offerings, no matter where it is—it doesn't have to be at the monastery or somewhere special, wherever it is, even in the toilet—we should think there is no place, not even one atom, where the omniscient mind is not existing. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is all over. Therefore, with this understanding, if we make offerings, visualizing like this, then it feels much better, much more comfortable. There's more trust and we feel more truth, more real.

Same thing when we make offering in our room, like when we are in meditation, offering incense, light, anything, at that time also Guru Shakyamuni is there, even though we don't see, we don't feel that. Remembering the functions of the omniscient mind, how a buddha sees everything at the same time, how it sees all existence at the same time, by understanding that the omniscient mind is all over, then if we make offering like this, for sure, the feeling of making offerings is more serious and we have more trust in it. It's not just like playing, not just a custom, not just for the beauty of our room but really offering.

Especially, if possible, visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha there, really there, as if you are seeing him, as if he is really there, seated on the throne with moon and lotus. Then you make offering with the understanding of the omniscient mind, this knowledge of the omniscient mind: that the Buddha is existing all over. Then there is much more benefit, much more benefit. Also it gives you energy to making offering. If you don't have understanding, even though you do the offerings, maybe it becomes just like a custom. Maybe in the mind there's no such thing, no such thing, God or no such thing. Buddha maybe not sure, like space, nothing that can be pointed at. If there's no knowledge of the omniscient mind, no knowledge of his holy body, then even though you make offering, it is difficult for the feeling to be pure, so most of the time it becomes a kind of custom or because it's a good decoration. That's what I do! Things like this.

Also, with this understanding you don't become lazy. Maybe you created merit by doing this once or twice when you were happy, maybe something. Maybe when your parents or other people come to your house, maybe you do that, to show them your room. However, in this way, with understanding, remember this knowledge of the omniscient mind, this knowledge of the holy body. Then you know that Guru Shakyamuni is really in your room. By thinking this more and more, remembering this more and more, then seeing more clearly, clearer and clearer, you can't lie down and you can't do any disrespectful action in your room. It's as if you are in the presence of a teacher, an important person or something. When you are with important people, you should have respect and behave correctly as much as possible. Like that feeling, the same, the more you think in this way, the feeling becomes stronger and stronger. In this way your room also gets blessed by this. Your room becomes blessed, becomes pure and your mind in that place receives the blessings of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha through this understanding, through this strong feeling. It also gives you energy all the time to make offerings, to create merit; by making prostrations, offerings, creating merit, different things.

There's a definite way the mind can change. Now, our mind doesn't see anything but definitely through the checking meditation, the more we understand the knowledge, also through purification, definitely by checking this and thinking about it more and more, definitely the mind can change, can feel it. Now we don't feel anything but afterwards, by thinking about this more and more, the mind can sort of feel it, exactly as if we're in front of an important person, the guru or some important president or someone; sort of like that feeling. Also in this way, as there's such strong feeling and having this understanding, thinking like this, it makes less distraction, it becomes less of a distraction in your room, also for your mind.

Same thing when you clean your room, think, "This is Guru Shakyamuni's room." Instead of thinking, "This is my room, and I should have my room clean, for health or maybe if other people come. If other people come, they will see it is dirty and then they would think how I live is dirty, how I am messy," so you are sort of cleaning for your reputation. The evil thought of the worldly mind, attachment, is coming. Instead of letting the attachment come, think, "Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is in this room and this is his mandala, this is his palace; it belongs to him." Then if you

clean your room it becomes service to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, instead of it becoming service to your negative mind.

The other night Lama Yeshe told the example, the Ben Gungyal story of the thief showing his hand, Ben Gungyal saying that he was stealing. That Kadampa geshe, a follower of Atisha, cleaned his room in the morning on the day that his benefactors were coming. It's possible he didn't check his motivation as he cleaned his room. First of all he thought, "My benefactors are coming, so I should clean the room then make the offerings very good, very clean, the offering bowls." Afterwards, he sat down on his meditation bed and checked. Usually this is preparatory, then we make offerings. First we sit down and check our motivation. So he checked up and he found the evil thought of worldly dharmas. All of a sudden he got up and thoroughly covered his offerings with dust, putting dust on the water offerings, in the bowls. All the clean offerings became very messy. There was dust all over.

Padampa Sangye, a great yogi exactly like Milarepa, who had complete control over his mind and body, lived very far away, at a place called Tingri. This great yogi Padampa Sangye had control, knowledge of the mind, the holy mind, thus when he looked at sentient beings he knew what was going on, what was happening. All of a sudden he saw this ascetic geshe do this and all of a sudden, when he did like this, his disciples didn't know what happened, so they asked him. He explained, "This geshe in such-and-such a place put dust in the mouth of the evil thought of the eight worldly dharmas." Then he really admired and respected that geshe, he really was respecting him when he discovered that, and he made prostration with his hands, like this, from his place.

Even though we can't be completely pure like that all the lifetime, it is very beneficial, very good to think like this, having such a motivation, thinking like this—that it belongs to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's mandala, palace or something. Then you clean. Then you offer service to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Each time, no matter how much you clean the room, it all becomes good karma; it all becomes Dharma practice, good karma. You are cleaning the dirt by thinking like this, as if you are in service, as if you are sweeping for Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, cleaning Guru Shakyamuni's room. You are doing some physical thing, a physical action, sweeping or something, but also at the same time you are cleaning your mind of the ignorance, the obscurations to the mind. At the same time, by thinking like that, the physical action of cleaning also becomes a method of cleaning the mind, cleaning inside. Like this, there are so many benefits, so many benefits.

The Tibetan lamas, when they clean and sweep, they also repeat this prayer of the arhat whose story I told before, Chudapanthaka, the arhat called "Tiny Path." The prayer that was shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was "avoid dust, avoid smell." In Tibetan *du le bam* means avoiding dust and *du le pam* means avoiding smell.

Du le bam, du le pam, also many meditators repeat this while they are sweeping. It is the same thing; Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, gave the method to him but it can be used also by us, with understanding. It can be done also like this, while you are saying this, *du le bam, du le pam*. We can think like this, it can be interpreted this way: *du le bam*, avoiding the dust or dirt, whatever it is, that is sort of avoiding the gross negative mind. *Du le pam*, avoiding smell can be interpreted in the sense of avoiding the subtle negativities, subtle obscurations, subtle illusive thought, *she drib*. Then visualize the garbage things, all this *nyon drib* and *she drib*, as gross delusion and subtle delusion, gross obscurations and subtle obscurations. You can think the broom is the realization of the graduated path to enlightenment, starting from guru devotion up to enlightenment, manifested as the broom,

sort of like that. Then cleaning the delusions, those things, you don't have to think they are only yours. You can also think every other sentient being's delusions, the gross and subtle obscurations of all other sentient beings. The action is then much more beneficial, not only purifying, working for oneself but also for other beings.

Even though this kind of work is recognized as very low in the ordinary world, by ordinary people, even though such action is recognized as low—I'm not sure about in the West but in the East, such as India, it's incredible, the sweeper is the lowest person, the lowest caste, the lowest person, way down. The lowest person is the sweeper, however, by thinking, by concentrating like this, by doing the physical work that we have to do but with meditation, it becomes rich, it becomes great Dharma practice, it becomes great purification.

By doing things like this, with feeling, understanding that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's omniscient mind is really here, existing, our mind becomes more and more ready, more and more purified. The feeling becomes stronger and stronger. As we become more purified, the feeling becomes stronger and stronger, more and more real, as he is really there. According to karma it is also possible to see [the Buddha], to really see him and receive teachings, like this.

Even when you make offering to a statue or things like this, you should not think, "I am making offerings to the statue." This is a limited mind, a limited mind. Instead of thinking, "This is a statue and I'm making offering," think the statue is really living Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, really living, then you make offering. Then, when you make offering there's some feeling. The feeling becomes much stronger, it doesn't become just playing.

Regarding the knowledge of the holy mind of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, another way of making checking meditation: if all the trees and all the bushes that are on the earth are put into the ocean, the Atlantic or the Pacific—if all the bushes from all the different countries are cut into tiny, tiny, tiny pieces and then put in the ocean, such as the Pacific and stirred, all mixed up—then afterwards taking a very small piece, a very, very small, tiny piece of wood from the ocean, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha can see where it was from, where it was growing, in which place, in which country, how it was growing, at which specific place, even the specific place. If he is asked, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha can explain everything—which country the plant was from, how it was growing, at which specific place—without a single mistake.

Also in previous times in India, the Kundegyu, I think they are people who have a certain religion, but I'm not sure which religion. They believed that after this person died, I think their teacher, after he died, again he became alive. All of them believed he came back, so they gave food believing that he came back as the same person. The people who follow that religion all believe that. Then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said it was not that person, it was a spirit which entered that body. The people didn't believe what Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said, those other religious followers didn't believe it. Around that area people didn't believe what Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha wanted to prove it, so he said, "Each family should bring wheat, putting a little in a sack and putting the names of the families in the little sack. Cover with a piece of cloth, tie it up and then put your family names inside; like this everyone should bring. Without the names outside, put them inside the sack and tie with a rope." So all the families, all the people brought these and piled them up. Then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, to show them that he had the omniscient mind, with such power to see, without opening each of the sacks, without reading the names inside,

just taking each sack, he said, “This belongs to this family.” He could also say the names of the grains, the different grains, “... and this belongs to such family, this is such and such.” Then they opened the sacks and each one was exact, exact, no matter how many there were in the pile, there was never a mistake, without one single mistake. Each family received their own name, they discovered that. Without mistake the Buddha mentioned the names of the families who brought each of the sacks. Then all the people in that area really believed Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, that he had the power to see, that it was true.

Not only Guru Shakyamuni Buddha but also in Tibet, the Bön religion, the first religion in Tibet, before Buddhism came. Even when Milarepa was there in Tibet, there were still these religious people, Bönpo. The name of the religion was Bön and the name of the people was Bönpo. These people believe that after people die—they have certain pujas, they draw mandalas and they make pujas, like burning, then they think they are capable, they have the strong belief that they have power, by making puja, for that person to become alive, to come back. They really believe that.

One time, one of Milarepa’s disciples, who took initiation from Milarepa, died. Milarepa was there, and the dead person, his disciple, a lay person, the older man was dead. So the family invited the Buddhist people, the great yogi Milarepa and his followers, and also the Bönpos, those followers. They invited both to make puja. First the Bönpos were making puja downstairs. They perform the mandalas and made burning pujas. Then the dead body that they put there became sort of moving. They usually believe they have the power to make the corpse alive. The trouble is that. Milarepa was told by someone, I think by the benefactor, that the Bönpos have the power to sort of make it alive. Then Milarepa told the benefactor, “They are ignorant people, they don’t know; he didn’t come back. It is not really him; it is not the person. They are ignorant. It is just a spirit, a different type of spirit.”

Afterwards, Milarepa asked the person who became alive and he said, “Actually I am a spirit and the reason I came here is because these people were living in the wrong action, not living in pure morality.” They were ignorant people and they didn’t know that he hadn’t come back, that it was not really the person. They were ignorant. It was just a spirit, a disciple or something. He checked precisely; he asked and the spirit talked to him. The spirits cannot tell a lie to these powerful, high lamas, the powerful meditators, even though they tell lies to other people. So Milarepa told the benefactor, “The real person I can see, he is a little bit up there on the kind of mountain, up there. The actual person was born as a long white worm in the cow’s excrement.”

The long worm was brought to Milarepa. Because the previous life of the long worm took initiation from Milarepa but didn’t finish the practice, the purification and things, somehow his karma was not completely finished so he had to take that rebirth as a worm. So the Bönpos asked Milarepa to prove it. Milarepa called his initiation name, the secret name that he received in his initiation before, “Real change, come here.” The worm came up like this when called by that name. Then Milarepa tried to transfer his consciousness. Then white light, his consciousness came there and sank into Milarepa’s holy mind, and then from there a white light came from his body to Milarepa’s heart. After a little time such a strong white light came from there. Then at that time his consciousness became oneness, absorbed to Milarepa’s holy mind, then from there his consciousness was transferring to the pure realm. So when the white light was coming, the rays were coming, at the same time, as his consciousness was transferring, going to pure realm, he said, “Thank you.” There was a sound in the room while the white light was there but the consciousness could not be seen. The white light was

like this, and there was a sound in the room saying, “Thank you, Milarepa, for sending me to the pure realm.”

However, even without talking about Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, even Milarepa’s mind had such power to see the actual person, where his mind actually was. He could see so clearly.

There are many people like this, who believe that a person can come back, but Western doctors, psychologists, they don’t know; even though many things like this happen, they can’t really tell. Also they can’t really say the person comes back and have proof of that. So their mind becomes very confused. There are many times that happened in different countries. After taking the dead body to the cemetery, then thinking, praying. Then something is making a noise and they don’t know what to do; nobody can tell. In many instances it happened like this. They put the body in the coffin and it makes a noise. This happened many times in the West. I don’t remember exactly the specific place.

PRECEPTS 2

Motivation

Besides the action of Dharma, taking ordination, it is necessary for it to become the cause of receiving enlightenment. Therefore it is necessary to cultivate a pure motivation.

The evil thought of the eight worldly dharmas, self-cherishing, the wrong conception of the self, I, the self-cherishing thought: these wrong conceptions have been obliging us to receive the general samsaric sufferings and particularly the sufferings of the three lower realms numberless times, from beginningless samsaric lifetimes. This wrong conception has been obliging us to create negative karma numberless times, so it is definite that we will have to experience the suffering result in the lower realms again a great number of times. As long as we follow these wrong conceptions, these past experiences are again what will happen in the future. It is something that makes tears come up, which really makes us terrified.

There is not even one small pleasure left in samsara that we never experienced, which has not been experienced by us numberless times, just as there is not one small suffering left in samsara that we have never experienced. It has all been experienced by us numberless times. Same thing, there is not even one greater samsaric pleasure left that we have never experienced before, it has all been experienced by us numberless times. Similarly, we have experienced all the greater samsaric suffering and there is not even one single greater suffering that has not been experienced by us; it has all been experienced by us numberless times. So there is no interest in any samsaric experience, existence, nothing to be attached to.

Releasing oneself from samsaric suffering is not sufficient. Being always concerned with oneself is just like the animals, the foolish sentient beings. The wrong conception, the self-cherishing thought, is the base from where all the suffering arises. Cherishing others more than oneself is the base from where all the perfection and happiness arises: the pure thought bodhicitta. So where has this pure thought bodhicitta been received from? Where is it coming from? In dependence on the sentient beings. Therefore, sentient beings are the field from which we have been receiving all our past perfections and happiness, and our present and future perfections and happiness, including enlightenment.

Think, “I have always been discriminating the mother sentient beings as friend and enemy with ignorance, anger and attachment, and in that way creating so much negative karma.”

How wonderful it would be if all the sentient beings could abide in equanimity, free from attachment and anger which discriminates some as close and others distant.
May they abide in equanimity.
I shall cause them to abide in this way.
Guru Buddha, please grant me blessings to be able to do this.

Think, “However much the mother sentient beings desire happiness, due to being completely ignorant of the cause of happiness they always destroy the cause of happiness. How pitiful it is.”

How wonderful it would be if all mother sentient beings were to receive all happiness and the causes of happiness.
May they receive this.
I shall cause them to receive this.
Guru Buddha, please grant me blessings to be able to do this.

At the same time dedicate your body, possessions and merits completely to each of the sentient beings, to become the cause of all their happiness. Think, “Now all the sentient beings have received all the happiness.”

Also think: “No matter how much sentient beings do not desire suffering, they are deeply ignorant and do not recognize the cause of suffering, so they often run, they often create the cause of suffering. How pitiful it is.”

How wonderful it would be if all the mother sentient beings could be free from suffering and its causes.
May they be free.
I will cause them to be free.
Guru Buddha, please grant me blessings to be able to do this.

At the same time think you are taking all their sufferings into your heart, onto the self-cherishing thought. Think that they all become free from suffering.

How wonderful it would be if all the mother sentient beings were never parted from all the happiness of enlightenment.
May they never be parted from this.
I will cause them never to be parted.
Guru Buddha, please grant me blessings to be able to do this.

Think: “Just wishing is not sufficient. As the mother sentient beings have been extremely kind, I must take full responsibility to release each of the sentient beings from suffering. I must actually work to do this. I must receive enlightenment. Receiving enlightenment depends on disciplining my body, speech and mind, therefore I’m going to take ordination until tomorrow morning.”

With the visualization of the person granting the ordination as the manifestation of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, surrounded by infinite buddhas and bodhisattvas, repeat after me.

PRECEPTS 3

Motivation

In order to make this action the cause of enlightenment, it is necessary to cultivate the pure thought of bodhicitta. Therefore it is necessary to set a motivation like this:

“Due to the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the wrong conception of the self, I, the self-cherishing thought, in numberless times and from beginningless samsaric lifetimes, I have been experiencing suffering in the general samsaric realms and particularly in the suffering lower realms. If I still follow this wrong conception, I will continuously suffer the same thing in the general samsaric realms and also in the suffering lower realms. At the moment I have received the perfect human rebirth, I have met the leader [virtuous friend], who can lead me on the path to enlightenment and also the Mahayana teaching. I have the chance to follow the path to enlightenment and to have the Dharma wisdom eye, to know what the right actions are and what the wrong actions are.

“Only desiring to release myself from samsara is not sufficient; it is not right. It is the selfish motivation concerned only with my own comfort, exactly the same as the dumb animals—no difference. Numberless other mother sentient beings are extremely suffering due to these wrong conceptions, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the wrong conception of the self, I, the self-cherishing thought. But they have no solution, no method, no wisdom eye to see what is right action and what is wrong action. They don’t have the chance to follow the path, because they haven’t met the Dharma and they haven’t met the leader, leading in the path to enlightenment.

“The mother sentient beings have been extremely kind in the past, are extremely kind even in the present and will be continuously extremely kind in the future. How? Because I received all the past samsara happiness from them, as well as in the present and future. As long as I am in samsara all my future samsaric happiness will have to be received from the sentient beings. Being able to begin to practice Dharma is due to their kindness. Being able to continue the Dharma practice is also through the kindness of mother sentient beings. Even being able to receive enlightenment in the future is due to the kindness of mother sentient beings. They are the field from which I receive all my perfections and all happiness, therefore it is my responsibility to release them from suffering and lead them to perfect peace, the most sublime perfect peace, enlightenment—the best happiness among all the peace and happiness. To do this I must receive enlightenment, therefore I’m going to receive ordination until tomorrow morning.”

[Precepts ceremony]

The fundamental logic is that which equalizes, which gives understanding so we can see the sentient beings in equanimity. Usually we discriminate. Because we are attached to I, we are also attached to our body and our own pleasure. As we are attached to our own I, we are attached also to “my things, my body.” As there is attachment to pleasure and possessions—our pleasure, our body, our

possessions—when someone disturbs our pleasure they are discriminated against by the mind. When someone disturbs our pleasure, that person is discriminated against by the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. When someone disturbs our pleasure, then anger arises, hatred comes. Then we discriminate, seeing the other person as enemy; our anger discriminates against them as the absolute enemy, on the basis of the wrong conception believing that the enemy is self-existent. Similarly, when someone gives us pleasure, the mind discriminates, seeing them as a relative [or friend], as an absolute, permanent relative, thinking this won't change. That's also on the basis of believing. Why do we believe like this? That is also based on the wrong conception believing that the relative is self-existing.

So, how to make them equal? The problem is that between enemies anger arises; we get anger arising. The anger arising itself is creating negative karma. With anger we create negative actions of speech and negative actions of the body. Like this, in many ways we create negative actions of the body. So in many ways we make negative karma. Same thing, when attachment arises for our relative and then we create negative actions of the speech and negative actions of the body. All this is creating negative karma.

Both these types of actions have negative results causing us to be born in the suffering lower realms. Even if we are born in the upper realms there are other suffering results that we have to experience. Even if we have a human body there are other sufferings we have to experience. Not only that, there is a habit which carries on all the time; it carries on and on and on.

We use this life discriminating like this, with attachment and anger arising, and one result is the habit. In the future lifetime we will again have the same habit. Then this carries on and on and on and on in all the future lifetimes, until we cut off the attachment and anger through meditation. If we don't receive equanimity, the realization of equilibrium meditation, by following the remedies; if we don't stop negative thoughts and discriminating thoughts arising, then they go on and on. However, the details of that explanation will come in the karma section.

There are many dangers—not only being born in a suffering realm—that can cause danger in our future lifetime in many ways. However, the main wrong conception is believing in the absolute permanent enemy and the absolute permanent relative [or friend].

The main thing in this meditation, which we should understand, is not to stop the named existing enemy and the named existing relative; the main problem is the negative mind which arises. When there are different things happening, when there are different people doing different things to us, then the problem is the mind, that which comes in the mind. The mind becomes confused. This is the problem; this is the thing that makes us create the negative karma. This is also the thing that makes us oblige other people to create negative karma. Besides creating negative karma ourselves, we cause other people to create negative karma. By getting angry, by arising attachment—in that way we cause the other person's attachment or anger to arise and then they do negative actions.

This is easy to understand from our own life situation. The main aim of the equilibrium meditation, the main thing is to equalize the friend and enemy, seeing friend and enemy as equal, then trying to see the rest of the sentient beings in the same way. We try to see the rest of sentient beings as equal in being friend, equal in being enemy—that's the whole point. And by doing that it stops our attachment arising and it stops our anger arising. This is one of the fundamental solutions, the best solution. This is an extremely important way to keep the whole world in peace, actually. To really

keep the whole world in peace, our mind needs to be in peace. To really bring peace, such a practice, such a method is needed.

From the material side, we cannot make everyone equal. We cannot make them equal as long as the mind is living in problems. Therefore, by equalizing the discriminating thoughts, by equalizing inside, within our mind, then they become equal. If we equalize our mind, which discriminates others, if we equalize this, we stop attachment and anger arising. If we equalize, our mind has no problems. We have peace because as we equalize our mind, we see all sentient beings in equanimity, so there's no problem, as we do this to bring peace, such peace.

Seeing sentient beings in equanimity is the responsibility of each sentient being. First, talking of this earth, it is the responsibility of each of us to have such understanding, to think in this way, to cease discriminating in such a way. The main point is to stop anger and attachment. The fundamental logic is this.

First of all, when we do meditation, whatever enemy we have we can visualize and whatever friend we have we can visualize. The stranger is in front, then the enemy and friend, like this. If we don't find an enemy—maybe some of us have received bodhicitta and maybe the enemy is difficult to find! Anyway, sometimes we may think, “Oh, I don't have any enemies. What should I do? This meditation is useless for me.” That's not true, not true; that's only because we don't see the conditions clearly. But it can easily happen by just one word. After a few seconds or a few minutes it can easily happen if we don't have control. However, if we don't find an object to visualize, with which to meditate, then we make up the situation of friend, enemy.

Check if our friend is giving us something, telling us some good things which make our mind high. Then the enemy is disturbing us or something, criticizing us, complaining about us—we have to visualize the enemy as doing something like this. If we don't get bothered by stealing or by having our possessions destroyed, things like this, then we should visualize the worst thing—that which disturbs our ego, the worst thing, whatever it is for us. If it is usually easy for us to get angry, to get bothered by ugly words—we don't care about other things, we are so gentle but the words are sort of like a thorn, so sharp—if this is usually the worst thing to disturb our ego, then we have to visualize that. That thing, whatever is the worst thing for us—it's not the same for everyone—we visualize that, they are doing like this. Then the friend, whoever we are more attached to, materials and things, whatever we are attached to, they are doing. Whatever we are attached strongly to, we should visualize that they are doing these things.

Then the logic is to check up within our mind. As we visualize what the enemy is doing, check up what is happening here, what is going on, what trip is going on in our mind. Check up what trip is going on with the friend when they do these things to us. Check up whether it is peaceful nature or not. When our mind goes high, is it a peaceful nature or not? Check up—there is no peace at all. So our discrimination is that: “They are very good, very kind because they gave me this and that, they helped give me pleasure.”

Then think like this: “As they did this at the present time, they have also been doing things like this numberless times in my previous lifetimes. Not only that, they have also been harming me in different ways—insulting me, like an animal does, harming me, killing me, destroying me, taking my possessions—they have done many things. They have harmed me in different ways just as this animal does, in numberless lifetimes.”

Now we see they are exactly equal in being friend or being enemy. They are exactly equal in our feeling. When we think of the logic, they have been doing the same actions, both harming and helping, the same number of times in previous lifetimes. The feeling is being detached, no anger, no attachment; we feel relaxed, completely relaxed when we think like this.

Same thing: “This person who my negative mind discriminates as a friend, same thing, the same change in their actions will happen again and again the future; sometimes they will help me and sometimes they will harm me. Sometimes giving help and sometimes giving harm. Like this, same thing, this carries on circling in the future. When I discriminate against them as enemy, thinking they are my enemy because they gave me harm; same thing, this friend has also given me harm; same thing, same reason. They gave me harm in the past.”

If we think, “This friend never gave me harm in this life and this enemy gave me harm in this life, I remember this life, this present time,” Same thing, this enemy giving harm, this certain year, certain month, certain day, certain minute, certain second. It is past action, past. We discriminate as present, but it is in the past. Even if it was done a few minutes ago it is past. Same reason, this friend has also given me harm in the past.

So this friend, to whom we were attached before, becomes equal in being friend and being enemy. “There is no reason for me to be attached to the friend by discriminating thinking ‘they helped me.’ That’s a wrong reason; it isn’t proof.”

Same thing with this enemy: “I discriminate because they bother me, but for all the same reasons as I discriminate the other one as friend, they have been helping me before. They gave me harm in previous lifetimes and also helped me before. They harmed me in previous lifetimes and helped me in numberless lifetimes before—giving me things, helping me, giving me food, clothes, saying good things. All these things they did numberless times, both actions. Therefore there is no reason for me to get angry. They also gave help, same reason.”

So now that anger is lost and the mind is relaxed; it becomes equal, exactly equal. Then think also, now we have checked in the past, we think that the same thing will circle round. Sometimes they are giving help and sometimes giving harm, so sometimes they become enemy, sometimes they become friend—it carries on and on like this as long as we are in samsara. So there’s no reason to get angry.

Now we have equalized these two persons; we have them equal in our mind. This is the best way to make equal.

If we ask people, “Please be equal,” if we go and ask all sentient beings, all human beings, it is difficult. That’s not the right way, by sharing materials; that’s not the right way. Seeing sentient beings as equal is a conception, so the mind has to create equanimity; the mind has to see all beings in equanimity.

Now these two are completely equal, completely equal, we don’t feel anything, the mind is not confused.

Then the feeling we have for the stranger, same thing. Then we do the same thing with the rest of the sentient beings, all the sentient beings that we have visualized around, all sentient beings we have visualized in infinite space.

“All the sentient beings have been giving me harm numberless times and giving me help numberless times; they have been equally friend and enemy. Also in the future they will continuously do this, circling around, continuously harming or helping me.” So all the sentient beings are exactly equal, starting from your enemy, your friend, your parents—what you discriminate with a negative mind—starting from this, just as these two persons became equal so all the rest of the sentient beings are exactly equal in being friend and enemy. Exactly equal—try to get that equal feeling in your mind, try to see that way and try to get that equal feeling.

Then that is the result of your practice, the result of your checking meditation on the equilibrium meditation. That is necessary, it is the essence of this meditation; this is the basic logic. The reason why I emphasize this is that it is very, very, extremely important, so *very* important. Even the psychologists and the psychiatrists have this problem—their minds cannot see all sentient beings in equanimity. They also have problems of discrimination between friend and enemy. How can they help, since there’s no understanding? I’m not criticizing; I’m just saying whatever is there. There’s water and fire; fire burns, just like that.

Lecture 13

From the holy speech of the great bodhisattva Shantideva:

[1: 26] How can I fathom the depths
Of the goodness of this jewel of the mind,
The panacea that relieves the world of pain
And is the source of all its joy?

“All the merit of the jewel thought, which is the cause of all the living beings’ happiness and which is the medicine of sentient beings’ suffering—how is it possible to make limitation?”

The meaning of this quotation is that the benefits of the jewel thought, bodhicitta, are limitless. It is the cause of the happiness of all sentient beings; it is the object of refuge or offering for the enlightened beings, the holy beings, and it is also the medicine for all the sentient beings’ suffering. It removes all the sentient beings’ suffering, thus whatever benefit it has cannot be limited by our mind, by our thought. Whatever benefits it has is beyond the limits of our thought. Whatever benefits bodhicitta has, the mind cannot figure out that it has this number of benefits; the benefits don’t have a fixed number.

For instance, the action that is done without bodhicitta—like simple, ordinary virtuous actions just concerned with our own better future life, actions done just for that without any strong motivation of bodhicitta—such virtuous actions can have a certain good result. Due to this karma, due to this virtuous action, it will bring a result having such enjoyment, to receive such a rebirth. There is a certain limitation in the benefits. But the benefits of bodhicitta cannot be figured out, cannot be

limited by thought because the benefits of bodhicitta are infinite. The whole thing is this, and why it cannot be figured out by the mind to be this much is because the benefits is infinite, infinite.

Also Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said in the sutra teachings called *Pan chen gyi shu bi do*,

Whatever benefits bodhicitta has, if it had form, it would fill the whole of space; there wouldn't be any space left.

Just as space is infinite, so this pure thought that is received has that much benefit. As I said before, I think I repeated once, as it is said in Shantideva's teaching, it is the cause of the happiness of all sentient beings and the object of refuge or offering. So if we want to please the enlightened beings and holy beings such as the bodhisattvas or our guru, the best way to please them or make them happy is by cultivating and having the realization of bodhicitta in our mind.

For instance, the bodhisattvas' only wish is to release sentient beings from suffering and lead them into enlightenment, for them to receive enlightenment. The whole thing depends on bodhicitta. All this success, bringing success depends on bodhicitta, so what they wish is for us also to receive bodhicitta. Therefore, receiving the realization of bodhicitta is the best cause of their happiness and it pleases them very much. We become their helper. Once we have received the realization of bodhicitta, we become their helper. We can help other sentient beings when we have the realization of bodhicitta.

Same thing also for the enlightened beings: this is the best way to please them. They are extremely pleased because this is the only thing the enlightened beings wish the sentient beings to achieve. As it is said in Shantideva's teaching: "Bodhicitta is the medicine that removes all the sentient beings' suffering." That's why having the realization of bodhicitta is the best way to please the enlightened beings.

For instance, the great pandit Atisha, when he saw his disciples or other people he didn't say, as people usually say, "Hello, how are you? Did you have a good time? Did you enjoy? Are you well?" Whether you have been healthy or you didn't get sick, whether you enjoyed the place or something to do with materials—usually normal people ask in that way, we ordinary people ask in that way. But the great bodhisattva Atisha, whenever he saw other people, friends or disciples or other people, instead of saying, "How are you?"—instead of asking whether they had been healthy, he often asked whether they had a good mind, like bodhicitta, the beneficial thought, He asked whether their mind had been beneficial, how their mind had been—beneficial or negative. That's the way he asked, what he asked first when he saw people. *Sems sang po* is what Tibetans call the beneficial thought, generous thought. *Sems* is mind, *sang po* is generous, holy, pure. He often asked "*sems sang po shu nge?*" meaning, "Did you have good generous thoughts, beneficial thoughts?"

He often emphasized bodhicitta in his teachings. Bodhicitta is the essence of the practice of the Kadampa tradition of teachings, which came from Atisha. The practice of bodhicitta is the essence of the Kadampa tradition teachings. Another way of talking, for those meditators who follow Atisha's teaching—the Kadampa tradition teachings—the foundation of their practice, the foundation of their thought is bodhicitta.

We ordinary people—what is the essence of our work? What is the essence of our work, the foundation of our thought? It is attachment, being attached to the comfort of this life. What is the

foundation, what is the base on which we work, how we think, the base? That is attachment, being attached to the comfort of this life. For those meditators who follow Atisha's teaching, those higher meditators who lead ascetic lives, the foundation of their thought, the main object of concentration, the essence of their practice is bodhicitta.

By understanding the benefits of receiving the pure thought of bodhicitta—there are infinite benefits, as much as infinite space—by understanding this it is natural to be extremely pleased and happy to have the chance to hear this teaching, to practice bodhicitta and to train the mind in this path.

For the action of listening to Dharma to become a positive action, Dharma, it has to become the cause of receiving enlightenment. The whole thing depends on cultivating the pure thought of bodhicitta, therefore it is necessary to think like this: “Only releasing myself from samsara is not sufficient; there are numberless other sentient beings who are suffering. I must lead them into enlightenment by releasing them from suffering. Therefore I'm going to listen to the profound teaching of the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The listening subject is a Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate ones to receive enlightenment. It is well-expounded by the great philosophers Nagarjuna and Asanga. It is a profound teaching; in it the essence of the great unequaled, magnificent pandit Atisha, and the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa's knowledge was extracted. It contains the 84,000 teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, and all this is arranged for our practice of the graduated path and our achievement of enlightenment. This graduated path is the only path by which the past, present and future buddhas all received enlightenment.

This commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment has four outlines. The last is how to lead the disciples by showing the actual oral teaching. That has two outlines:

1. How to follow the guru, which is the root of the path
2. How to train the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment by following the guru.

That has two outlines. The last one is how to take the essence with the perfect human rebirth, and that is divided into three. The first one is the graduated path of the lower capable being and in general. That has two outlines. The last one is following the method that brings happiness in future lives.

This happiness is not samsaric happiness but it includes all happiness, including the most sublime happiness of enlightenment. Besides samsaric happiness, since it includes even the highest happiness of sublime enlightenment, this method which is explained is the foundation of that. Therefore, even by understanding this outline, even from the meaning of this, the subject that comes, the method is a very, very important thing to understand and to realize.

The fundamental method is taking refuge, which is the holy door of the teaching, and arising devotion to karma, which is the root of all perfection and happiness.

Regarding refuge, the first outline has five outlines:

1. Taking refuge depending on what cause

2. Taking refuge depending on what object, definition
3. With how much understanding the person is taking refuge
4. Precepts of the refuge
5. Benefits of the refuge.

This part of the subject is from the third outline: taking refuge with understanding of the knowledge of the object of refuge—the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The function or the ability—what the Buddha can do, what Dharma can do, what Sangha can do—what power they have. By taking refuge, what ability do the Sangha have? So this is important to understand.

It is as if we are questioning how the Buddha can help us. At the moment our mind is not capable. Even though the Buddha explained, our mind does not have the capability now, at this moment, to fully understand how he helps sentient beings. Through listening to the Dharma, studying, trying to understand, and meditating—through the experience—and especially through the explanation of refuge, according to the level of our mind, we can have that much understanding. We can have some idea of the essence, how the Buddha helps, how Dharma helps and how the Sangha help to guide other sentient beings from suffering. But to really, fully understand how the Buddha helps, first of all we have to complete the realizations of the whole graduated path to enlightenment.

Even the higher bodhisattvas, even arhats who have such high psychic powers, who can see past, present and future, who can do incredible things, comparing even the Hinayana arhats who have realized only the Lesser Vehicle path, not the Mahayana path—compared to our limited knowledge, the arhats are like buddhas for us, they are buddhas for us.

However, as I told you before, there are three stories, examples of how arhats didn't see those subtle methods. Those examples such as the old man who became an arhat in his lifetime even though he was terribly old and the abbot of the monastery couldn't see that he had created any merit which could make the old man become ordained. Even other arhats couldn't see this, so they objected. But Guru Shakyamuni realized and he said to the old man, "It's all right, you can be ordained because you have the merit to become a monk."

Why the arhats couldn't see this cause is because the merit with which he could become monk was very subtle, it had been such an incredible length of time ago, and there were so many eons between becoming a monk and having created the merit. It was such a long time ago, an incredible length of time ago, such a great number of eons, so far back that even the arhats—those who were out of samsara—even they could not see this, because it is so subtle and so distant in time. Guru Shakyamuni discovered this because for his omniscient mind, as we talked, there is no such existence, there's no such block, no such time, no such thing.

So Guru Shakyamuni told the old man, "There is merit, but there is such an incredible length of time since you created the merit. That's why the arhats couldn't see it. They are not perfect in power or in the collection of merit, therefore they couldn't see this merit. The merit you created before was when you were a fly and there was excrement of animals around a great, very blessed holy stupa." When the old man was a fly, of course, he ran to find something. Somehow, by opportunity, the fly went around on the excrement. As the excrement was all around the stupa, so the fly went around like this. Just by going around the stupa on the excrement, because it was such a great, holy object, much blessed, where the infinite buddhas' transcendental wisdom is situated, and even though there was no knowledge from the side of the fly, the object that the fly went around was so precious that,

by the power of the object, the fly had the opportunity to create such small merit. Because of that, by such small merit, he had the possibility to be ordained, by the kindness of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's realization, the omniscient mind. Like this there are so many other examples.

Simply talking now, Guru Shakyamuni knows how to help. For instance, arhats couldn't see that, even though they had much knowledge, they couldn't see such subtle small merit, which the old man had created such an incredible length of time ago. Also there are many other things. There are several other things that arhats cannot realize, cannot fully see. Only the Buddha can do this. Also very subtle karmas, for instance, this example of subtle karma, this old man's story, and many other examples—such subtle karma is only the object of the omniscient mind. Even the highest bodhisattvas cannot fully see the subtle karmas—this result happened because of such-and-such karma before—the subtle ones.

So it is not easy. Even though it is explained, our mind is not capable of understanding. To fully understand how the Buddha helps all sentient beings, we have to reach that level. If we want to fully understand that, we have to reach that level. Then we can fully understand.

We briefly talked about the knowledge, the function or the ability of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's omniscient mind. Part of the checking meditation that we talked about, the knowledge of the omniscient mind, if it's divided, becomes two divisions: the understanding knowledge and the knowledge of compassion. So far what we have talked about is the understanding knowledge.

The knowledge of compassion, for instance, we samsaric sentient beings are always bound by delusion and karma, always bound by delusion and karma. The enlightened beings are bound by compassion, bound by infinite compassion. They are the same in regard to being bound, but our bondage is suffering and their bondage is compassion, not suffering. Our bondage by delusion and karma itself is suffering.

Because we are bound by delusion and karma, besides being incapable of helping others, guiding others from suffering, we can't guide even ourselves—just one person—from suffering. Besides not guiding infinite sentient beings from suffering, even guiding one other sentient being from suffering, we cannot even guide ourselves from suffering. That's why our life is full of problems from rebirth until death, anyway, as long as we're in samsara.

In this way we can understand very clearly how our bondage—being bound by delusion and karma—is useless and only gives us trouble, however, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's bondage of infinite compassion only gives happiness, the cause of happiness. Not only is he in infinite bliss himself, he is also bound by infinite compassion, therefore he leads infinite sentient beings on the path of everlasting happiness and being bound by compassion is extremely, infinitely beneficial for all sentient beings. There is a big difference.

If we think about our personality, the function of our mind, among the numberless sentient beings, among the families, we always take the best care of ourselves. The most concern that we have is for our own comfort, keeping ourselves away from danger. That's what we're trying to do, but that doesn't mean that what we are trying to do is correct. It doesn't mean we know all the dangers; it doesn't mean this.

For instance, by thinking how much we are concerned with ourselves, the love that we have for ourselves, the individual, it seems that we have the greatest love for ourselves; it looks like that according to how much more we are concerned for self than others. But actually that is nothing. It is nothing in comparison to the great compassion that the Buddha has for us. I'm not talking about our compassion and love for other sentient beings; I'm not talking about this, I'm just talking about having love and compassion even for ourselves. This is supposed to be the greatest, it's supposed to be the strongest. Even though we don't have compassion for other sentient beings, we're supposed to have the greatest love and compassion for ourselves. But even as much as we are concerned for ourselves, having love and compassion for ourselves more than the love and compassion that we have for others—this is nothing compared to the great love and compassion that the Buddha has for us. The Buddha has a thousand, million times greater love for us. He has a thousand, billion times greater love and compassion than the love and compassion that we have for ourselves. He has greater love and compassion for us than the great love and compassion that we have for ourselves.

For instance, even though we have heard Dharma, even though we have heard about karma and things like this, in the depth of our mind there is no respect for karma, not so much feeling about karma—even though it is explained—and not so much feeling with the Dharma. The understanding is merely intellectual and without much feeling in the mind. Even if we know what the Dharma is about and how karma exists, still we have no respect and we don't feel much difference, whether creating negative karma or not. For instance, we don't feel the difference between killing insects and not killing insects. Even though we think karma exists we don't have much feeling and then we don't observe karma much, we don't care much. These things show that we don't love ourselves that much, we don't have much compassion for ourselves.

The compassion and love that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has for all sentient beings is equal. Even if someone cuts flesh from one side of his body, piece by piece, piece by piece cutting it off, taking it in pieces, taking much time, and if someone on the other side is patting, loving him very much, touching, caressing with much love—from the side of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's compassion, it is equal for both of them. His love and compassion is equal for both of them. There is no such thing that for one person he feels more love, he loves them more, and he loves the other person less. There is no such discrimination, which we ordinary people have.

The Buddha has the knowledge of understanding, knowledge of power and knowledge of compassion, love. If there's only the understanding knowledge and no knowledge of power, no knowledge of infinite compassion and love, then it can be possible that even though we take refuge, Buddha doesn't or cannot guide us.

Because there's also power—besides understanding knowledge there's also knowledge of power—Buddha can guide us if we take refuge. He can guide us. Even if there is understanding knowledge and knowledge of power, if there is no knowledge of compassion, even though he can guide, he may not guide us. Even though he can guide, if there's no knowledge of compassion, even though we take refuge, he may not guide us, he may not guide the sentient beings from suffering.

There's not this problem, because he has the knowledge of compassion. Knowledge of compassion is all important. He has knowledge of compassion and he has compassion to all sentient beings, therefore if we take refuge he can definitely guide us and he will guide us.

Now, the fourth one, the knowledge of action, knowledge of the Buddha's action. The knowledge of the Buddha's holy action is all the time. There is no such thing as day and night, a specific time. There is not even a second or a minute that the Buddha doesn't work for sentient beings, doesn't benefit sentient beings. The Buddha's holy work doesn't cease until all sentient beings receive enlightenment. It is continuously, continuously done. Also it doesn't depend on effort. There's no effort. To act, to work for other sentient beings by showing different methods naturally works; it doesn't depend, like us, on having an active impulse.

The way the Buddha's holy actions, working for other sentient beings, are without effort is like the [reflection of] the moon rising on the ocean, the Pacific, streams and lakes—no matter how many different waters there are on the earth, they all reflect the moon. The reflection of the rising moon comes from the water, whether it's a reflection from the lake, from the ocean, from the stream, from all these billions of different places of water. Even a few drops of water in a cup reflect the moon; even water in a small pot reflects the moon. Small or big, all these reflections that are coming from the water in these different places happen this way. The moon doesn't have a motivation and it doesn't have to think to appear in this water, to reflect. There's no such motivation, it doesn't need effort. It intuitively happens—as the moon rises, it intuitively happens. The reflection comes in all the places where there is water—big waters, small waters, all these waters.

The way the Buddha's holy action works for all sentient beings is without effort, just automatically, naturally, according to the level of the sentient being's mind. This example is quite clear. The holy action is working for other sentient beings according to the level of their karma, according to their karma. If the person's karma is to show a certain method, then the Buddha shows that method. If the person's karma is ready to show a different method, then the Buddha shows that method. Like this. It's like the example of the moon—if there's water, no matter small or big, the reflection comes, but at the place where there's no water, for instance, stones or something, the moon's reflection cannot come to that place. In the places where there's no water, the reflection doesn't come. If the person doesn't have the karma to be shown that method and to be guided, then it doesn't happen.

If this did not depend on karma—if it didn't depend on karma to be ready, things like this—there would be no reason for even one sentient being to exist now. All the sentient beings would be enlightened already. The way the Buddha manifests, taking different manifestations, giving different teachings, manifesting differently as a living being or even as non-living things, such as statues—all these things are done just like the moon's reflection, without effort. As our karma is ready, then it works.

Also there are so many different aspects of buddhas—peaceful aspects, wrathful aspects, some embracing the female aspect and some not embracing the female aspect. All these are the Buddha's actions. All these are the actions of the omniscient mind, power and compassion. All these are different manifestations of Buddha's action and Buddha's holy speech, with the understanding knowledge, the power and compassion manifesting, appearing in such different forms, as is necessary. For example, Avalokiteshvara, who also has different aspects. Even though there is one name, there are many different aspects.

Like this, there are many other buddhas, not only appearing in the manifestation of the buddhas, but appearing in the manifestation of bodhisattvas and also appearing in the manifestation of arhats. Taking the form of an arhat, pretending to be an arhat, pretending to be a bodhisattva, pretending to

be a protector or even an ordinary being. As I said before, our vision is not necessarily definite or sure. I talked before about that subject, how taking the aspect, the form, may be necessary, as that method is discovered to be helpful.

Regarding action, there are two things, as explained in the philosophical teachings. The action of the Buddha—one part of the Buddha's action is in the object, in the sentient being's mind, the object of the Buddha's work. So what is the action of the Buddha that is in the sentient being's mind? That is Dharma practice, virtuous actions, receiving the realizations, following the path, receiving enlightenment. But the Buddha's action that is in the mind of the sentient beings has to come from someone; it has to be caused by someone. It's not kind of intuitively happening without being caused by someone. It has to be caused by someone; the action happens by being caused by someone. It comes from the dharmakaya of the transcendental wisdom.

Who obliges us to do that virtuous action, which becomes the cause of receiving enlightenment? It can be action of our speech, it can be action of our body, it can be action of our mind, but that realization or that action has to be caused by someone, it has to be brought about by someone. It doesn't intuitively happen, sort of without reason or without cause, or self-existing. It doesn't absolutely come—another way of saying this is that it doesn't absolutely come. It comes by depending on something. It doesn't come absolutely; it comes by depending on something. So the cause, the subject, the creator who persuades us to do that action, who persuades or obliges us to do that action is the dharmakaya of transcendental wisdom.

This is one of the most important subjects to understand. It is pointed out as the most important thing in the practice of the graduated path of enlightenment, to understand this point, even at the beginning of the practice of the graduated path to enlightenment. This is in all the different sects of Tibet, the different Mahayana sects. In all the sects, in all the Mahayana teachings, this point is the most important thing to understand. Trying to understand this evolution and trying to follow it, then trying to recognize the dharmakaya of transcendental wisdom, which persuades us, which is the cause, the subject, the creator, which persuades us to do all these actions, to do all these virtuous actions—realizing, following the path, receiving enlightenment, the whole thing from beginning to the end, benefiting for sentient beings—all this.

Now definitely, when we create a virtuous action, definitely there is dharmakaya of transcendental wisdom working for us. Definitely, but it's not sure that we see the manifestation of the dharmakaya of transcendental wisdom as a fully enlightened being. We see the manifestation according to the level of our mind. So this is the dharmakaya of transcendental wisdom, which has taken such a manifestation and is the leader, leading us in the path to enlightenment.

The reason we are born as human beings this time, having the chance to practice Dharma, all these things, having all the enjoyments as we wish, all this is due to the kindness of the dharmakaya of transcendental wisdom. If there's no dharmakaya of transcendental wisdom, there's no way we can create good karma to receive all these results. No way. If there is no moon, how can there be a reflection in the water? If there is no sun, how can the sunlight come into the room and make us feel comfortable, enjoy? It's impossible. Because of the sun there is light coming, there is light.

Student: If there is the sun, Dharma is the rays of the sun. The sun is Buddha and Dharma would be the rays of the sun reaching me ...

Rinpoche: If there's the same function for the sun and the light of the sun. If there's the same function. What about the sun and the rays of the sun? Is there a difference in their nature? Do they have the same power to dispel the darkness? Do the sun and the rays of the sun have the same power to dispel darkness?

[Discussion]

For instance, the sun also has the power to dispel darkness. The rays that come into your room also have the same essence—to dispel darkness. But it just looks different. The whole round sun you don't see in your room; that's the difference. Anyway, you can understand slowly.

This is just a brief explanation. I will just explain this briefly. This is the essential way, the main thing. If we clearly want to understand how Buddha helps us, how Buddha guides us, if we really want to clearly understand, this is the essential part, the essential subject. This is the answer, the essential subject that we can elaborate, that we can understand.

Someone explains the teachings to us and we are able to recognize the manifestation that contains the dharmakaya of transcendental wisdom. Then by the kindness of that, by gratefully following the path, we receive enlightenment. However, this particular subject is another meditation, another checking meditation. Again, it involves a very deep subject.

One useful thing is the outline that I mentioned before: how our vision is not definite, not sure. That's the most important outline to always be aware of. It's so helpful, very helpful always to remember this when we have problems with other people, in the city or wherever, even among Dharma friends. Because it is like this: if the other person is a holy being, a bodhisattva who has higher realization or something like that, then if we ignorantly create negative karma with them by getting angry or harming them with actions of our speech, body or mind, the karma is very, very heavy. As the other being has that much higher realization, is that much more holy, the negative actions that we create are very heavy, very dangerous.

Also, even if we have realization of bodhicitta, if the other person is a higher bodhisattva and has received a higher path, if we create negative actions with them, then according to the level of their realization—if we are ready to receive the path tomorrow due to the merits, but today we get angry and do some harmful action to that being who has higher realizations—depending on how much higher their realizations are, receiving the path is postponed, maybe for one hundred years, two hundred years or for eons. This delay depends on the level of our mind and on the level of the other person's mind. Not only the bodhisattvas, but it can also be enlightened beings. This is also very useful.

This is useful not only in these specific meditations on guru yoga, as I just said, but generally, as we are concerned about karma, it's very beneficial to think like this. Then if something seems wrong: "Oh, I'm not sure. My vision is not always correct. If it is always projecting my wrong conceptions, how can it be always correct? I'm not sure, maybe they are holy beings, bodhisattvas. Who knows? So maybe I shouldn't do this."

If we think like this when we get angry, the evil thought of worldly dharma gets scared; the anger, or whatever is going on, all of a sudden it goes down, decreases. All of a sudden our action changes, the action changes right away. So it's very useful, very useful. By understanding this, we are sure, we

have unshakable understanding: “The Buddha is definitely, definitely guiding me, working for me.” We have definite firm, unshakeable understanding of the evolution, the holy action of the Buddha.

Then briefly the knowledge of Dharma. The second thing is the knowledge of Dharma. Absolute Dharma, as I said before, is the full realization of absolute true nature and the cessation of the different levels of suffering, which is received by fully realizing the absolute true nature, and which is called the true path. In the four noble truths it is the true path. In the four noble truths, there are two things that come after and these are true cessation and the true path. Absolute Dharma is true cessation of suffering and true path. The true path means fully realizing absolute true nature. The true cessation of suffering, of the different levels of suffering, is received by realizing the absolute Dharma, fully realizing absolute true nature. Generally, it is good to think about this when we take refuge and to think about it generally. Usually if we can think of the whole graduated path it is useful and effective for the mind. When we take refuge in Dharma, thinking of the whole graduated path is very useful for the mind.

Pratimoksha, self-liberation—in regard to the Lesser Vehicle path there are two lesser vehicle paths: Pratyekayana path and Shravakayana path. By following both paths we receive pratimoksha, individual liberation for ourselves, nirvana. In regard to the path, there are five paths: Pratyekayana has five paths and Shravakayana also has five paths. The number of paths is the same.

Also, for enlightenment, the Mahayana has five paths. The general names of each of the paths are the same. By following both of these Lesser Vehicle paths, the paths of the pratyekabuddhas and shravakabuddhas, we can realize release from samsara. That’s how we can receive nirvana, pratimoksha. And to receive enlightenment, even after we receive nirvana, again we have to follow the Mahayana path; then we can receive enlightenment.

Just talking about the five paths, here are the titles:

1. The first is the path of collection [path of merit]. Collection of what? Collection not of money, but the collection of merit, the path of collection.
2. The second one is the path of conjunction [path of preparation], like a railway.
3. The third one is the right-seeing path. That is the wisdom eye. I think people are very interested in having an operation for a wisdom eye, to have an operation.
4. Path of meditation.
5. Path of fulfillment [path of no-more-learning]. Path of entraining or path of accomplishment are other ways of saying path of fulfillment.

The names are the same for the Lesser Vehicle and Mahayana paths; the general titles are the same. I think I’ll stop there.

Lecture 14

Regarding the path of collection, generally speaking, the explanation is the same as it is for the five paths of the Lesser Vehicle. For instance, the path of collection means the collection of merit. The

follower who has received that path creates much merit. They are at a stage where they create very much merit in order to receive nirvana, but do not actually receive cessation of suffering.

From the third path—the path of right-seeing, the path of meditation and the path of fulfillment—these paths have achieved the cessation of suffering. [Blinds flapping in wind] They're all talking about Dharma! The right-seeing path, the path of meditation and the path of fulfillment have different levels of cessation of delusion, suffering. Receiving the path of collection of merit helps to receive the higher paths, where delusions can be ceased. This path also has three categories, three different stages: small, middle and higher. There's so much to say about each path, but here I'm just briefly talking about the meaning of each path, the essence.

The path of conjunction: why it is called the path of conjunction is because, according to the title “conjunction,” this is the path that realizes or sees the four noble truths, the absolute true nature, but is not *fully seeing*. It is not the same as the path of fully seeing the absolute true nature. There are still obscurations with this path, which block us from fully seeing absolute nature.

For the right-seeing path, “right” means absolute nature. The right-seeing path is the path that fully sees absolute nature. At this stage—the path of fully seeing absolute nature—this path has the ability to remove one hundred and twelve delusions. There is also within this path the non-intermediate path without hindrance and the path of release. While we are in deep concentration, having received the non-intermediate path, this path becomes the remedy to the one hundred and twelve delusions. When these one hundred and twelve delusions are ceased, whenever the path removes or finishes the one hundred and twelve delusions, then the path of release is received.

Same thing for the path of meditation, which also has the non-intermediate path and the path of release. The rest of the delusions, sixteen delusions, are ceased in this fourth path, the path of meditation. So same thing, there are two stages: the non-intermediate path, which has no hindrance between it and that path becoming the remedy to delusion. Then, when the delusion for which that path becomes a remedy is ceased, the path of release is received. They are received together. The path of release and removing or finishing the delusions are received together.

The fifth path, the path of entraining, the path of fulfillment—the actual meaning is the path of fulfillment. Why path of fulfillment? Because all the delusions are finished; we have finished working to remove the delusions.

This is generally talking according to the five paths on the Lesser Vehicle path; how the five paths function, what their functions and abilities are. If we are talking specifically about the five Mahayana paths, the general meaning is the same.

However, according to the Mahayana, the bodhisattva path of collection of merits creates much more merit than the meditator who has received the path of collection in the Lesser Vehicle path. Also the Mahayana path of the collection of merit becomes the helper, and receiving this path causes us to receive the Mahayana path of conjunction, also the Mahayana right-seeing path, the Mahayana path of meditation and the Mahayana path of fulfillment, enlightenment. Receiving this path helps us to join with the higher paths, which remove all the delusions—the gross obscurations and subtle obscurations.

The second path, the path of conjunction, has the same meaning, conjunction. By realizing the four noble truths, it causes us to join the third path, fully realizing absolute true nature. Then same thing, the Mahayana path of fully seeing absolute true nature has two paths: the uninterrupted path (same thing, same meaning as before) and the path of release.

Just talking about the person who enters directly into the Mahayana path without coming through the Lesser Vehicle path—when they receive the right-seeing path, the uninterrupted path becomes the remedy to delusion, the gross and also the subtle delusions, *she drib*, the subtle obscurations. While the meditator is in concentration, whenever they receive the second path, the path of release, then the one hundred and twelve delusions and the one hundred and eight subtle obscurations (*she drib*), the seeds, are removed or erased. That meditator who has received the third path, the right-seeing path, by going through the uninterrupted path, whenever they receive the path of release, all these one hundred and twelve delusions and one hundred and eight subtle obscurations, *she drib*, are removed at the same time.

For the Mahayana path of meditation, again, the full realization of absolute nature is continuously developed. By continually progressing in that realization, because that path is continuing the realization that is received by this meditation, it is called the path of meditation. Continuously progressing in the realization of fully realizing absolute true nature is called the path of meditation. Same thing, when the meditator receives this path there is the uninterrupted path and the path of release. At that time, the uninterrupted path becomes the remedy to the delusions, the *nyön drib* and *she drib*, the gross obscuration and subtle obscurations. Whenever the path of release is received, the sixteen gross obscurations (*nyön drib*) and the one hundred and eight subtle obscurations (*she drib*), are removed at the same time.

The fifth one is the path of accomplishment, achieved when the obscurations are completely removed.

This is talking about the five Mahayana paths, which remove both gross and subtle obscurations, *nyön drib* and *she drib*. If we haven't gone through the Lesser Vehicle path, if we directly follow the five Mahayana paths, we remove all the delusions in the Mahayana path of meditation.

There are ten grounds or stages, called *bhumi* in Sanskrit. Bhumi means ground, like a base. However, there are ten stages—there are more realizations in the Mahayana path. The Lesser Vehicle path does not have these ten bhumis, these ten realizations. We start to receive these from the right-seeing path. The meditator who has received the right-seeing path, the third path, from there receives the first bhumi, and then second bhumi—gradually the meditator receives like this.

When the meditator receives the eighth stage, the eighth bhumi, at the same time all the delusions have ceased, are removed. No gross delusions exist from when the meditator receives the eighth stage. While following the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh bhumis, during those times there is delusion, but at the eighth stage the bodhisattva has no delusion. I'm talking about the bodhisattva who didn't become an arhat before by following the Lesser Vehicle path and was just straight away following the Mahayana path. When that bodhisattva receives the right-seeing path, from there they start to receive the first bhumi, then the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh. Whenever they receive the eighth, all the gross delusions, *nyön drib*, are removed, completely ceased. When the gross delusions are ceased, completely removed, they are not in samsara. Then, because there is no more delusion existing after that, the eighth, ninth and tenth stages are called

pure, the three pure stages, because there is no delusion. The other seven stages are called the seven impure stages because there is delusion in the mind of the meditator. The function of these three latter stages is only removing the subtle obscurations, the dualistic mind.

Why the Mahayana path is called the Great Vehicle is because there are more realizations, it has more functions, it can purify, remove more obscurations. As it has more knowledge, it has more functions, it can remove more obscurations. Each of the Mahayana paths, even the first two, the Mahayana path of collection of merit and the Mahayana path of conjunction, has so much more knowledge; greater knowledge than the five paths of the Lesser Vehicle. These practitioners have greater understanding, more skill. There's more skill.

Thinking like this, remember the meaning of the paths, especially the right-seeing path and the path of meditation, the five paths of the Lesser Vehicle and the five Mahayana paths. Remember the functions of each path, especially the function, the ability of the right-seeing path and the path of meditation in removing the delusions and the subtle obscurations. These are very useful to think of and remember. When you do checking meditation on the knowledge of Dharma, try to remember the meaning and the abilities of each path. If you can try to remember even this much it is very helpful, very helpful.

There is very little knowledge of what ability the Dharma has, how the Dharma guides us from the suffering, from the obscurations. When we understand the knowledge of Buddha, when we make checking meditation on the knowledge of the Buddha and the ability of the Buddha, the functions of the Buddha, it is easy to figure out, to understand how the Buddha helps us, how Buddha guides us from suffering.

The same thing, when we make checking meditation on the Dharma, the knowledge of Dharma, the ability of Dharma, it is easy to understand how the Dharma guides us from suffering. By taking refuge in Dharma, it guides us from suffering. It is easy to understand this. As we talked about the ability or function of each path, by taking refuge in the Dharma, it is easy to understand how Buddhadharma guides us from suffering. As we actualize each path, according to the ability or function that each path has, it removes our delusions, the gross and subtle obscurations, those subtle wrong conceptions, those wrong conceptions. That's how Dharma causes us to be released from all suffering, from all the obscurations. It is easy to understand.

Before, we talked about Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's knowledge and how it guides us, the ability that Guru Shakyamuni has to guide the sentient beings from suffering. By understanding that we can understand how Guru Shakyamuni Buddha guides us from suffering. Also, we ourselves can become a buddha in the future. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha guides us from all the dualistic thoughts and wrong views, and we will become capable of helping other sentient beings.

So just like this there are two ways to check Dharma. One way to check is by actualizing the different levels of path in our mind, and how all these different obscurations—subtle and gross obscurations, all these different wrong conceptions—are gradually removed. That's how the Dharma guides us from suffering, from all the wrong conceptions, the dualistic mind. This way of checking is very useful; this is also the ability of Dharma. For instance, our receiving guidance, help, from Buddha, is also due to the ability of the Dharma, due to the power of the Dharma. For instance, if Guru Shakyamuni had not followed the path he wouldn't have received enlightenment and then he couldn't help us sentient beings. His benefiting us, guiding us from suffering is also the

ability of the Dharma, the function of the Dharma, This is how Dharma guides us, how his Dharma guides us from suffering.

So there are two ways of checking: we can check how the Dharma knowledge that other holy beings have guides us, and how the Dharma that we have actualized within our own mind helps us, guides us. Both methods are very useful, very effective.

Also remember the graduated path, the knowledge of the lamrim; this is also very useful. Remember the ability or function of the graduated path, by following the graduated path.

The graduated path of the lower capable being has the ability or function to guide us from the suffering of a lower rebirth.

The graduated path of the middle capable being has the ability or the function to release us from the samsara. As the graduated path of the lower capable being has the function to guide us from the suffering of rebirth in the lower realms and to be reborn in the upper realms, to receive happy rebirth, so the graduated path of the middle capable being has the ability or function to guide us from samsara and to receive ultimate happiness.

The graduated path of the higher capable being has the ability or function to release us, to guide us from all the dualistic minds, from all the wrong conceptions, even the subtle ones. It has the ability or function to guide us from our own everlasting happiness, the incomplete everlasting happiness. What I mean is that there's a greater, sublime happiness, a greater goal. That's why I say "incomplete everlasting happiness." Even though it is everlasting it is not the most sublime goal, perfect happiness, therefore it's incomplete. So the lamrim, the graduated path of the higher capable being has the ability to guide us away from the pratimoksha, our own everlasting happiness. I think I explained that once before.

Why do we need refuge to guide us from that? At the moment there is so much struggle and we are not even receiving it! The essential purpose of practicing Mahayana teaching is to receive enlightenment only to work for sentient beings. The main goal is to enlighten all sentient beings with the realization of enlightenment. This talk may come afterwards.

Even if we have received that [incomplete everlasting happiness], the work of purifying obscurations is still to be finished. We are not perfected in the purity of a buddha because our work of purifying obscurations is still not finished. Even if we have received that everlasting happiness and there are no delusions, still there is dualistic mind, the subtle illusive thoughts and the dualistic views. Therefore that purifying work is not finished. Even without talking of working for other sentient beings, whether that is finished or not; without talking of completing work for others, just only talking of our own work, the purification is not finished. As the work of purifying obscurations is not finished, the completion in knowledge also is not finished. Completing the knowledge is not finished, being like Buddha. Completing the knowledge is not finished. It's easy to understand that even if we have received ultimate happiness, why we are not completed in knowledge. If purification is not finished, how can knowledge be perfected?

Therefore, even if we are concerned with becoming completely self-supporting, we need to receive enlightenment. To completely finish the purifying work and to completely finish the work of receiving realizations, we need to receive enlightenment, and that happens only when we receive

enlightenment. Therefore, even for our own sake we have to complete the purification and complete the knowledge by following the Mahayana path.

The essential purpose of the Mahayana teaching is mainly to enlighten other sentient beings with the realization of enlightenment. If we fall into the stage of our own everlasting happiness, then we stay in that stage for an incredible, incredible number of eons. In that way we don't receive enlightenment quickly and also we can't help the sentient beings as quickly as a bodhisattva does or as quickly as Buddha helps sentient beings.

In previous times there was this story. I think Manjushri had shown the Mahayana teaching to a disciple—I forgot the name of the disciple—whose mind is not ready. He was somehow not ready, and he got heresy. Even though he had received the teaching he got heresy, sort of disbelief happened, came in his mind. Because of that karma—the disbelief, heresy of Mahayana teaching that was shown—he was born in the naraks.

Then Vajrapani asked Guru Shakyamuni Buddha why this happened. Vajrapani explained to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha that Manjushri had shown the Mahayana teaching to this person—I think the disciple's name was Jampel or something—and because he received disbelief in it he was born in the naraks. Guru Shakyamuni said, "That's not wrong." Vajrapani explained to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha that his mind was suitable to be shown the Lesser Vehicle teaching but Manjushri had shown him the Mahayana teaching.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said, "It's not a mistake. It is because Manjushri is highly skillful that he did it, therefore it's not a mistake. If the Mahayana teaching was not shown to him, then by following the Lesser Vehicle path he would be in everlasting happiness for numberless eons, and for such an incredible length of time he wouldn't receive enlightenment fully. So even though momentarily he was born in the narak realm, in the lowest, unceasing suffering stage, after that life he will quickly be born in the upper realms and enter straight into the Mahayana path and, by following the Mahayana path, he will receive enlightenment more quickly than by following the Lesser Vehicle path, where he would stay in everlasting happiness for an incredible number of eons." Guru Shakyamuni Buddha explained it was not a mistake but that Manjushri was highly skillful and that's why he did this, purposefully. This was the reason.

However the essential purpose is this. By following the Mahayana, the graduated path of the higher capable being, it has the ability or function to guide us out of the incomplete peace of individual everlasting happiness. It guides us from this and from all the subtle dualistic minds, the subtle obscurations, in order to receive enlightenment.

It is very good to remember the knowledge, the ability or function of the graduated path, the lamrim. Lamrim means graduated path. The ability or function of the graduated path of the lower capable being, the ability or function of the graduated path of the middle capable being, and the ability or function of the graduated path of the higher capable being. We should remember this when we do checking meditation on Dharma. It's very helpful for the mind. In this way, as we make checking meditation, it gives us energy and makes us want to follow this path and receive this experience.

So first maybe you can do checking meditation on Dharma, the morning subject, the actions that we talked about. First try to remember the morning subject, the action of the Buddha's compassion, the

action of the Buddha, the knowledge of the ability. Try to remember that, do checking meditation on that, how that works. Also in the last part I talked about two things: how the action was working without effort, without the need of active motivation, like the moon reflecting in water. I used that example, how this action is automatically working for all sentient beings. In the last part I said there are two actions; one is in the mind of the object, the sentient being, and that is persuaded by the dharmakaya of the transcendental wisdom, that which is in different manifestations, shown according to the level of mind.

This is so important to understand. This is also the essence of the guru yoga practice, the essence. As long as you do not understand these important points, no matter how much you practice tantra—very high techniques, deities having thousands or a million, billion arms—there's no taste in your meditation, there's no taste in your practice. Your practice, your understanding is basic. The understanding you have is very dry, it's kind of lost the essence. Anyway it doesn't matter. This is very important, even though we cannot understand it perfectly right away, we won't understand it fully. It's like seeing our own reflection in the mirror, perhaps it may not be very clear. Of course it depends on the individual's level of mind, how close each of our minds is to Dharma, to the realization of Dharma. It can be different and people may have different feelings. Someone may be clear, somebody sees *that* much, somebody sees *that* much and somebody doesn't see anything—it can be different. Even though we understand the words very well, we have different experiences.

Regarding Dharma, remember the ability or function of the paths. You can check up on each name, the meaning of each of the paths, the capability of each path, the power to avoid a different number of delusions, subtle obscurations.

Then after that, after finishing the checking meditation on compassionate action, then you can also think of how the Buddha guides us. Try to have a rough idea of how the Buddha guides. It's easy to understand how Guru Shakyamuni guides us; it's easy to understand that. Then also, how your own future buddha guides you; for instance its power. It guides you to have the power to help sentient beings, and all the subtle dualistic minds will finish. Think like this.

Then check on Dharma, the function, the ability of Dharma. Then after that, going through the path, how Dharma guides us. Think: "By actualizing the path, as the path has the ability like this, by actualizing the path in our mind, wrong conceptions and delusions are gradually removed. That's how the Dharma guides me out of samsara, out of suffering." Then Dharma in other beings, which Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has achieved, that Dharma in other beings' minds; for instance, Buddha Shakyamuni guiding us is also due to the power or ability of Dharma.

Also Sangha. Remember how the Sangha guide us, how Guru Shakyamuni is Sangha, guiding us, and also due to the power of the Dharma. Also, how the higher bodhisattvas are guiding us is due to the power of Dharma, with these realizations, the power of their realizations. So this way of thinking is also very useful.

Lecture 15

From the holy speech of the great bodhisattva Shantideva:

[1: 29] For those who are deprived of happiness
And burdened with many sorrows,
It satisfies them with all joys,
Dispels all suffering,

[1: 30] And clears all confusion.
Where is there a comparable virtue?
Where is there even such a friend?
Where is there merit similar to this?

Those who don't have happiness and experience great suffering will be satisfied. They will have all happiness and their continuity of all the suffering will cease. It will even destroy their ignorance. Is there any virtue similar to this?

The meaning of this quotation is that the sentient beings are not satisfied and are unhappy, no matter how many material enjoyments and surroundings they have. They don't have the satisfaction of the pleasures so they are unhappy and they experience great suffering. The bodhisattvas, with their great love—with Mahayana compassion, great compassion—make the sentient beings satisfied by all happiness and make those sentient beings see the continuity of their sufferings. With wisdom, understanding of absolute true nature, they explain what is practice and what is avoidance, and they explain the absolute true nature which can dispel the sentient beings' ignorance.

That last part of the quotation says, "Are there benefits similar to this?" The bodhisattva, the child of the buddhas, does such great actions and brings such great benefit for other sentient beings. The verse is emphasizing that there is no other virtuous action—the actions created without bodhicitta—that can be as beneficial for sentient beings as this bodhisattva's action. Can the benefits of the virtuous action [without bodhicitta] be similar to the virtuous action created by the bodhisattva?

"Is there any action, any virtuous action similar to that created by the bodhisattva? Is there any virtue?" There is no virtue similar to this. There is no virtue which is not created by the bodhisattva whose benefits are similar to this. There is not even such a relative. "The relative" is the ordinary way of saying the people who are close and who are supposed to help us, to benefit us. There's no such way a relative can benefit us like a bodhisattva.

This quotation explains that with the realization of a bodhisattva, with great compassion and great love, and with wisdom understanding the absolute true nature, how great is the benefit they give, helping us and other sentient beings, such great benefit. By having the realizations they have, even relatives, who we expect to help us, cannot give us such great help, even they can't do that.

In essence, Shantideva is talking about the great benefits of bodhicitta. By understanding the great benefits, the functions and powers of the bodhisattva who has bodhicitta, by understanding this and why it is necessary, we also get the chance to train the mind in the path and to actualize bodhicitta.

Even for the present action of listening to the Dharma to become the cause for receiving enlightenment, besides being just Dharma, it is necessary to think: "Only to release myself from samsara, suffering, is not sufficient. I must receive enlightenment in order to release all the mother

sentient beings from suffering and lead them into enlightenment. Therefore, I'm going to listen to the teaching on the graduated path of enlightenment.”

The listening subject is the Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate ones to enlightenment. It is well-expounded by the great philosophers, Nagarjuna and Asanga. It is a profound teaching, the essence from which the great, the magnificent, unequaled pandit Atisha and the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa, was extracted. It includes the 84,000 teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. All these teachings are arranged for our practice of the graduated path leading to enlightenment. The graduated path is the only path by which all the past, present and future bodhisattvas received enlightenment.

This profound commentary on the graduated path has four outlines. The last one is how to lead the disciples in the path to enlightenment by showing this excellent oral teaching, and that has two outlines: How to follow the guru, which is the root of the path, and how to train the mind in the graduated path. The last outline has two divisions; the last one is how to take the essence of the perfect human rebirth.

This has three divisions:

1. The graduated path of the lower intelligence being
2. The graduated path of the middle intelligence being
3. The graduated path of the higher capable being.

The first outline has two parts of which the last one is: Following the method that brings happiness in the experience, or how to follow the fundamental method of happiness.

The outline refers to the future, but it doesn't mean that this method only brings happiness in a future life, never in this life. Not like this. It doesn't depend on this. What it means is that besides bringing happiness and peace in this life, following this fundamental method also brings happiness and peace in the future life. Taking refuge, which is the holy door of the teaching, and arising devotion to karma, which is the root of all perfection and happiness.

Refuge has five outlines. The precepts, as we were talking yesterday about the practice of the refuge, “the precepts of refuge” has two aspects: the particular precepts and the general precepts. “Particular precepts” is divided in two: the practice of avoidance and of obtaining.

Any of the symbolic holy things, like statues or paintings, anything, even if the shape is not complete or it doesn't look good, even if the way it is made is not good, all this; whenever we see these, it is necessary to think that it is actually Buddha. Same thing also when we see any Dharma books, even a few lines, even a few words or one page, whatever, it is necessary to look at it as real Dharma, as if it is the jewel of Dharma and then to have respect. Also, whenever we see any being who is in robes, nuns or monks, without discriminating their essence of life, what the person normally does, without discriminating like this, since they are living in the precepts and are wearing robes, concerned with their own peace, their own happiness, by abstaining from the negative karmas, then it is necessary to think of them as Sangha, that they are the Sangha jewel, also respecting the robes.

Each of these holy symbolic things, like holy statues and Dharma—even though those statues, those paintings, are not the real Buddha—thinking like this and respecting in that way only causes us to

create good karma and avoid creating negative action. Dharma books and things like this, even a few words or a few letters, even though they are not absolute Dharma, actual Dharma, but by looking at them as the Dharma jewel and respecting that, only makes us create good karma and avoid creating negative action. Same thing, any monks that we see, even though they are not the real Sangha jewel, by looking at them as real Sangha and respecting them, it only makes us create good karma and stops us from creating negative karma.

All this practice is only for us to make profit, to not have loss and to only make profit, to create the cause of our own peace.

Then also there are general practices. By remembering again and again the different [qualities] of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and the knowledge of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, take refuge. And no matter what you drink or eat, just before you start eating, any time, no matter whatever it is, whether delicious or non-delicious, whatever you are taking, just before starting always make offering to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

I explained before how to make offering, how to visualize these things. If you can do that visualization as I explained before, having Guru Shakyamuni Buddha at your heart, then all sentient beings at the heart of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, this is really so very, very helpful for the mind. Visualize the Buddha at your heart and at the heart of the Buddha keep all sentient beings. If you can visualize in this way it is extremely beneficial, creating much good karma. As much time as you spend eating, whatever, how many times, also this practice is easy to do all the time. However much you eat, as much time as you spend, it is such a method by which you can easily make incredible merits so many times, easily, easily.

It's not like fixing a schedule to create good karma, it's not like fixing a schedule to meditate at a certain time, or making hundreds and hundreds of prostrations, thousands and thousands of prostrations, or going to a solitary place to do retreat in order to create good karma, to do purification. If doing purification and creating good karma depends on that, then it's difficult. Usually to do like this, to spend time like this away from your work, away from your life, is difficult. Therefore, if this practice is done all the time, being conscious all the time, then it's easy, so easy. Without depending on going to another place to make retreat, you create so much good karma easily.

I don't mean that it is not necessary to go to solitary places to do retreat, to do 100,000 prostrations, these things. I'm not saying that is not necessary—of course it is. But the emphasis is, even during the time when you go to work, when you live in the city, when you have normal life—at that time you can easily create so much good karma, you can easily make so much incredible purification. I'm just emphasizing that to be unconscious and lazy wastes a lot of time, it wastes a lot of energy and wastes the great precious chance to create good karma with your wisdom, with this emphasis. Then especially, the most important thing to remember is the motivation.

If we have wisdom, if we know the different methods, with wisdom, just living the normal life there are so many things, like when we eat, there are so many beneficial things, actions we can do. Just by living a normal life we can create [good karma], we can make such great purification all the time, just normally—while working, talking, walking, eating or sleeping. If we have wisdom and know the different methods, besides having the intellectual understanding, if our mind is not lazy, just in

normal life we can do incredible purification. The purification and beneficial actions, Dharma practice, can be done.

Anyway, I don't need so much to repeat this, after talking so much on refuge, the Buddha's knowledge.

Out in the fields, to receive a crop that we enjoy, which makes our life happy, how much we have to work, how much we have to try—plowing and fertilizing, planting the seed, again cleaning—there's so much work. In the East there's so much work before the crop is coming. Fertilizing the land, putting water, planting seeds, then cleaning and afterwards when it starts to grow, cleaning and then putting water, all kind of things, and then harvesting the crop. So much work has to be done. Even if it's done with machines, so much work has to be done. To get the pleasure of eating one plate of food, one plate of rice, how much work has to be done. Incredible work has to be done for the rice from that field, for one plate of rice. That much work has to be done for one small cup of rice.

However, without changing or subduing the mind, without cleaning the mind, these temporal things help us only temporarily. Without trying to subduing the mind, without changing or cleaning the mind, without working, all these temporal things never make us receive ultimate happiness, they never bring release from samsara.

Even to receive that plate of food, how much we and other beings had to work! Whether by us or other people, so much effort was put into receiving that one small cup of rice. Even though we didn't do the work, there was a lot of energy used. But this small action of the mind—just by the way, while we are eating, as we have to eat, no problem—we just do the visualization and have a pure motivation, then we dedicate, just thinking of offering to Buddha and sharing with sentient beings. Just that small action becomes the cause of receiving the highest enjoyment in future lifetimes, receiving enjoyments in future lifetimes without effort—materials, food, clothing, these things—without effort, without working for it, intuitively receiving these. Not only that, we are born in the upper realms, and it also becomes the cause of receiving enlightenment, the cause of receiving the realizations, because doing this is a method of purification.

So it is a small action but it has incredible benefit. The result, the happiness and peace that we can see from this small action is so much. It is something we can receive in this lifetime or in the future life even when we are in samsara; the result is also something we can experience after, when we find release from samsara, when we receive enlightenment. Incredible results accrue from this small action, such a small action—planting that virtuous action in the holy field of the Buddha, and also in the field of the sentient beings. The virtuous actions that we do in the merit field of the Buddha and sentient beings are like the seeds we are planting in the field. The sentient beings, the Buddha that we visualize, to whom we dedicate the action, are like the fields from where we receive all these crops.

So you see my emphasis is this. Until the mind is changed like this, without depending on the mind, the mental development of the mind, the pure motivation, even if we want one small cup of rice, for that much we work, we put so much energy into our work, but what is the result? It is limited, you know. What is the result? It gets eaten and becomes kaka and maybe there are a few minutes of pleasure, but that's all, that's all, that's all. For this effort, that much time spent in the field. Therefore, in regard to the benefits of the result, they can never compare. This one, making offerings to the field when eating the rice, and the benefit or result of that other action can never

compare. Even drinking a drop of tea or eating one spoonful of rice, if we make offerings, by that we are planting the virtuous action on the holy field of Buddha and the field of merit, sentient beings. This action so easy and it doesn't even take a minute; it's so easy but the result is incredible, the resultant benefit is peace. What we can receive from that is incredible. Checking like this, thinking like this, you can understand.

Also, not only this, but from the external field we cannot always get plants, the crops. From the outside field we cannot get them all the time, we have to depend on the seasons. All the time as we want, we cannot always receive crops from the field—only maybe once or twice in the year. If we want to have rice from the field all the time, we cannot receive it from the field. But from this field, the holy buddha field, the merit field, the sentient beings—any time, it doesn't depend on day and night or the seasons, winter, summer, spring and autumn, things like this. It does not depend on any specific times. How much we want, anytime, whenever we want, we can plant virtuous actions in the field any time. And each action has incredible beneficial results.

When we think like this, when we check like this, even just one time—one lunch or drinking one cup of tea—not making offering is a great loss, it is an incredible loss, an incredible loss of chance. We had the chance but we lose such a great chance, such a precious opportunity. We have the chance and we have the wisdom to do it. The holy field, the buddhas, the merit field, sentient beings—this field really is a wish-fulfilling field. This is really a wish-fulfilling field because from this field, by cultivating virtuous actions, any result, any enjoyment—besides enlightenment, ultimate happiness—any good result that we want to receive in the future lifetime, even to become king, to have sufficient surroundings, many possessions, whatever, from this field we can receive all that. So it is really the wish-fulfilling field.

One thing is that even though we know the practice, the methods, the different things that can be done, we do things unconsciously, we don't use the methods. This is because without understanding what right action is, what virtuous, meritorious action is, without understanding this, it can be said to be caused by ignorance, not knowing virtuous action and non-virtuous action. Once we have a little understanding, depending on our motivation, we know that this is right action and this is wrong action, but still we are not conscious, we are not using the methods—we are being lazy, unconscious and lazy. Laziness, not having forbearance, not being afraid of the negative karma, not remembering, not thinking about the suffering results of the negative actions. It is due to not thinking of this.

The third thing is that even if we know the techniques, the method, how to do things, we become lazy, unconscious. The third one, which we usually have, is very strong. That is the self-cherishing thought. Always thinking, "I am more important than any other sentient being," we see only ourselves there and we don't see anyone else. All the time, we see only ourselves. All the time we see only ourselves, we don't see other sentient beings. I'm talking about our feelings, I'm not talking about seeing with the eyes but about our feelings, the feelings that we have. We think that the buddhas, the enlightened beings, are not important, and sentient beings are not important. We think nothing else is important—only *we* are important. We only see ourselves, we only see "I," the great Mt. Meru, "I." This feeling is always there, therefore this is one thing that makes us unconscious.

I'm just telling you what possibilities you have and how easy it is to create good karma without living the life of an ascetic, like the great yogi Milarepa. Also in the morning, as you have a statue or holy painting, some symbolic things like that, and you put them up in your meditation room or whatever, at your place, a little bit higher. As you wash, as you clean yourself, by the way you can offer bowls

of water. You don't even need seven bowls—just one cup or bowl, or three bowls, whatever, it doesn't matter, a hundred or even two hundred, anyway, whatever is possible, big or small, or as big as Diamond Valley, whatever. As you wash in the morning, just by the way, you can offer bowls of water. But you should make sure they are clean.

Because you don't see the statue, that object, because you don't see it even yourself, sort of moving and living, you don't see anything, so with laziness and ignorance, thinking like this, even though you are making offering to this statue or painting, sometimes you don't make it clean. You don't even make it as clean as you would giving it to your friends, even that much cleaning you don't make. Just sort of wiping the bowl if it's dirty, then pouring a little bit of water, not like this. This is doing things with ignorance; this kind of action is the same as having no devotion. That mind has no smell of devotion and is thus an evil thought of the worldly dharmas.

I'm not sure that this can be the evil thought of eight worldly dharmas, however, not like this. The bowls should be clean. As much as you want the bowls clean, even if you can't make them cleaner than that, they should be as clean as if you are offering to the buddhas, they should be that much clean.

However, no matter how dirty the offering is, no matter if it is even kaka or whatever it is, for the enlightened beings they only see nectar. For them all the time it is nectar. They taste nectar and only feel bliss. It's completely different, the taste they have, what they feel. Between what they see and your views—what you see and what you think is completely different. Even though there's no danger and it doesn't give any harm to the buddhas, for your sake the offerings should be clean. If you do not clean the bowls well, then in that way also it is negative action of offering something dirty. The object to whom we offer is not like sentient beings, it doesn't give harm and the object is holy, is precious, so holy. Because of that if the offering is dirty it becomes disrespectful, so it is a negative action.

So even one bowl or one cup, whatever, you should wash it and make it clean, and then offer. You should also clean the dust on the altar, things like this, putting rice bowls or something. Make it clean-looking. Just as when you eat food at the table, you make it clean, so also you make the altar clean here. Then you offer, you fill water there, clean water. Not dirty water or something left over—clean water, then flowers. There are many disciplines when making offering but now there's no time.

You pour the water without making a noise. First you start small then after a certain amount, pour a little more until the bowl is full. In that way it doesn't make a noise. Much noise becomes a condition, a cause for the mind to be crazy, unpeaceful, complicated. When you pour water, pour it very gently, respectfully, as if Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is really sitting there; visualize that, as if he is really there. Offer respectfully, like you are serving an important person. Then by remembering the omniscient mind, those things as we talked before, you offer.

While you are offering, you can say the blessing mantra: OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM, just three syllables, OM AH HUM. While you are pouring the water you recite this mantra. That blesses the offering; saying the mantra blesses the offering.

Student: Rinpoche, is that HUM or HUNG?

Rinpoche: Yes, that is right. Whatever comes from your mouth, HUM or HUNG. OM AH HUM. There are other spirits, other interferers who steal, so it protects the ability of that, the pure power, the pure essence of that offering. There are other spirits who enjoy water, who enjoy plants; there are many different spirits like this. When you bless like this they cannot take the essence, the ability of the offering.

You make offering like this but you can visualize it is much better than that. You actually make the offering like this, one bowl, then put flowers around, the decorations for making offering. If your motivation is pure, then however much you can do it is best, and you create that much good karma. No matter how much, you can make it beautiful, you can visualize.

There are two ways to make offerings: actually transformed offerings and mentally transformed offerings. You say a mantra which purifies the place and then you say the mantra blessing the offering. You recite the mantra to increase the offering and bless the offering. That mantra increases both. That long mantra, then OM AH HUM. That is not in this book, the mantra to transform the offering.

You can visualize the offering bowl like a golden bowl, large as the earth, incredibly wide like that and full of nectar. When you visualize, you can do mental transformation, you can make like this. Full of nectar, like this. Make the offering of blissful nectar, the bowl full of nectar, to the buddhas. Make the offering of blissful nectar to the buddhas, like this. Then you create good karma in two ways: by actually offering you create good karma and by mentally transforming the offering you create good karma. Even though there's no actual material thing, however, you create good karma by visualizing like this. I think the buddhas will be flying, falling down to earth. [Rinpoche laughs]

How does that become good karma, even though there is no actual material offering? Just because it is there it doesn't become an offering, just because it is there. Often it is just a function of mind, actually offering is a function of mind. The main essence, if we really clarify it, is a function of mind. Just because it is there, that doesn't make it an offering. Just because someone is surrounded by all their possessions—children, partner and possessions—that doesn't make it an offering. The essence of offering is dedicating with the mind, with the mind renouncing it instead of being attached to it. Dedicating the offering for the Buddha or for sentient beings, renouncing the attachment—that is the exact meaning of offering. The essence, what it really means is renouncing attachment. Therefore, it does not always depend on making offering of material things, having something there.

Many times, even in dreams, even during the day, many times we remember our previous actions and our previous friends. As each particular one comes, the attachment strongly comes up and anger comes up. Everything is like this, even in dreams, even in the daytime, even if we don't physically see the actual person, even if it's in the mind.

Some people think offering is putting something on the altar, something fixed there, or taking a flower or something to the temple, a separate house, something like this, a temple or church or whatever you call it, but they don't understand the real purpose of offering. They understand offering like this—always taking something to the temple, taking a flower into the temple, putting something there. They never understand that without having enough physical things we can still make an incredible offering. Offering is method. Offering is the remedy to miserliness, to attachment. What negative mind it specifically destroys is the attachment, miserliness. Therefore, the

practice of offering is done to lose attachment and finally, naturally, the main aim is to receive enlightenment.

I'm just giving you the idea, just a suggestion, of how offering can easily be done like this. Just by the way, as you have to wash, just do it like that, easy. Also, if you have several bowls, if you have many bowls, if you want to offer, you can also offer candles and incense. You can think like this, even though you make offering of just one bowl of water. The offering can be milk, honey, anything, but why we use water is because we don't have much miserliness, attachment to it. It is easy to make that offering of water because there's no attachment to it. And water is usually plentiful, although maybe not in certain places. Because there is not so much mind problem when offering water it is easy to make offering and easy to dedicate, so the offering is more pure. That is why water was used in India and Tibet by the previous meditators. Why they make water offering is because it's easy and also there are no difficulties with heat. The main thing is that it's easy to renounce and in that way it becomes a pure offering.

You offer water there, then: "Due to the merits of making one bowl offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, may it become the cause of all sentient beings receiving enlightenment." Even though you make one bowl offering, dedicate the offering like this. Besides offering to Buddha, you can dedicate the merit to all the sentient beings. Think, "May the merit be the cause of all sentient beings receiving enlightenment." You have dedicated the merit, you have shared, dedicated for all sentient beings, the infinite number of sentient beings. So even though the offering is a simple thing, one bowl offering, the merit covers all sentient beings. It becomes the cause for all sentient beings to receive enlightenment, by dedicating it like this. As you dedicate like this, as I told you, the benefits of bodhicitta are like infinite space and just by making that offering you gain infinite merits easily. It's so easy.

Also when you offer lights, candles or anything, visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and make the offering. When you start to light the candle, while doing that, you can think: "By making offering of this candle, by lighting it, due to the action of offering light, may all the sentient beings' ignorance be burnt and destroyed by the transcendental wisdom flame or light, by the transcendental wisdom light." If you think like this, so it's not only physical action, you also feel it in your mind, then the action has such great meaning. Offering one candle, you feel it has meaning. Sincerely think like this: "By my offering the lamp, the light, and lighting it, may all sentient beings' ignorance be dispelled, or burnt (whatever you want to say) by the transcendental wisdom light." Transcendental wisdom is the wisdom realizing shunyata. The main ignorance is what? The main ignorance is not knowing the nature of self.

Same thing, when you light incense, you can think like this. This motive involves bodhicitta. Just while you are starting the action of lighting the incense you can think: "By my making offering of the incense, lighting it, burning it, may the subtle dualistic mind of all the sentient beings be burnt by the transcendental wisdom of happiness." With your mind, think like this. Also if you can, strongly think that all sentient beings' subtle dualistic minds are completely burned by the transcendental wisdom of happiness. Kind of like completely extinguished, sort of not existing. If you can strongly think like this it will be more effective, more beneficial. Then you put the offering there as you are visualizing Guru Shakyamuni Buddha; you make the offering.

With this action, if you do this with the pure thought of bodhicitta, it becomes the cause of receiving bodhicitta sooner and also, by receiving the realizations quickly, soon you can become like a buddha,

capable of burning and destroying all the sentient beings' dualistic minds, and capable also of destroying all the sentient beings' ignorance. You can lead them to actualize transcendental wisdom happiness, the path, by offering like this.

Then, remember Buddha, Dharma and Sangha three times at night and three times during the day if it is possible. Actually those who take refuge, those who precisely take the refuge or ordination, precisely taking through prayers—since we have fear and since we do not desire to be reborn in suffering realms, since we have fear of that rebirth, since we want to seek help and receive guidance from the Buddha, that itself is taking refuge. Refuge is not to do with the action of speech; refuge is mainly mind action.

As I talked about devotion and the fear of samsaric suffering, the fear of the suffering of the three lower realms, once we have this devotion and this fear of the suffering realms, we want to receive help and guidance from Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Even though we don't know samsaric suffering, we don't want to be born in the suffering realms, and as we have that much devotion and that much fear, we receive that much refuge. The strength of the refuge is that much.

Actually, that is the most important thing, rather than repeating prayers. If we don't have that understanding, if our mind is not qualified in those things, even though we repeat the formula, just repeating the words doesn't mean taking refuge. That doesn't mean taking the refuge ordination.

What I mean is, especially those of you who take refuge ordination, you should remember Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and the benefits of taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Remember Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in the morning when you get up, in the afternoon and at nighttime when you go to bed—remember. Just remember. Remember the knowledge; remember the benefits of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You don't have to do checking meditation each night; even if you don't have time for that, just remember the benefits of taking refuge. Just remember.

When you remember this, you can also remember samsaric suffering and the suffering of the lower realms. You can remember that at the same time. Just remember this, even when you are lying down, whatever you are doing. Just remembering even the benefits of arising devotion creates good karma. Then as you remember, you prostrate with your hands and make prostrations like this. You easily create good karma by making prostrations, three times at night and three times during the day, in the morning time. Remember this frequently, don't completely forget it, remember it again and again.

Then, in our life, whatever work we have to do, whatever is being planned, whatever work we have, small or great, business or whatever it is, it's like wanting to make a journey to some country, to travel, to be successful or something, to not have any danger on the way, things like that. All the time, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are the only objects in whom we can completely trust, the objects who never betray us and never lead us the wrong way.

Usually ordinary people, even our very close friend, even the closest friend who gives us materials, all kinds of things, who fulfills all our desires: there's nothing to trust in even that person. We're not sure that they will always help us, we're not sure they will always guide us. We're not sure, and even if they help us, we're not sure they will always help us in the right way. We're not sure they will always become our helper. It always changes. Even last year we were so close, almost like impossible to split, inseparable, you know. Almost like interdependent—I'm joking.

Anyway, this is the nature of samsaric beings, the nature of samsara. So for ordinary people, no matter how close we were to our friends, so friendly, almost impossible to split in the last year but this year it's become completely opposite, we're completely against each other. There are many of these life experiences like this. It is true, it's easy to see. In our life experience, it is easy to understand if our mind is conscious. If we try to stay wide awake it is easy, [relationships] always keep changing.

By thinking "Now they are my close friend," then completely relying for our whole life on that, with our whole life in their hands, completely, soon there's big confusion. Because there's nothing to trust and their nature is not permanent, one day soon maybe we will do or say something which they don't like. Just as a match, a small thing, can burn, destroy many things, it's easy. It could be such a small thing, a small condition—something is wrong with our voice, something is wrong with our actions, maybe something is wrong with the materials—a small condition can split so easily and they can become enemy. So easily they turn against us. It always changes; there's nothing to trust. Afterwards our life becomes a big hassle.

However, those whom we really should trust from the depths of our mind, on whom we should rely—ordinary people, there's nothing to trust, because we're not free and later everything changes—those who our mind should hang onto, rely on, in whom we can have complete trust, who can never betray us, who never lead us in the wrong way, are Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Even if we have a job, even if we have great business, even if we have great work that has to be done, we can always rely on Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. We can always pray and always completely rely on Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, especially of course, no need to talk about if we are practicing Dharma, which is the greatest work. Practicing Dharma is greater than anything else, greater action than anything else, so there's no need to talk about the need to rely on the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.

Next, whatever action is done, do it by relying on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Not giving up the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha even if it costs us our life. Not giving up Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, even in play.

In previous times, there was one monk. I think, the other religion people, anti-Buddhists who follow outer religions, told this person, "You should give up the refuge. If you don't give up Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, I will kill you." So he gave up his life. Instead of giving up Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, he gave up his life. He didn't care about himself; he didn't give up Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and for that purpose he gave up his life—he didn't give up Buddha, Dharma, Sangha even though there was danger to his life. Then, after his death, instead of being born in the lower realms, he was born in the realm of the gods.

Even though it doesn't cost our life, giving up Buddha, Dharma, Sangha is very heavy karma. Giving up the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is like completely destroying, completely burning the root of a tree, like a wish-fulfilling tree which always gives much result, enjoyment. Burning that root, completely destroying the root, so we don't receive all the enjoyment results. However, it's like this.

Then also for other people whose mind we see is OK, whose mind is OK to explain all about refuge, who is seeking some guidance; the person whose mind is a little bit ready, who is not satisfied with their life, the samsaric life and these things. Anyway, the person who wants to have a

better, pure and meaningful life, who wants to escape from the mental sufferings, whose mind is a little bit ready, wanting to seek guidance, refuge. That kind of person, whose mind is a little bit ready, who has problems and doesn't know what the perfect object of refuge is, we can try to talk to them about refuge, the benefits of refuge, things like this. We can talk about the object of refuge with others.

These are the general practices of the refuge.

Lecture 16

Remembering this prayer is very useful. I mentioned before, even at your own house, usually when you enjoy, when you eat or drink—and not only at the time of eating—this prayer is very useful just to remember any time, any time. It has great meaning.

“May I and all surrounding sentient beings in all the lifetimes not be separated from the Triple Gem—Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—and always make offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and receive blessings of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.”

This is very useful, even at your own house. This can be used to offer, this prayer can be used for grace. Not for buddha grass! [Laughter] It can be used even when you take that, without discrimination! However, even at your house it's very good to say this.

“Myself and all surrounding sentient beings,” according to the Tibetan words, “all surroundings” means your friends, your wife, your children, your husband, parents, whatever close people are there, surrounding people, relatives, then all the rest of the sentient beings. You can think like this. Visualize your parents, children or whatever, those who are close to you, then the rest of the sentient beings. This prayer is useful because you are not only praying for yourself, you are also praying for all the surrounding family and the rest of sentient beings to not be separated from the Triple Gem, to always have the chance to make offerings to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and to create good karma, which means to continuously create good karma and continuously receive happiness, to receive blessings for enlightenment.

Receiving blessings is extremely important. Having devotion to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha is also receiving blessings. Your devotion increasing to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha is also receiving blessings. Receiving clearer and clearer understanding, clearer and clearer experience of the meditation subjects as you practice, meditate—that is also receiving blessings. As your experience of meditation is getting stronger and stronger, the feelings of meditation are getting stronger and stronger, clearer and clearer, that is also receiving blessings. Of course, no need to talk about actualizing, receiving realizations—no need to talk about that.

Even remembering impermanence, even remembering impermanence and death and wanting to practice Dharma, by remembering this you want to practice Dharma, you want to do something good—this is also receiving blessings in the mind, blessings of the Triple Gem. Receiving blessings is extremely important and without that there is no way to actualize the meditations. Therefore, praying to receive blessings is very important.

If we pray like this, we can easily remember these things. Of course it's good to help parents and relatives in a material way, this and that, but actually what really helps, what can really help them is doing this simple prayer, which we can say during the time of eating. Without making our mind complicated, this can definitely help. The best help we can give is this prayer. It's the best help, for our parents, our family and the rest of the sentient beings to not be separated from the Triple Gem.

If we are separate from the Triple Gem, if we don't meet the Triple Gem, then we remain ignorant, not having a savior. Also we are always ignorant, following the wrong guide, always creating negative karma, always putting ourselves in suffering. Then besides us, all the family, all the rest, by continuously making offerings to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and receiving blessings, they receive enlightenment. This is very useful, very useful. This is the best thing; prayers such as this are the best help.

Sometimes I used to listen to my mother. Of course, she worried about me very much so I used to tell her what she could do: the best thing she could do for me was not give me presents, not give me material things. I told her that what I would really like, instead of giving me a million dollars I would much prefer that she pray for the success of my Dharma practice. I would much prefer that; I'd be much happier that she made prayers.

My mother said she often prays for me. One day I asked her how she prays, "How do you pray for me?" I tried to check up. It really made me laugh the way she prays. She says she prays all the time—when the sun rises in the mountains, in the early morning, she says she often remembers me and prays. She says she has been praying since I was born, even from that time when I was small she has been praying. In her prayers, I'm not sure, but there are funny words. One of her prayers is "May the sun rise on the mountains," or something like that. "May the light of the sun strike, may the snow mountain receive the sunlight," kind of like that prayer.

Then I said, "Why do you pray like this? It doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense, so why do you pray like this? Better you pray like this" She said, "No, no, my prayer has some meaning, because by continuously praying like this all the time, it becomes successful." Afterwards we talked about how to pray and sometimes I examine whether she is saying it correctly, whether she can remember or not. I used to tell her that if the Dharma practice is to be successful then that includes everything, every wish, everything, so you don't need to say many words, this and that, so many things. Sometimes I feel shy to explain what she is doing, like those prayers, what she is doing.

Even when we are invited by other people, friends, to parties or anything, at those times the best thing we can do for them, the really best help for them, among all the actions that we do for other people, the best thing we can do for them is to pray like this. Then even when we eat, sincerely thinking, praying like this, remembering all this.

That is the best help for them. By praying we are making conjunction, fixing a relationship between them and Buddhadharma, between them and Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Even if at the present time they do not know Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, even if they are far away from that understanding, even if they are completely in darkness, if their mind or life is completely in darkness. For ordinary people other actions—giving presents to them, talking nicely, trying to say good words, ego-pleasing words—are mostly involved with the eight worldly dharmas, however, sincerely praying in our heart, which other people don't know we are doing, is really sincere, really pure action. This is just

my suggestion of what things can help, how we can help, how we can benefit others without confusion.

Before, I mentioned and explained about refuge, the benefits of refuge, and talked about knowledge of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha for others. The emphasis is that it is not like being a missionary, as I see it. It's not like some missionaries who go all over the country, all over the place, in the streets, passing books. Not like that, not in that way. Some religious people want to just spread as much as possible their theory, without checking, without having any compassion, without any concern for other people's suffering. The basic idea in Buddhadharma—not talking about Mahayana, just the basic idea of Buddhadharma—is that it's necessary to have concern for other beings' suffering. Those kinds of things, without concern for other beings' suffering—to release, to guide other beings from suffering, from their problems of life—not being concerned with any of this, completely forgetting that and just trying to spread their own theory, whatever they call their religion, trying to be well-far-famed. That is more or less having attachment to that religion and doesn't really have so much purpose. Talking from the side of the ordinary person, it isn't the real purpose of religion.

However, the basic thing is that it is necessary to have compassion when we talk, it's necessary to have compassion. Not with attachment, the mind kind of taking partisanship to Buddhism, not with attachment, but when we talk about Dharma or when we explain about refuge to other people, there must be compassion. Not so much with that but mainly, with compassion, being concerned with those other people's suffering, their wrong conceptions; the mind feeling their suffering.

Those who are ready, those who can digest or whose mind wants to seek a new method instead of having such a material life according to their level of mind, and especially having fear of death—that is very rare. Especially if they have a mind capable of listening to a talk about refuge, it is worthwhile to explain that, to talk about refuge to them, because refuge is the best solution to guide, the fundamental method to not be born in a suffering realm and to have less suffering at death-time. By feeling the wrong conceptions that they have—not knowing Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, not having that knowledge, and not knowing the perfect guide who can definitely help; not having wisdom and not having method, all these things, the sufferings—by feeling compassion for them, understanding their suffering with compassion, feeling concerned for their suffering, you can explain, talk about refuge, the knowledge of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, how they are fantastic. As much as you know, you can explain the powers that it has or the benefits of taking refuge.

Especially if you talk from your own experience, it is the best, not just intellectually but with experience, that is the best, the best. How do you say? It's more real for them. This is leading others in the path of refuge.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 127]

If the good results of taking refuge were to manifest themselves in form, there would not be enough room in the three worlds to contain them, so immense are the benefits. They are innumerable—more numerous than handfuls of water in all the oceans.

Yet, there are eight major benefits of taking refuge.

1. Becoming Buddhist (an inner being; Tib. *nangpa*.)

Actually that word “Buddhist,” according to my understanding, just from the word “Buddhist” usually we interpret—because someone has studied Buddhist philosophy and they can explain it,

they can talk about Dharma and Buddhist philosophy—normally for reasons like that we believe that person is Buddhist and we call them Buddhist. However, that word cannot just make someone a Buddhist.

For instance, in previous times, I think Devadatta who always competed with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who was recognized as evil, the person who always tried to destroy Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. In Devadatta's mind there was [knowledge of] maybe thousands, thousands, thousands, thousands of volumes of texts, as much as a big elephant could carry as luggage. He had that many texts in the mind, he could explain them, but there was still no change in his mind or having refuge. So another way of saying this, using this normal word "Buddhist" even though there is that much textual knowledge in someone's mind, as much as one big elephant's luggage, thousands of volumes, still they are not Buddhist.

The actual term is "inner being" and the actual meaning is inner being. So just the word "Buddhist" does not really convey that; just from the word Buddhist it is not so clear. "Inner being" is a clearer title, if we use "Buddhist" as title for inner being. However, as we talked before, it doesn't depend on anything physical. The definition of the inner being or Buddhist can never be made just by seeing the external actions of the person.

Just because the person is in robes does not mean they are an inner being, a Buddhist. Just because the person's hair is shaved doesn't mean they are Buddhist; just because the person has a mala around their neck, doesn't mean the person is Buddhist. Anybody can have mala, anybody can shave their hair. Just the physical thing of wearing robes, anybody can do that without going through the precepts and changing their mind. That doesn't mean they are a Buddhist; it doesn't mean they are an inner being. Same thing, making pujas or saying prayers doesn't mean the person is an inner being, a Buddhist. Even sitting on a throne, the person is sitting on a throne and talking about Dharma, still that doesn't mean they are an inner being, a Buddhist; that cannot make the definition. It can be possible that none of those who are speaking, talking about Dharma and none of those who are listening to Dharma are Buddhists, inner beings, but some beggars begging outside are maybe pure Buddhists, inner beings. That can be possible. It only depends on the mind. The definition can never be made by judging only the external actions.

Even if we sleep with thousands of statues and Dharma texts around our room and we sleep in the middle, that doesn't mean we are a Buddhist, an inner being. It doesn't mean this. If all this doesn't mean being Buddhist, then how can it be possible that just by being born in a Buddhist country we become Buddhist? Of course, it is clear that being born in a place doesn't make us Buddhist. It is clear. Even if we understand the whole philosophical teaching, many thousands of volumes, if we have the texts in our mind to explain—just that, without changing the mind we don't become Buddhist.

Without having refuge or changing the mind, without having refuge, we don't become Buddhist. Therefore, how can it be possible that just by being born in a Buddhist country we become a Buddhist? That's just generalizing, that's just ordinary people's talk, without checking. Also being born in a family in which the father and mother make offerings or have a little devotion, just being born to that family doesn't mean that person, that baby is a Buddhist, an inner being. Just that doesn't make it so.

So now, since it doesn't depend on only physical actions, actions of speech and body—what does it depend on? It's all in the mind; it only depends on the mind. How do we define whether someone is an inner being or not? That is by refuge, the definition is by refuge. The person with refuge is an inner being. If we don't have refuge in our mind then we are not an inner being, no matter how we act, no matter how much our actions are Buddhist actions. This is so important; this is very important to understand. This is very important.

In this way we can check, by understanding this we can check whether we are an inner being or an outer being, whether we are outer or inner. Whether we are inner being or outer being: we can check. Then we know where we are—outside of the house or inside. By understanding this, we can really check up the level of our mind and know where we are. Otherwise, if we don't know this, we will always have wrong beliefs. Because we can say some prayers and mantras and we can do some religious actions, we believe we are Buddhists, inner beings, but this is a wrong conception. Because we are born in a family to parents who have a little devotion, who make little offerings, who imitate a little bit that religious action—because of that we believe “I am Buddhist.” That is a wrong conception, wrong conception. This is very important to know. Then we know for ourselves.

So how much we are a pure inner being depends on how pure our refuge is. It's only defined by the mind, by the mental development, the understanding, having fear of the samsaric sufferings, the suffering of the three lower realms, and having devotion to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Comparing the outer being—who doesn't have anything at all, who doesn't understand anything about samsaric suffering or the suffering of the three lower realms, who has no understanding of reincarnation, no devotion to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—looking at that person's mind level, they have such an ignorant, limited mind.

If we have a little understanding of reincarnation and have faith in it, having fear of those rebirths, especially having fear in general of samsaric rebirth, and having devotion to Buddha, Dharma, Sangha—even if we don't have deep understanding of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha's knowledge, or a deep understanding of samsaric nature—comparing to that person who doesn't have anything, whose mind is completely empty and very dried; compared to that mind, we who have a little bit of devotion, a little bit of fear, a little bit of understanding, our mind is much higher. Compared to that previous person, we have realizations. Compared to that person whose mind is completely empty, in darkness, we who have a little bit devotion, who understand something, having some faith in karma, it's like having realizations. Our mind is much higher; we have that much refuge and we are that fortunate.

Generally, having fear and devotion is like this. This is talking about having fear of the suffering of the three lower realms, according to ordinary people, according to the level of our mind. Of course, there are higher bodhisattvas who have refuge. The higher bodhisattvas and higher beings following the higher paths have refuge, but they don't have fear of the suffering lower realms because they have gone beyond the ordinary level of mind, the ordinary path, they have gone beyond that. So there's complete trust. Because of that higher path they have received, definitely they won't be born in the suffering lower realms. They don't have fear of their own future rebirth, but they have the wish for release from the delusions, and also the higher bodhisattvas wish for release from the dualistic mind, the subtle obscurations. They also have incredible, deep understanding of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha's knowledge, and incredible devotion to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. So this is just a little detail, just to have understanding.

Inner being, *nangpa*; inner being has much more taste and it makes much more sense. Now we can understand this term inner being is nothing to do with partisanship. Now we can easily see it's nothing to do with partisanship. It's not easy to become an inner being. If we think like this, if we really check up, our speech cannot define it by saying "I am Buddhist." Only our mind can define it, only our mental development can define it, only our relative mind's realizations can define it. Only that makes us become an inner being or Buddhist.

Generally, if we really check up, even in Buddhist countries there are less people who are inner beings and more outer beings who don't have refuge. Less people have refuge in the mind, if we really check up. However, it's not an easy thing to become an inner being. Especially becoming a pure inner being is difficult; it depends on great understanding, mental development.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 127]

2. It is the basis of all ordinations.

Why is it called "inner?" Why inner? Because the person who has refuge, as we talked before, as we started with the outline "Refuge is the holy door of the teachings," this person who has refuge has entered the holy door of the teachings, they are inside. Therefore they are called inner being, Buddhist. It's like this. An outer being is one who doesn't have devotion to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, who doesn't have faith or understanding of karma and also who has wrong understanding, who follows a wrong path.

So the second benefit: "It is the basis of all ordinations." Any ordination has to be taken on the basis of refuge, by having the basis, the foundation of refuge. Also as the refuge is pure, the ordination becomes pure, purer and stronger. Whenever ordination is given, the refuge comes all the time at the beginning.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 127]

3. All previous bad karma is diminished.

By taking refuge, all previous bad karma, no matter how heavy it is, can be purified.

4. Extensive good karma accumulates.

As we discussed at the beginning, the benefits of taking refuge are greater than handfuls of water from the ocean, the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean. If the benefits of taking refuge were material, even the three worlds—the world of the senses, the world of form, the world of formless—would become a small part. If the benefits of refuge were in material form, they would not fit into the three worlds. The benefits of taking refuge and handfuls of water from the Pacific—if you could count, the number of handfuls of water from the Pacific can be finished but the benefits of refuge cannot be finished by counting.

5. I cannot be afflicted by either humans or non- humans.

Why I said before that mind should always rely on and trust these is because it is the best method, the best protection, not only in this life but in all lifetimes. The best protection at death time and

after death, in all the future lives, even in this life, day and night, all the time, the fundamental best protection is taking refuge. There are so many stories, but there's not time.

Just to be released from the ordinary temporal hindrances, from the fears and sufferings of this life—it isn't necessary for those things to happen. We can be protected [from the temporal hindrances of this life] by taking refuge in the Dharma, we can be protected. But to not be born in the suffering lower realms, to find release from samsara needs the help of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, all three. Especially to be released from samsara, to be released from all the wrong conceptions, dualistic mind, we need the help of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. So it's necessary to take refuge in all three. Only the Sangha, without taking refuge to Buddhadharma, we cannot do, therefore it is necessary to take refuge to all three.

In India, many Tibetan people and monks work in the fields, many Tibetan refugees. There's always the danger of animals—even elephants, very harmful animals—coming to eat in the fields, coming to eat crops and harm the people. So many times when this happens they pray to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They just remember His Holiness and they strongly pray from the heart. Many times they had the experience that when they pray the animals, who usually give harm, just slowly run away without harming anything. Many people had that experience and proved it.

Anyway there is so much to tell you about the previous meditators, how taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha has been helpful for them, how it has been protecting their life. There's so much to talk about.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 127]

6. I shall not be reborn in the three lower realms.

If you don't want to be born in the three lower realms, if you don't desire that, the best fundamental method is the refuge.

7. It brings all success.

All success—happiness in this life, happiness in future lives, receiving enlightenment—everything.

8. I shall receive enlightenment sooner.

By taking refuge, the benefit is also receiving enlightenment sooner.

Taking refuge is, therefore, extremely important, and it is the basis of all teachings. To attain enlightenment or to gain tantric practices, I must complete the practice of the six paramitas: the transcendental perfections of charity, morality, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom. To do so, I need the three higher trainings of conduct, concentration and wisdom. The basis of these three is taking refuge.

So the part on refuge is finished. This is still just like a little drop in the ocean, nothing. Actually refuge is a very deep subject. We can only understand it perfectly, fully, without missing anything, when we receive enlightenment. So refuge is very important. If you want to check the founder of a

religion or whatever it is, how perfect a guide it is, how pure it is—if you want to check up, you can check up with this understanding.

How it is a worthwhile object of refuge: there are four reasons as I mentioned before, whether that object of refuge has the knowledge, whether they are worthwhile object to take refuge, whether they have this knowledge. Like this you check up the founder of another religion, if you want to check whether they have this and this and this. Then check up whether they have exactly like the Buddha's knowledge—knowledge of speech, body, mind, actions, everything. Like this you should check up.

Not understanding refuge, not understanding karma—not understanding the practice of refuge, not understanding the practice of karma—is the root from where all the suffering comes, all the negative actions, ignorance, our wrong conceptions and sufferings, our complicated life, all the suffering. From the understanding of refuge, the practice of refuge, the understanding of karma, the practice of karma—from there all the happiness, all the perfections, enlightenment, everything comes. That's like the world. Therefore, refuge and karma are extremely important, extremely important.

Even though we haven't gone on to other parts, the next part of the meditations, still it's greatly worthwhile to hear details about refuge and these things. It's a fundamentally important thing, which stops us from creating a lot of negative karma, which clears up many things, which is important. It's difficult to hear about this again, even in the future. It's difficult because of many hindrances to hear about this again in future times.

Lecture 17

There are techniques that can be used when there are problems, life confusion. Instead of thinking "I am suffering," instead of taking it on ourselves, there is a way to use anything the negative mind suffers, also our feelings, whatever the problem is, the mind of near disaster. Even though there's something happening it doesn't become important, if doesn't seem a big problem for us. There can be so much benefit, according to the level of our mind and how strongly we let go of the evil thought of worldly dharmas. We must renounce that.

Actually, if we want to fight—fight the ego, fight the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, fight the attachment, fight the anger—it is worthwhile to fight. That fighting becomes the cause of peace. That fighting becomes Dharma, that fighting is real Dharma, that fighting is pure Dharma, real pure Dharma. It is not even physical work—that work of peace is not the work of the physical body, it is only work in the mind, mental work. No matter if we are sleeping, lying down, whatever the physical body is doing, if the mind is working like this we are practicing and that practice or that action is real pure Dharma. That fighting never creates negative karma. It only becomes the cause of everlasting happiness.

Usually we make mistakes in fighting. Instead of fighting our main enemy—that which bothers us all the time, which turns people against us, so there is disharmony at work and other people harm us—we don't fight the main enemy, which is the mind, and we take care of it as best as possible. We serve it as much as possible, we worship our enemy. And then, instead of fighting and destroying

this enemy, we fight and destroy other sentient beings, we fight with other sentient beings, from whom we receive peace, from where we receive happiness.

Sentient beings are never the object we should fight or to whom we should give harm; they are never the object of that. They are all objects that bring us peace, from whom we get our enjoyments, our happiness. Even the temporal perfections, peace, even everlasting happiness, even enlightenment; they're objects from which we receive this. Receiving enlightenment is dependent on sentient beings. We practice Dharma and without sentient beings we cannot practice; without depending on the kindness of sentient beings there's no way we can practice Dharma. They're only objects of peace.

So it is a great mistake in our daily life when we get angry, when we fight and give harm to them, you know. When we make other people lose, it is a great mistake. In this way, normally what we do is destroy them, instead of taking care of the sentient beings, by understanding that they are the object, the field from where we receive all our pleasures, our enlightenment, all the perfections, all the enjoyments, all the temporal needs. Instead of thinking of their kindness, instead of helping them, we destroy them. We destroy the object, the field from where we receive all these perfections and happiness. We destroy them instead of taking care or helping them. This is a big mistake, a grave mistake.

When there is suffering and problems, as I explained before, we should think of karma and these things, trying to understand that this is the fault of the evil thought of worldly dharmas. Think, "The evil thought of worldly dharmas obliged me to create negative karma so now I am experiencing the suffering result. I'm obliged to experience suffering due to the evil thought of worldly dharmas. It is the fault of the evil thought of worldly dharmas."

Thinking in that way is very, very useful. In this way we never want to follow the evil thought of the worldly dharmas and we want to renounce that energy. We don't want to follow the evil thought of the worldly dharmas and also we don't create bad karma. If we follow the evil thought of the worldly dharmas we create bad karma. Our action becomes negative karma. So, in this way, if we don't follow the evil thought of worldly dharmas we also don't create negative karma. In this way, we are planting the root of peace for many lifetimes. If we don't follow the evil thought of the worldly dharmas we don't create negative karma, therefore the result of the negative karma does not have to be experienced in this life or any other lifetime. That's why this practice brings the root of peace in many future lives.

The beginning meditators who are trying to lead an ascetic life; those meditators practice like this at the beginning. Whenever their enemy, whom they dislike, is harming them they're so pleased. "How good it is! That has to be! That should be! Even more damage should happen!" Even if they have a car accident, they think that's good, that's very good. There are many meditators who live their life in pure Dharma, who try to create pure actions and in such a way try to lead an ascetic life in pure Dharma practice. Whenever problems happen, like maybe thief is coming or maybe someone comes to beat them or maybe criticize them, or maybe disease is coming; whatever things happen, they always think in this way: "I have experienced it to discover the evil thought of the worldly dharmas," and their mind is sort of happier, instead of feeling depressed and upset.

Like some New York people who come to Nepal, which is not a good place, it's not a materially developed country. There are many fleas and because they haven't been used to that, when they see

a flea on the bed they freak out. This one great flea jumping! Just even one, just one flea on the bed! Then they make a big fuss, calling everybody, just as if someone came to take their whole life.

The mind of the meditators, instead of feeling upset and freaking out, they feel more and more happy as things happen. Ordinary people think of outer enemies, but the meditators think of the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. They take revenge and fight the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, thinking how it is good that they are suffering! This is needed for them, such trouble, such suffering! Like taking revenge, like when we fight with someone, when we shoot or do something, when it hits us or when it hurts us, we feel sort of satisfied, “That’s good, good.” Feeling satisfied. Like that we should think to the evil thought of the worldly dharmas.

Anyway, this is something that can be experienced, which can be proved only through practice and experience. Through such practice gradually the mind becomes peaceful, but through words it cannot be understood. Like these meditators who are practicing Dharma purely, instead of people praising them, they prefer criticism. This is just one example. Same thing, temporal conditions, they prefer more uncomfortable conditions. Why? If the conditions or the place are more uncomfortable, same thing happens, they find it very useful to practice Dharma. They let the attachment suffer, they find it very useful.

One yogi, one meditator, Kadampa Geshe Ben Gungyal, a follower of Atisha, was living an ascetic life in the practice of thought training. Geshe Ben Gungyal was very famous in his early life as a robber in the daytime and a thief at night. In his belt and on his body he used to carry many weapons such as knives, arrows and slingshots. One day, due to previous habits, he was in some family’s house, stealing tea. He put his hand in the sack to steal the tea and all of a sudden he realized that he was stealing, so he made a big noise, “Oh here’s a thief, here’s a thief, a thief is in the house!” When the people came he showed them his hand, saying, “Here’s the thief!”

There are many other stories of what he did. Like this, instead of hiding the mistakes and faults, the great meditators display them, they expose them because their practice becomes really pure Dharma in this way. It becomes real spiritual action.

The way they practice Dharma, how they renounce or fight the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, is exemplified by another story of Kadampa Geshe Ben Gungyal. Once, after he had begun to practice Dharma, he was in a temple where a benefactor had offered curd to all the monks. Geshe Ben Gungyal was sitting near the end of the row of monks, watching the person serving the curd to the monks at the top of the line. When he saw that a lot of curd was being dished out into the bowls of these monks, he was worried that it would all be gone by the time it came to him.

Then he suddenly realized this was the evil thought of the worldly dharmas coming, that his attitude was one of worldly concern. To renounce the evil thought of the worldly dharmas he then turned his bowl upside down. When the person came to serve him the delicious curd, his bowl was upside down. In order to control or fight the evil thought of worldly dharmas, in order to lose it, he did not accept any curd.

This is how those yogis, those meditators practice Dharma. Dharma is like that, we should not have the feeling it is always doing some puja or saying mantras, meditating or burning incense; it is actions of the mind.

Also sometimes, when people are praising us or saying this and that and there is danger of attachment arising, it is useful to think like this, sort of visualizing or thinking that they are speaking words that are very pointed or like red-hot pins, like the long needle that is put into a fire and becomes red-hot. Thinking like that about these words praising us—which cause attachment and the negative minds to arise, so we create negative karma—we don't have to show anything with our face or body, but this is something we can practice within our mind. We should check up and be aware of our mind and what it is doing, what our reaction is. What is happening in our mind while someone is helping us; try to be aware of that. If we are in danger of attachment and things like this arising, thus becoming a disaster, if we visualize in this way, it is also useful. If we visualize their words like this, if we visualize in that way then we aren't interested in or attached to whatever the person says.

So think like this, as we visualize a sort of long, red-hot, burning needle which goes through the body: "This hot burning needle, even this cannot cause such suffering; perhaps it may cause my death but that's all. Just this life's death, that's all. But their words, what they are saying, such words have been causing me to experience suffering numberless times in my previous lifetimes, in the upper realms and in the suffering lower realms. How that has been causing me to suffer is because those words caused my attachment to arise. Then I created negative karma and suffered in the suffering realms and the upper realms. I was born in those realms and suffered. Like this in the past, these words are also obliging me to suffer in the present time and continuously in the future. So, therefore why should I be attached to their words?"

Compared to this, a very pointed red-hot pin is nothing, even if goes through our body, that's nothing, it's just one time. It is a hindrance but that's nothing comparing to the words, which cause attachment to arise. Thinking like this is also very, very useful.

When someone gives us a present or something material which causes attachment to arise, again unhappiness comes in our mind, non-peace, which makes us confused. Those things we can also visualize, for example, if someone offers us delicious cake we can visualize red-hot coal. Then we don't get attached to it and there is no problem in the mind. We're creating peace within our own mind, so there's no problem. Our mind does not become confused if we visualize in that way. Our mind is continuously relaxed, at peace. We don't get pumped up, we don't become uptight and unpeaceful.

In our country, the mountain people have devotion to the monks; the people are wanting to create good karma and they offer things. They don't have much, mostly they are very poor but they try to offer something. Mostly what they bring is food. Corn doesn't grow at that height, wheat grows lower down and sometimes they bring that, but most of the crop is potatoes so they bring potatoes and sometimes they bring salt. The mountain people don't like the Indian salt; they don't eat it because Indian salt doesn't have the power, it's not as strong as Tibetan salt. They eat salt that comes from Tibet because it has a very strong taste and it is sort of a special salt; it is kind of an expensive thing. So they bring salt and these kinds of things and sometimes I feel unworthy myself when they bring their food.

For their small amount of food they walk for a long time. Physically they suffer so much to get the wheat from a place way down. They go down for three, four or five days and then they carry it up on their own backs. Mostly they don't have animals. Some families transport by animals but mostly the poor people carry things on their back, carrying their load for four or five days from places

where it is very hot, from where they buy things. When they go down they take certain foods, like potatoes, certain things, whatever they have a lot of. Then they make an exchange, then they bring back the wheat or whatever it is, but it doesn't last long. The roads are not straight and are terrible, up and down, crossing rivers and mountains. Then they bring food to the monks.

They come to see the lama when they have problems. Sometimes they come maybe just to say hello, sometimes they come without problems but mostly they come because they have been having some problem in their family, someone is sick or something happened, something is wrong. That's mainly what it is like in Tibet also. They don't have psychologists, you know! Usually here, when you have something wrong with your mind that you can't handle, you go to a psychologist. Sort of like that, but in Tibet they go to see the lamas in the monasteries!

When they bring these things, even if it is just a little bit, even if it is nothing, just one plate, but when I think how much they suffer for their food, it's unbearable, kind of unbelievable—actually I feel unworthy to eat the food. However, it is also useful sometimes to try to visualize food as kaka, you know, visualizing the food that they bring as sort of a dirty thing, like kaka, the worst thing you can think of. It's very useful, very useful to keep your mind in place! [Laughter] Then the mind is very relaxed, the mind is so relaxed. So relaxed, nothing like before, so relaxed, quiet, quiet, and also, if you want to, you can meditate and there is no distraction.

There is no distraction and when you think more and more of the shortcomings of the evil thought of the worldly dharmas and how things are boring, bringing problems, things like this, when you think more and more like this, when you discover this more and more—sometimes even though you had attachment before, in the beginning, wanting other people to bring things, but after two months of meditation, thinking of the shortcomings of the evil thought of the worldly dharmas and how things become conditioned with delusion, as you think about this more and more—gradually you prefer, you're much happier if they don't bring anything to your room. If they don't bring you things, you're much happier, you prefer that; you're much happier than if they are bringing things to you.

So, definitely the mind progresses through practice, lessening attachment, not having attachment to things generally. When there is any problem like attachment to pleasure, hearing pleasing words or receiving material things or admiration, there are so many other techniques, it depends. Like thinking, as I explained before, that the nature of pleasure is suffering and being aware; that is very, very helpful to not get attached. To keep away from attachment, also think the pleasure does not last. In a split second it changes. That's also useful.

One very powerful thing for ordinary people or very beginners, one most useful thing is the indefinite time of death. Perhaps when it comes to it, I can point it out, however the indefinite time of death is extremely useful, especially for beginners who do not know much about Dharma, who do not know much about shunyata, absolute nature, and these subjects, who do not know much, who have no deep understanding. For those people, to control attachment when there's pleasure or something, a most useful technique is thinking of the indefinite time of death. Anyway, it will come afterwards, so no need to repeat it now. Your understanding will become clear afterwards.

Thinking about the indefinite time of death is very useful, very useful. And also, besides, when you have suffering, you can think about karma. When you have problems of attachment arising with pleasure, this time you can also think of karma. When attachment arises, creating negative karma, the

result of this is to be born in the suffering realms. Even if you are born in the upper realms, again there are different types of suffering results which have to be experienced. This will come in the part on karma; this will become clear in the part on karma. There are different results explained.

Like this, thinking about problems, it is also very, very useful when you understand the part about karma, the different suffering results. It's very, very useful to think about that, it's very powerful. But if you don't have much understanding of karma or much respect for that, if you don't care, even if you think about it intellectually it does not change your mind.

Then, if you have understanding of shunyata, you can use that understanding. If you have clear understanding of what shunyata is, what emptiness is—what is emptiness and what is the opposite of emptiness—that which has to be empty. There's something that has to be empty. So, maybe this stomach, to make the stomach empty! I'm joking. Maybe to make your purse, your money purse empty! I'm joking. Anyway, in the objects of the senses there is something that has to be empty—that which has to be empty and what it is empty of. If you have clear understanding, the exact right understanding of absolute nature and how things relatively exist, if you have right understanding of this, correct understanding, you can also use these techniques when there are life problems or mind problems. When there is such a problem within the mind, when the mind goes up and down, you can use these techniques. You can use these techniques if you have clear, exact and correct understanding of these things.

Just like the things in the shops, where there are many artificial goods—maybe not here but in India there are many artificial foods which are of good colors, like apples, and they set them behind glass, way up, not down, where people can't take them and go! [Rinpoche laughs] Then below, there are many foods that cannot be eaten. Like that, if you recognize what is artificial and what is real, if you have that much understanding of this shunyata subject, then you can definitely use the understanding when a mind problem comes—attachment, these things—and it definitely works if you have the right understanding. Understanding of shunyata, the wisdom of shunyata, is like the knife that cuts off the branches of trees. It is the main weapon which cuts off all the fundamental wrong conceptions. So, anyway, like this, to just give you an idea. Then, the other subject, death, will gradually come.

However, the final thing, Dharma. What is important to renounce in this life, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, is a very, very profound teaching. It is extremely difficult to understand, it's very deep, very deep. It is not something we can understand by hearing just the title, Dharma. It's not something we can understand. If we share a candle we can understand or if we share a flower, we can understand. But Dharma is difficult to understand; even sharing words does not make us understand what Dharma really means. It is very deep, very deep.

Even if we open the *kundalini chakra*, if we have the power to control kundalini, that kind of thing, even if we have magic powers to fly, magic powers having control over certain things or we can show magic things, like not being burnt by fire, things like that. Even if we have that much power but we are still not living in pure Dharma practice, that's possible. Our life is still not pure because we are always following the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, which creates problems, suffering.

Therefore, this is something we have to try to understand and then, with understanding, as much as possible we can try to put it into action. This practice, this action of renouncing the evil thought of the worldly dharmas has such incredible knowledge and benefits. The practice gives us incredible

knowledge and benefits with which to stop suffering and attain all the happiness. From this we receive temporal happiness and also everlasting happiness. It does not mean that by renouncing the evil thought of worldly dharmas we don't receive any pleasure. From this we also receive happiness—our life becomes much happier, much more peaceful, less complicated—and without doubt, we will receive everlasting happiness and enlightenment.

So, I'd appreciate that, rather than meditating. Someone may spend one month in a meditation course without understanding Dharma, and even though they know other subjects they don't know the actual meaning of Dharma or how to practice Dharma. Comparing that person with someone who has all the understanding of Dharma, what the Dharma means, how to practice Dharma, but has no understanding of other meditations, I would prefer the person who only has the understanding of Dharma, what Dharma means and how to practice Dharma—even though they don't have understanding of other meditations, they have correct understanding of Dharma. I'd prefer this to knowing other meditations but not knowing Dharma.

However, I think your life in the West is difficult somehow. Sure, there are many things, due to your previous life, which have made such conditions in this life. However, it is difficult. But “difficult” is made by you and “easy” is also made by you. It's something that you made and we arranged. It's something that you unconsciously or consciously made.

I think it's useful, even if you don't always have time at home, even if usually there is no time to meditate, even if you don't meditate for one hour or something like that, even if you haven't developed a fixed time. The most important thing is that your mind does not forget the subject of meditation. You are always aware, you always remember the subject of meditation, and whatever actions you are doing—talking, anything—as the usual life is going on, at the same time you always remember the meditation subject that relates to that action. At the same time the mind is aware.

There are different techniques and the meditations contain the methods to make the life meaningful, showing how to make your actions of body, speech and mind meaningful and beneficial for yourself and other people. The meditations contain techniques, so as your wisdom remembers them and uses them, your actions are transformed in this way, you act in this way.

If you meditate for one hour in the morning but the rest of the day your mind is completely unconscious and you completely forget the meditation for the rest of the day, then the mind is just wild, you are like a wild animal and you are doing all kinds of violent actions. It's as if you are a completely different person from the morning. Except for that one hour in the morning, the rest of the day you are completely different, like you have taken another rebirth, sort of!

It's better to be aware of your actions and to be practical in your life. Even if you don't meditate for one hour in the morning, since you have an understanding of the meditation techniques, you are always aware of your daily actions and the meditation, the Dharma subject. You are also aware of which action is opposite to the Dharma, against Dharma. Then you can try to always make actions harmonious with Dharma, according to Dharma. In this way, your life is fantastic, really fantastic. Then your life is really beneficial, really beneficial, really meaningful, beneficial, without doubt. You also create much less bad karma because your mind is always aware, checking whether it is good karma or negative karma, like this. In this way—when you act according to Dharma, when you try to do all actions through Dharma—all the negative actions, which are the cause of suffering, are

stopped. So every day your life becomes the cause of peace. It's very, very useful, very useful, very useful.

So, what I mean is this. It's better if you don't spend one hour meditating but use your life actions like this, always checking, being aware of the Dharma, trying to do actions not against but harmonious with the Dharma, trying to act according to Dharma. I would rather say your life is much more practical, much more clever, more skillful than if you meditated for one hour and after one hour you become completely berserk, like wild animal. I mean, you're trying in the morning, that's good, that's better than nothing, [laughter] but actually where you spend more time is the rest of the day, not in that one hour. The whole of your day is not one hour. The whole of your day, all of your time is spent in the rest of the hours, and for that you have to be careful. That is the time when you have to be more careful. That's where you spend more time, you see. So, if your actions are opposite to Dharma, only creating negative karma, then so much time is wasted and your life becomes meaningless. So these things are just my idea.

Same thing, even if you are living in a cave in a very high, solitary place, eating little food and not seeing people. Even though it is physically a solitary place, your mind is not really in a solitary place, your mind is not really in retreat, you are following the evil thought of the worldly dharmas. If the actions are not done according to Dharma, then you aren't any different from an animal that is living in the cave or a small ant living in a solitary place—they are also living very distant, in the mountains, with no people around, same thing. All this gives us ideas for discussion, what we can do with our life, how we can make our life practical.

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 88]

Spending this perfect human rebirth desiring only the eight worldly dharmas and working for the enjoyment of samsaric pleasures is like trading universes full of jewels for kaka. But even this very dirty thing is much more useful than attachment—it can be used by both people and animals.

The more I desire and enjoy the eight worldly dharmas and higher samsaric pleasures, the more I create confusion and remain ignorant.

So I think, briefly, just a very brief finish on the eight worldly dharmas! I don't think it is completely finished. Also sometimes in one year doing a retreat is very good, I think like two months. Even though usually in daily life we try to practice Dharma but also each year make it a little bit stricter, doing two months or one month retreat, more strict meditation. You can do certain purifying meditations, there are many different techniques, there are many meditations, there are many things. There are so many hundreds and hundreds of things that can be done. Even if you work during the rest of the year, but each year for one or two months do a stricter retreat, mainly strict in the mind, strict in the mind. It's very, very useful to try to do some purification. It's very useful, very, very useful, very useful.

Also, in this way it helps us to have less time in a suffering realm, in suffering. This way we're making a path or a bridge to everlasting happiness and enlightenment.

For tonight's meditation—that's your own enlightenment! Then come back into samsara! You can do meditation on the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth. Maybe spend half the time on these

things and half the time in oneness with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Do purification by reciting the mantra and purifying with white light. Do it longer. Do that longer and then visualize receiving knowledge. So you can do maybe twenty-five minutes or something on the usefulness, then the rest of the time, meditate on emptiness. Meditate on the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth and then do guru yoga meditation on emptiness.

PRECEPTS 4

Before taking the ordination, for the action not only to become Dharma but also to become the cause of enlightenment, it is necessary to cultivate a pure motivation. Even though there is no actual bodhicitta received, it is a similar thought to bodhicitta. It's necessary to think deeply, at least having a short motivation like this:

“I and all sentient beings have been experiencing suffering in the general samsaric realms, particularly in the three lower realms, from beginningless previous lifetimes, due to the wrong conception believing the object is self-existent even though it is non-self-existent; believing the object is permanent even though the object is impermanent; and also believing the impure object is pure.”

Try to feel the beginningless experience of this suffering in samsara. If we really think back, if we really check up, we've been experiencing suffering in samsara from beginningless times. It is something that makes tears come. As we continue to follow these wrong conceptions, we will endlessly suffer in samsara. If we really think, check up on the incredible sufferings we will be experiencing in samsara continuously, it is something that is really terrifying and we can't stand it without trying to do something to stop it. It is something that we can't wait even a minute. If we fully and clearly see the whole future, the experience of all the sufferings is unbelievable, what great sufferings we have experienced, what long sufferings we have experienced.

“Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's achievement of enlightenment is not eternal, that which has no beginning. He was an ordinary person like us at the beginning, he followed the guru and the ordination. By purifying the mind, speech and body, by disciplining himself, he received enlightenment and enlightened infinite sentient beings. Just as he did, we're all capable of receiving enlightenment for the sake of other sentient beings. Only wishing for myself to be released from samsaric sufferings is very selfish, ungenerous. That is not sufficient. The sentient beings are the field from where I receive all my past, present and future perfections and happiness—even the precious happiness of enlightenment, the ultimate happiness, and even the samsaric happiness.”

Sentient beings are our principal helpers at the beginning, in the middle and even at the end of our Dharma practice. At the beginning, by the kindness of the sentient beings we receive the chance to practice Dharma. By the kindness of the sentient beings we are able to carry on the practice of Dharma, following the practice. Even at the end, by the kindness of other sentient beings we receive enlightenment.

How wonderful it would be if all the mother sentient beings were to abide in equanimity, free from attachment and hatred which discriminates between foe and friend.
May they abide in equanimity.

I myself will cause them to abide in equanimity.
Please, Guru Buddha, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

How wonderful it would be if all the mother sentient beings were to receive all happiness
and the causes of happiness.
May they receive all happiness.
I myself will cause them receive this.
Please, Guru Buddha, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

How wonderful it would be if all the sentient beings were free from suffering and the causes
of suffering.
May they be free from all suffering and its causes.
I myself will cause them to be free.
Please, Guru Buddha, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

How wonderful it would be if all the mother sentient beings were never separated from the
happiness of the upper realms and the holy peace and happiness of nirvana.
May they never be separated from this happiness.
I myself will cause them never to be separated from this.
Please, Guru Buddha, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

Think: “To enlighten all these mother sentient beings as quickly as possible, I must achieve
enlightenment first. Achieving enlightenment depends on disciplining the body and speech, and that
depends on disciplining the mind. Therefore I’m going to keep the ordination until tomorrow
sunrise.”

Then you visualize the person who grants the ordination in the aspect of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha,
as a real living Shakyamuni Buddha, surrounded by infinite other buddhas. Then with this
visualization you repeat the prayer.

[Ordination prayer]

Think: “Just as the previous tathagatas, the holy beings, followed the precepts, I’m going to observe
the precepts until tomorrow sunrise.”

In the depths of your mind, think: “With all my effort I will benefit other sentient beings, in order to
cause all sentient beings to be released from suffering. For that reason I am going to observe the
precepts.” Feel this in your heart. Then repeat this prayer.

[Prayer repetition]

Think: “Just as the past, present and future buddhas dedicated their merits, in the same way, for the
same reason, I will dedicate the merits of taking the ordination.”

Also think: “Due to the past merits, present merits and future merits of taking the ordination, may I
quickly receive the enlightened stage of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and lead all sentient beings into
this enlightened stage.” Completely dedicate from the heart.

During the whole day, since the ordination has been taken, as much as possible, frequently, during the whole day, especially at break times, it is necessary for the mind to always be aware of the eight precepts. If you're always aware of your responsibility to keep the precepts for the sake of all the mother sentient beings; if you're aware and feel it all the time, then your precepts won't get broken. If you're not aware, because of previous habits and the mind being unconscious, not well-trained, the precepts are easily broken.

Therefore, it is necessary to think all the time, when you see people or animals, whatever you see, even those you don't see, always remember this:

“I'm keeping these precepts for each of the sentient beings—all the animal creatures, insect creatures, each of the sentient beings—to release each of them from suffering and for them to receive enlightenment.”

Try to feel some responsibility. Try to feel that you are doing something for the sentient beings, some practical, really useful, beneficial thing for the sentient beings. This includes your parents, your relatives, your best friends, your enemies, everyone. Helping sentient beings equally in a practical way, which really benefits others, is much better than giving them clothes and food and trying to talk in a samsaric way. This is a really beneficial way of helping them and it really brings peace. Try to feel the responsibility, what we have to do for the sentient beings. If you think “I am doing this for the sentient beings,” then you feel you are doing some heavy thing. Also in that way you take much more care of the precepts and they don't get so easily broken. Otherwise they are easily broken, by being unconscious. Like this.

If you think like this as you go through the ordination, with bodhicitta, as the number of sentient beings is infinite so the benefit of keeping precepts for one day is also infinite—infinite in its knowledge, infinite in its teaching. Also keep in the mind the benefits of keeping the precepts. Then think of this when mind gets tired or things like that.

Lecture 18

From the holy speech of the great bodhisattva Shantideva:

[1:14] Just like the fire at the end of an age,
It instantly consumes all great wrongdoing.
Its unfathomable advantages were taught
To the disciple Sudhana by the wise Lord Maitreya.

“Just like the fire of the end of time destroys the great negativities in one second” Shantideva is explaining in this verse that, just like the fire at the end of time—that means when the whole world, the earth, the planets, the stars and moons, even Mt. Meru [are destroyed]—anyway that subject involves the explanation of the mandala, which comes at the beginning part of the purifying methods, the several different purifying methods. That contains the explanation.

The idea of Mt. Meru and the different continents can be understood from the explanation of the mandala offering, the visualization. The greatest mountain is Mt. Meru, which is a formation of jewels and has different categories of samsaric gods on each level. Mt. Meru has four levels; the gods of desire or the gods of the senses are situated on various levels. On the top of Mt. Meru there is the realm of the gods, and right on the top there is the king of their realm, the king of the gods of the senses. And in the center is the palace of the king.

When the whole of the universe ends, a place like this, one universe—twenty-four continents, Mt. Meru and the ocean around—will all be destroyed by fire. It will be the end of the time of the world existing. The whole thing, even Mt. Meru, will be burned, will be destroyed by the fire of the end of time. This is also the result of karma—the length of the karma to enjoy the existence of such a universe is finished. Because of karma, it is also a creation of human beings; the world is also a creation of sentient beings, of mind.

However, just as the fire of the end of time is extremely powerful to burn and destroy everything in a second—even something as high as Mt. Meru, which is usually difficult to destroy, gets burned by fire—so is bodhicitta. The example is trying to show how bodhicitta is extremely powerful, extremely quick to destroy negativities. Bodhicitta can destroy even heavy, great negativities that are the cause of being born in the suffering realms. Just in a second, without taking eons, without taking even years, without taking even days, without taking any length of time—in just a second, bodhicitta has the power to completely destroy, to completely burn all these heavy negative karmas.

The incredible, unimaginable benefits of bodhicitta are explained by the knowledgeable Buddha Maitreya to the bodhisattva Norsang. There are also very long stories of these bodhisattvas, how they practice Dharma, how they dedicate life for other sentient beings, how they follow the guru, and there are very interesting, fantastic stories of how they practice Dharma. There are many, many thousands of pages of texts that explain their lives, their practice and their holy deeds.

Also, as the Buddha said in his sutra teachings, bodhicitta is like the seed of all the buddhas' realizations, all the buddhas' Dharma. Dharma means all their realizations, all their knowledge. Bodhicitta is like the field from where all the sentient beings' white dharma increases. White dharma is easy to understand since we talked for a long time about the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the black dharmas. White dharma means any action that is virtuous.

Bodhicitta is like a wish-fulfilling pot. There are things like this. Also there are certain powers to attain through certain techniques, by doing meditation, through certain paths; it's not so much a physical thing but a kind of meditation technique. Somehow, through this particular power, you put your mouth inside the pot, the vessel, and whatever you ask for—whatever works you want to be successful, whatever material you need, anything—after obtaining the technique, this meditation, this power, then you ask loudly by putting your mouth in this vessel, the pot. Then without effort somehow you easily receive whatever material thing you need, whatever success should be fulfilled. So it's called the wish-fulfilling pot. Bodhicitta is like this example, a wish-fulfilling pot which brings all success.

Bodhicitta is also like the earth. The earth is the base on which all the human beings and also non-human beings live. Also houses and many other things are situated on the earth, and other good things such as plants and mountains and many more things are situated on the earth. Just like this, bodhicitta is the foundation from where every perfection and happiness arises.

It is also the method, the tool or weapon to destroy the inner enemy, that which prevents our peace and happiness, all the happiness. Just as, for example, an atom bomb is a sure way to destroy; similarly bodhicitta is very powerful to destroy the inner enemy.

However, this time, as we have received the perfect human rebirth, we have met the teachings which definitely lead to enlightenment and we have a little bit understanding of the benefits of bodhicitta, as we have gone through all those examples—without wasting or losing the precious chance, it is necessary to train the mind in this path as much as possible.

Also at this present time, we must make sure the action of listening to Dharma is the principal cause of receiving enlightenment. That is also by cultivating the pure motivation of bodhicitta. So this is the thing.

“It is not enough that I release myself from samsaric suffering; there are numberless other sentient beings who are in suffering, not having wisdom, not having guidance. In order to enlighten them, to release them from suffering, I must achieve enlightenment first. Therefore, I must complete the whole progression of the graduated path to enlightenment. Therefore I’m going to listen to the profound teaching of the commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The subject is the Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate ones to enlightenment and is well-expounded by the great philosophers Nagarjuna and Asanga. This profound teaching is the essence of the knowledge of the great Atisha and the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa. It contains the eightfold path shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, and all this is arranged for the graduated practice of our achievement of enlightenment. This graduated path is the only path through which all the buddhas received enlightenment.

This commentary on the graduated path to enlightenment has four outlines. The last one is how to lead the disciple on the path to enlightenment by showing the actual teachings, the oral teachings. That has two outlines: the last one is how to follow the guru, the root of the path, and how to train the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment. That has two outlines: the last one is how to take the essence of the perfect human rebirth. That is divided into three:

1. The graduated path of the lower capable being and the general path.

It says “general path” because even though bodhicitta and such things as how to help samsaric beings who are living in the nature of suffering, all these things are actually found in the graduated paths of the middle capable being and the higher capable being—even though they come gradually like this, the meditation practices of the graduated paths of the lower capable being and middle capable being are done with the pure motivation of bodhicitta and with the understanding of the general samsaric suffering. The practices are done with the understanding that all samsaric realms are in suffering and are living in ignorance, therefore it’s called “general.” Therefore the graduated paths of the lower and middle capable beings are called “that which is conjoined with the general path.”

Although the subjects are set out like this, doing the practice in such a way is the recognized skillful method, because practicing in such a way—even though the actual meditation is the perfect human birth and those things, the graduated path of the lower capable being—it is done with the motivation of bodhicitta and with real understanding of how samsara is in the nature of suffering. In

this way, even though the subject we're training our mind in at the beginning is the practice of the lower capable being, it becomes the cause of receiving enlightenment. All the practices are done with the understanding of how samsara has a suffering nature, with the thought that the whole of samsara is in the nature of suffering and with the pure motivation of bodhicitta. With this understanding, all the practices, all this training becomes the cause of receiving enlightenment. All these methods, all these practices, even the practices of the beginning meditations become Mahayana Dharma.

The graduated path of the lower capable being and general has two outlines: the last one is following the method that brings happiness of future lives. How to follow the method which brings happiness, which brings perfection of all the happiness of future lives? What are the methods? The fundamental thing, the root of the method is refuge, going for refuge, which is the door of the teachings, and having devotion to karma, which is the root of all the perfection and happiness.

Why does the part of refuge come here, especially at this point, after the suffering of the lower realms? It's like this. Not only in this lifetime but for numberless previous lifetimes we've been collecting so many negative karmas, which have caused us to be reborn in the suffering realms. Our life is not permanent, it is impermanent, it is definitely going to end and its actual time is indefinite. What happens, death comes after that, and where we will be born, in which realm we will be reborn is according to karma. It's up to the karma. Wherever karma leads us, we have to be born in that realm. We, the ordinary beings who are not free from karma, have to follow our karma.

Guru Tsongkhapa said in his teaching, [*The Foundation of All Good Qualities*],

This body and life are changing, like a water bubble;
Remember how quickly they perish and death comes.
After death, just like a shadow follows the body,
The results of black and white karma follow.

As Guru Tsongkhapa said in his teaching, after death we have to follow the positive and negative karmas just as the shadow always follows wherever the body goes. We ordinary people who are not free of karma, we and karma are like this. We always follow karma. Karma always leads us, just as the police lead the criminal, putting them in chains and leading them to the court or to prison, to be punished or killed. Like this, karma and ourselves always go together. Also, we always experience our life problems without choice. Therefore, after death, because we follow our karma, we are not free from karma, so it's more definite we will be reborn in the suffering realms. If that is so, if that is what is going to happen, then what should we do now? Is there any method to stop this happening? To stop this danger of being born in suffering realms and having to experience the sufferings without choice—is there a way to stop this?

Of course, as soon as we notice this, we want to do something before our death. We have to make a decision not to fall into the precipice of the suffering realms. We have to do something. So what's the method? What is the fundamental, essential method which can really guide us, which can definitely save us, which can definitely guide us from this danger of falling over the precipice, like being on the mountains or rocks where there is a danger of falling down?

So, then comes refuge. The answer for that person comes—refuge and karma. The purpose of the relationship, why karma comes after refuge, will come later, after I've finished explaining refuge. Therefore refuge is necessary. The essential method is refuge, going for refuge.

The outline, why we need to take refuge, which is the holy door of the teaching, the explanation of that part we will have afterwards, the part of the explanation of the benefits of refuge.

However, taking refuge, this method is the fundamental and utmost necessity, the most important, extremely important thing. For instance, similarly talking, the people who lost their countries, because they're homeless and don't have anything to live on, they're living in danger. As they have problems, since they dislike it, in order to get out of that, to not suffer that, they have to take refuge in someone. They have to take refuge in another country which has the material power to help them with food and clothing, etc., in a material way.

Same thing when someone has broken the law and has done some criminal action, such as fighting or killing some other person or something, because of the danger that is the result of that action, which is caused by that action, because of that great danger they have to take refuge in someone. Usually, that person takes refuge in someone; they seek refuge because of the problems they are going to experience in the future. To avoid that, as they do not desire it, they have to seek a refuge. They have to find the object, a proper person, an important person who has the method, who has the power to release them from that danger, to save them from that danger. They have to find some top person who has power in the government or something like that.

Even for temporal needs, even just for the comfort of this temporal life, even for this we have to seek refuge. We need guidance. We have to rely on someone, you see. So, why not? Of course we have to seek refuge, because there's such a great danger and we want to avoid falling into that great danger, the precipice of the three suffering lower realms. We are seeking refuge from this greater danger, the greater suffering, which lasts for such a long time. If we are seeking refuge for temporal life comforts, to be free from temporal problems, if we are seeking refuge from this, it is silly, it is foolish. It is foolish, it's being ignorant. There's no logic to prove that we don't have to seek refuge to avoid being born in the suffering realms. But if we seek refuge for temporal life comfort, it's just ignorant if we don't know and don't seek refuge from this greater suffering.

Also, it is extremely necessary to seek refuge in order to escape from the prison of samsara, the reason we are bound, and what we are bound by—karma. To be released from such a samsaric prison it is extremely necessary for us to take refuge, in order to not fall into this danger of suffering and the lower realms and so we can escape from the samsaric prison.

There are countries, people and animals which are materially powerful; matter such as planets, the sun, moon, trees, rocks, and even those samsaric gods who are naturally incredibly rich and powerful. However, those samsaric beings, who are not free of karma, do not have the power to save us from being reborn in the suffering realms. They are not sure where they will be reborn and they are not even able to guide or save themselves from being born in the suffering realms; they do not have the power. Objects such as stars, rocks, trees or water are also the wrong objects to take refuge in.

Even with regard to beings, besides materially powerful people, even if those beings are very powerful in black magic and are able to kill others, to destroy other people, to kill hundreds and hundreds of people through black magic. Even if they have the power to tell the future or past things, having certain power to foretell, you know. Like having power to make objects move—there

are people who have limited power like that. They are not perfected, not completely perfect in all the powers but they have certain common, ordinary powers.

Even those higher samsaric gods who are extremely powerful and also the many spirits who have similar power to foretell, to give material help, who can help in a material way in this life. For example, if you want to make your business successful, if you want to have a lot of money, if you want to get a certain position, there are many spirits to rely on for help, whatever business, whatever material is needed, without much effort you can easily get it. There are many spirits like this, and if you want the spirit to go to other people, something like that, you rely on it. Or if you ask it, then it will kill other people.

Besides people, there are many powerful spirits like this. Even though they have such power, they themselves are not free of karma, they are not free of delusion, not free of samsara. There are also spirits that by relying on them, by making request to them, they have power to predict the future, things like this. However, since they are not free of samsara and karma, even they can't save themselves from being reborn in the suffering realms. These are the wrong objects in whom to take refuge, to take lifetime refuge, to take refuge forever. These are the wrong objects and are not completed in all powers like the Buddha. They are not free of karma and they have not achieved full realization of the absolute nature. Ordinary beings such as these, even though they have these ordinary powers which can help materially, giving temporal help, cannot be a worthy object of taking refuge.

The only worthy object in which we can have refuge, which never betrays us, which never becomes the cause of suffering and which always brings perfection and ultimate happiness, besides temporal happiness, is the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; going for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

How pure our refuge is, how strongly we are taking refuge, depends on having the causes of refuge.

According to the outlines of refuge, we are taking refuge by depending on what cause? Taking refuge in what object? The definition, how much we are taking refuge, then the precepts of refuge, the instructions in the precepts of refuge, then the benefits of taking the refuge. They are the outlines.

In order to take refuge, the very first thing is that our mind has to be qualified. Taking refuge does not mean just saying the refuge prayer, which contains the explanation of refuge, the objective of refuge, saying "I'm taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha." Even though the prayer we say contains this, it does not mean we're taking refuge. It's just all words. Even the tape recorder, even machines, if we record the prayer, machines can also repeat that. I mean, the refuge prayer comes out of the tape—that doesn't mean the tape is taking refuge! If it does not depend on having certain qualifications, knowledge in the person's mind, then something such as a tape recorder or even a parrot can repeat the refuge prayer. It does not mean that parrot is having refuge in their mind. It does not mean this.

The qualification that is necessary to have in the mind is the cause of taking refuge. What is the cause of refuge? There are several outlines. Taking refuge depends on what cause? There are two causes: the fear that comes from understanding the suffering of the lower realms and the general samsaric realms. Having aversion, not wanting to experience these sufferings—that is one cause. The second cause is having trusting devotion that Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the power to

save us from the suffering of the three lower realms and the general samsaric sufferings. These are the causes of refuge.

Actually, whether we are taking refuge or not, whether we have refuge or not, is defined by whether our mind is qualified or unqualified, whether our mind contains these two causes. This is the answer to whether we are taking refuge or not. If we have these two causes in the mind, then even though we don't say a prayer of refuge, nothing, since we have these two causes, we have refuge, we are taking refuge.

We should check up what's in our mind, checking if our mind is qualified in these two causes needed to take refuge. For instance, having aversion to the general suffering realms and the three lower realms depends on how strong our aversion is, how strong our fear is, and that depends on how deeply we understand these sufferings. By checking, if we discover our mind is empty of aversion, that we don't have any aversion to samsara, we don't have the thought of renouncing the sufferings of samsara and the sufferings of the three lower realms, then we should try to understand the nature of the suffering realms as much as possible. This is the method.

We also need to have trust and devotion that the powers of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha can save us from these sufferings. Receiving this trust and devotion depends on understanding the knowledge of Buddha, and it depends on how much understanding of the power of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha we have. Taking refuge by depending on the cause is like this.

Now, taking refuge in the object has two outlines: the object of refuge and the reasons why it is worthy of taking refuge. The objects of refuge are Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

The manifestations of transformation nature are the relative Buddha, and the omniscient mind, the dharmakaya, is the absolute Buddha. The holy mind of all the buddhas is the absolute Buddha.

Dharma has absolute Dharma and relative Dharma. The absolute Dharma is the actual Dharma—the wisdom that fully sees the absolute nature, and the cessation of suffering which is received by the wisdom fully seeing the absolute nature. These two are absolute Dharma, in which we can take refuge. The relative Dharma is the teachings that explain the path—those realizations or ways that cause us to achieve absolute Dharma, that cause us to achieve ultimate happiness and enlightenment. The teachings achieve this by explaining the nature of samsara, thus ending all wrong conceptions by explaining the path, by giving knowledge, explaining those different goals.

Sangha also has absolute Sangha and relative Sangha. Absolute Sangha are those who have the wisdom of the absolute Dharma, who have achievement of the absolute Dharma, the wisdom fully seeing absolute nature. That is absolute Sangha. The absolute Sangha are those who have that level of mind, who have that realization. That is the absolute Sangha. This absolute Sangha doesn't always depend on having robes. This absolute realization, any man or woman, any lay person who has achievement of this realization, the wisdom of absolute Dharma, the wisdom of fully seeing absolute nature—even if they are a lay person, they are absolute Sangha.

Relative Sangha is usually a group of four ordinary monks or nuns who have not achieved this realization, this level of mind. Usually when there's a group of four monks [or nuns] they are called Sangha. Then they can be called Sangha, then they become Sangha. But if the monk or nun has the realization, the wisdom fully seeing the absolute nature, then just that one person is Sangha. Even if

there are not three other persons, monks or nuns, if one monk or nun has this realization, they are Sangha.

This is just briefly the recognition of the different objects, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Then there's the object of refuge, how it is worthy of taking refuge, how Buddha is a worthy object of taking refuge. The reason he can guide us sentient beings from suffering, why Buddha is worthy of taking refuge is because he himself is released from all the fears, from all the sufferings.

We are not taking refuge in a being who is not released from all the fear and suffering, who doesn't have the power to guide us, to save us from all the samsaric sufferings. For instance, if we fall into a quagmire, a muddy place, and then we take refuge or ask another person who is also in a quagmire, who also got stuck inside—if we ask for help from someone who is also drowning, that person can't even help themselves get out of that problem. If we ask someone who is also living with the same problem, no matter how much we believe in and trust them, they can't help us because they are not released from that problem, they are not free. They themselves are not free. Just like this, the person we ask for help should be someone who has the power to save us. Like this, the Buddha is a worthwhile object to take refuge in because he himself is released from all fears and sufferings.

For instance, in previous times there were many stories of how Guru Shakyamuni was indestructible, so not a thing could harm him. However much other evil beings wanted to destroy him, wanted to kill him, wanted to wound him, no matter how much they tried, they couldn't do anything. For instance, when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was meditating and was close to receiving enlightenment, all the evil spirits, the *maras*, many hundreds of thousands of maras tried to destroy him.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was going to be enlightened the next morning around dawn time, and the king of the maras discovered this. Using his power, he discovered this and he thought, "If Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gets enlightened, he'll control all of us, we won't have any power. Therefore, before he receives enlightenment we must destroy him." So they all gathered, many thousands and thousands of maras gathered, thinking Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was going to be enlightened the next day, so they tried to destroy him through many different methods that day. They tried through many different means, such as making the whole area flooded, full of water; then very heavy storms came, so it was completely black, full of foggy, dark clouds; and they sent so much lightning, so much thunder, the sky was full of thunderbolts dropping, falling down. They tried in so many ways, just wishing to destroy him.

The example is usually painted in thangkas. This is because one of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's actions before receiving enlightenment is controlling the maras. There are twelve deeds, they're translated as "events" or something, like that, twelve deeds. Some maras tried to shoot in many different ways, with many different weapons, shooting arrows and bullets and all kinds of things, such as throwing thunderbolts. They tried in many ways and those maras manifested in the most fearful way that they can appear, with some appearing like mountains, carrying all kinds of different weapons and trying to destroy Guru Shakyamuni Buddha while he was in concentration.

No matter how much they threw weapons and shot at him, all became flowers. Instead of making wounds, nothing, no harm, all became flowers, like offering flowers. When they came near Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, all these things became flowers. So they couldn't do anything. However much

they tried to destroy him in a fearful way, they couldn't do anything. They couldn't disturb his concentration.

Since they couldn't do anything like that, they had an idea: maybe if they manifested as very beautiful attractive ladies, dancing like this, doing things, maybe that, instead of throwing weapons and trying to destroy him by use of weapons and things like this, maybe through this they could destroy his concentration. So they manifested as old women, and young women without clothes on, without dresses, showing their sex, trying to disturb his concentration so that they could give harm. They tried many ways dancing like this, trying to give harm to him, but no matter how much they tried in a peaceful way or in a wrathful way, they couldn't disturb his concentration at all. Without making even one little movement of his body, even though all these thousands and thousands of maras were trying to destroy him, without making even a little movement of his holy body, just only through his great love he completely controlled them, without needing to use even one weapon, without needing to use even one action to give harm.

What ordinary people would do is harm back, take revenge, but Guru Shakyamuni Buddha only had love for them. No matter how much they tried to destroy him in different ways, he controlled them by only his infinite love. So afterwards they couldn't do anything and then they changed their minds. Then they really discovered that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has such incredible compassion and love and that changed their minds. By not harming back and by his mind not being moved, his concentration was unshakable and it could not be destroyed by anything, not even by them manifesting as women, because he had no such problem, he had not one single atom of attachment. Before that, for a long time he was completely renounced and his attachment was completely removed, there was no problem of attachment.

So all the maras got a great surprise, then they really got devotion after they saw his powers and his great compassion. Then they had deep devotion for Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and they took teachings from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha.

This is one example of how Shakyamuni Buddha himself was released from all fears and suffering.

I think I'll stop here.

Lecture 19

... which shows the Buddha is a worthwhile object to take for refuge. It explains how the Buddha has the power to guide the sentient beings from sufferings. The reason explains the knowledge and the power that he has.

The Buddha is a worthwhile object of refuge because Buddha himself is released from all suffering and fears. For instance, in the example we talked about in the morning, he fought thousands and thousands of maras only with his pure thought, love, the great Mahayana love. Just even thinking of this, it's unbelievable, it's unbelievable. The highest person in the world, such as the king, no matter if their position is of the highest rank, it is nothing compared to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's knowledge. No matter how much material power, even the whole world, even the whole universe,

all the material power of countries, all the weapons, all the different countries' material power—there's nothing to compare with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's mind, the power of his pure thought, nothing to compare.

In the world, even those who are recognized as very knowledgeable and very powerful, who have a higher rank, instead of having pure thoughts and controlling others or subduing their enemies through the power of love, they have anger and pride and other negative minds arising, and then they harm others. So, it's completely the opposite action.

There are so many other stories and examples from previous times. Ajatashatru always competed with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, all the time. He tried to give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and to stop him in many different ways. When Guru Shakyamuni Buddha did something, Ajatashatru was always competing. One day this Ajatashatru—who actually was a king who had murdered his own father—sent a mad elephant, a very crazy elephant, while Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and hundreds and thousands of his disciples, those who also had high psychic powers, many arhats, were coming to beg in the village. This king, who was recognized as the evil king Ajatashatru, sent a crazy elephant from the field onto the road. This crazy elephant ran and killed many people and made much damage.

As they were coming to beg in the town, carrying bowls, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples, who were arhats, who had very high psychic powers, couldn't stand the crazy elephant, so they all flew into space! They all flew into space! Only Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was left on the road. The king aimed to destroy, to harm, to kill Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, something like this. However, the crazy elephant, the foolish animal couldn't give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha at all. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha had no fear, not a single fear. All the rest, those arhats, the other followers who had very high powers, all flew away. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha had not one single fear of the crazy animal.

Instead of the crazy elephant giving harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, when in the presence of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha he could not do anything, his rage completely subsided and he gave respect to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who has such incredible powers and understanding to guide the sentient beings, subdued the crazy elephant and explained the teachings. Although this king tried to give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha in many ways he couldn't harm him.

There was not one single fear. There was one person called Angulimala, he was the person in previous stories who killed 999 people, almost one thousand, except for one person. Except for one person it would have become one thousand! During the time of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, he was one person who was recognized as a very evil person. So, this person called Angulimala was trying to give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was going to make holy works for sentient beings, when he was begging. But even though Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was going so slowly, so slowly, and Angulimala was trying to run so fast, however fast he tried to run, he never reached close enough to give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. He was running so fast but somehow he didn't reach even though Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was walking so slowly, not so fast, just there in front. So afterwards, he asked Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, "Why is it that I run to give harm, but no matter how much I try to run so fast, I never catch you? What caused it?" Afterwards he asked Guru Shakyamuni Buddha this.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has incredible powers and cannot be given harm by evil sentient beings. Also one benefactor invited Guru Shakyamuni Buddha to his home, actually not with pure thought but in order to give harm, to destroy Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The family arranged to give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples, so before inviting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha they made holes in front of their door. Where there was a path to enter the house, they dug many very deep holes. They filled the holes with hot coals and the big holes were covered with dust on the surface, so that when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha walked there he would fall down. This was what they were expecting.

So they invited Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who accepted the invitation. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples were coming on that day and beforehand Guru Shakyamuni Buddha had told his disciples he would go first. The families who invited Guru Shakyamuni Buddha were thinking that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha didn't know anything, because that was the way they saw Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, their mind projection. They didn't see Guru Shakyamuni Buddha as enlightened, as he has complete power of the knowledge of omniscient mind. They saw him as an ordinary person who didn't know, so they invited him with the projection that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha would fall in the hole with the fire. Of course there was no problem for Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, he clearly sees, he's a holy being who sees all past, present and future. He has no problem seeing any existence.

So they were coming and when they were near the house, before walking on this road, underneath which there was a hole and fire, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha told his disciples that he would go first. As Guru Shakyamuni walked on this path, on each step, instead of falling in this hole on the path covered by dust, on that road, there were lotuses appearing as he was taking steps. He took steps on the lotuses. Just as there are lotuses on the water, like this, lotuses appeared and he walked on the lotuses instead of experiencing the suffering of falling down in the fire. Then all his disciples came and walked on the lotuses. They also walked on lotuses. So that family couldn't give harm, anything.

The family also planned to offer food to give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciples, so they put poison in the food. They thought Guru Shakyamuni Buddha wouldn't know, wouldn't discover the food contained poison, because they believed exactly as they saw Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. They offered the food that had the poison in it. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha told his disciples that he would start eating food first. Before he ate, he told his disciples not to eat the food. Then he started to eat the food and he took the food. Of course, as he took the food, nothing happened. There was no danger like ordinary people experience when they take poisonous food or poisonous liquid or something, and all of a sudden they get sick and it causes danger of life. But it is never like this for Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, there are no such problems. There is nothing, and even giving poison cannot harm Guru Shakyamuni Buddha.

For Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, because of the power of his holy mind the poison becomes medicine. He doesn't become poisoned. For him it's not poison, it is medicine. It is medicine that only increases the great bliss, which he has received by purifying dualistic wrong conceptions. For Guru Shakyamuni Buddha there's no such thing as impurities. Even if someone offers kaka or any dirty things, for him it is not dirty. For his senses, for his holy mind, it's not dirty. There's no such thing as "dirty" existing for his senses. Ugly things, there's no such thing existing. Even people offering presents, even kaka or however dirty it is, from the side of Shakyamuni Buddha it is absolute nature, which only increases the transcendental bliss, instead of causing danger in a physical

sense. There are no such problems, they're never existing. Because of these reasons, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is released from all sufferings, from all these fears and sufferings.

After Guru Shakyamuni Buddha took that person's food, then all his disciples took it also, but nothing happened. Nothing happened because of his powers, and also because of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's blessings. Due to his powers, nothing happened even to his followers. So, after nothing happened, no problem, nothing, the family got a big surprise. First of all, they tried to give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha by making a fireplace in the road and they couldn't do anything, and secondly, they offered poisonous food. They didn't give him any danger, nothing happened, so they got a big surprise. Then they really felt upset after doing such negative actions. They really got a big shock. Then they explained to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha that they were poor people. They felt great repentance after doing the negative actions, so they confessed to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who also gave them teachings.

There are many life stories of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha like this. However other sentient beings tried to give harm, nothing happened. The whole reason why no weapons, nothing, no other sentient beings could give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body is because his holy body, as I described before, is indestructible, the vajra holy body. The main thing is there's not one single delusion, not one single illusion, nothing existing, no impurities, they're completely finished. Because of the achievement of complete cessation of all the delusions, nothing can give harm, no one can destroy him.

Also, there was this Ajatashutra, the one who tried to send the crazy elephant to give harm to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, who always competed with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha whenever he did something. One time Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was taking medicines, very, very powerful medicines that no one else could take. If other people took this medicine, the pills, they would die or get sick. Such powerful medicine, very, very powerful medicine; no one could take it. So sometimes Guru Shakyamuni Buddha [shows the aspect of sickness], to show to other sentient beings, for the benefit of other sentient beings, even though he's free from samsara, free from the cause of sickness, he doesn't have to experience any sickness, not even one single pain, nothing, there's no problem.

He is completely out of samsara, therefore, even just because of this reason, there's no such thing as pain, sickness or disease, any kind of sickness, but if it benefits other sentient beings he sometimes take the aspect, he takes the form of having sickness. In other words, sort of pretending, in the ordinary way of talking, sort of pretending! Just as a person who is not really sick pretends that he's sick. Sort of like this. Sometimes, for the benefit of the sentient beings, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha takes the form, shows actions such as having sickness.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha took this very, very powerful medicine, which was also very expensive. It was so powerful that no one could take it. This Ajatashutra, who always tried to compete, who always tried to think he had the same power as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, tried to take this medicine.

[Break in transcript]

[Story of the king who was very proud of his musical talent] ... then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha came to the king's palace while he was playing the violin in his room. The king was sort of

intoxicated, his mind was so concentrated, intoxicated by the sound of music, thinking that he was the expert. However, while he was playing the music all of a sudden from outside he heard a fantastic sound of violin. He thought, “Oh, there’s a person who can play better than me.” He was kind of shocked to discover this and he came out to see who the person was. He came to check up.

When he came down there was a beggar, a very simple person, playing the violin—such a fantastic melody, with all different kinds of tunes, but when the king came out to get that beggar’s violin, it had only one string! There were no other strings—usually there are many strings but it did not have them, it had only one string and the beggar could produce every kind of tune. And that was more fantastic, sweeter than what the king was playing before, sweeter than his playing. So, the king’s ego pride was smashed! He got a big surprise and then his pride was subdued; such heavy pride was subdued, controlled by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha doing this action, the holy deed. He manifested as a beggar and then played the violin in such a beautiful way.

After the king’s mind was subdued, he invited the Buddha to come to [his room], then as the time was ready, afterwards he became Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s disciple. Then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gave teachings to him.

Like this, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is not only highly skillful in method, understanding the different methods that suit the different sentient beings, who have different personalities and different problems of mind. Also Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is very skillful in knowing the right time—the right times to control the mind, to give teachings, to show the different methods, the right times.

If the time is not right, for instance, if a person is not ready and it’s not the right time, then there are many problems. No matter how much you try, the method doesn’t work for the other person. The method doesn’t benefit, it doesn’t work for that person. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has such incredible understanding of different methods and the right time; not only knowing different methods and the right time for one sentient being, but for infinite sentient beings.

I think the meditation, what should be done next time, is the meditation on the refuge. Do the same visualization as before of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. After you have visualized Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, first of all you do the checking meditation on refuge, going through the outline. After you have visualized Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, then you can think ... I think it’s better to repeat it afterwards, this mind of motivation, but it is very useful to think in this way. Whenever we do meditation on refuge, doing purification with the refuge meditation, with the refuge objects, it is useful to remember the general samsaric sufferings. Generally, remember how samsara is in the nature of suffering, how it is, and then particularly the three suffering lower realms and how we have experienced that in beginningless lifetimes. We have experienced that numberless times in beginningless lifetimes. Try to understand, try to feel this.

Think: “This time, while I have received the perfect human rebirth and have met the precious teachings of the Buddha, if I don’t try to be released from all these sufferings, if I don’t try this time, definitely I will be born again in the suffering realms and continuously, endlessly suffer in samsara. Therefore, to be able to do like this, who has the perfect power?”

[Break in transcript]

Generally, negative karma is created either by depending on the sentient beings or by depending on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We create negative karma like this, either by depending on other sentient beings or by depending on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. So, making purification through refuge is very powerful, very, very powerful. It's very, very helpful to purify all the negative karmas that have been created from beginningless previous lifetimes. It is very, very helpful for the mind, so healthy.

When you recite *La ma la kyab su chi o* that means taking refuge in the guru. This subject is very deep, very deep, something that can be explained for a long time, it's very deep.

So, the manifestation we should visualize is Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Think the essence of all the buddhas is manifesting in Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, then take refuge in the guru, *La ma la kyab su chi o*. Then it's repeated—first of all visualize white light purifying and secondly the yellow light, which is the wisdom light, the light of knowledge. The yellow light is coming and you receive the knowledge of the gurus. Visualize the white light as usual, purifying white light, purifying all the negativities that have been created by depending on the Buddha, then second time, you receive the knowledge light, the yellow light, the knowledge of the Buddha.

Then *Chö la kyab su chi o*, “I take refuge in the Dharma.” *Chö la kyab su chi o* means taking refuge to the Dharma. *Chö* means Dharma; *kyab su chi o* means taking refuge, or going for refuge. “I go for refuge to the Dharma.”

At that time, maybe you can visualize texts at the side and in the front of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. When you say, “I go for refuge to Dharma” all his realizations manifest in the letters, in the form of texts. All the letters are formation of light. All the letters are radiating and making their own sound, which can be heard. Each letter makes its own sound. So all Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's realizations become manifest in the form of letters, in the form of texts, holy literature, and light is coming. Again visualize light. First of all visualize white light purifying all the karma that has been created by depending on Dharma; second time, you are receiving the knowledge of Dharma with the yellow light. You can visualize light coming from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and from the texts.

Then, *Gen diin la kyab su chi o*, “I go to refuge to Sangha.” This time you visualize the same thing, first of all the purifying white light, purifying the negative karma that has been created by depending on the Sangha, then the yellow light, the light of knowledge.

You can repeat this refuge prayer:

La ma la kyab su chi o
Sang gyä la kyab su chi o
Chö la kyab su chi o
Gen diin la kyab su chi o

[Chanting]

Yes, maybe repeat just one time.

PRECEPTS 5

Besides the action of taking ordination becoming Dharma, we need the pure thought, a similar thought to bodhicitta, for this action to become the cause of receiving enlightenment.

“From beginningless time I have been suffering in samsara and I have been circling around in the samsaric realms numberless times, particularly in the suffering lower realms. I have always been suffering by being bound in samsara. What caused all my past samsaric suffering? All these sufferings were caused by the wrong conception, the evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the wrong conception of self, I, and the wrong conception of the self-cherishing thought. If I continue to follow these wrong conceptions, I will suffer endlessly in samsara.

“Only releasing myself from samsara is not sufficient, there are also numberless other beings who are extremely suffering. At the moment their suffering is greater than mine. They are the field from where I receive all my past, present and future happiness, all perfections, including the ultimate happiness, enlightenment. They are of the utmost need at the beginning of Dharma practice, even in the middle and even at the end. They are extremely kind. Therefore, I should help all the mother sentient beings attain the causes of happiness, for them to have all the happiness and to be devoid of all the suffering and its causes, as quickly as possible.

“Actually I feel their suffering is unbearable, therefore I must quickly free all sentient beings from suffering and lead them to enlightenment. To do this, I must achieve enlightenment first, so therefore, I’m going to take the ordination until tomorrow sunrise.”

Visualize the person granting the ordination as the manifestation of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, surrounded by numberless other buddhas and bodhisattvas, and repeat the prayer.

PRECEPTS 6

Besides the action of taking the ordination becoming Dharma, it is necessary for it to become the cause of receiving enlightenment. Therefore, it is necessary to do even a short motivation, like this:

“The evil thought of the worldly dharmas, the wrong conception of the self, the self-cherishing thought, has obliged me to create the cause to experience the general samsaric suffering and particularly the sufferings of the three lower realms numberless times from beginningless lifetimes.”

As these wrong conceptions have been obliging us to create negative karma numberless times, it is definite that we will have to experience the suffering result in the lower realms again and again, a great number of times. As long as we follow these wrong conceptions, we will have to endlessly suffer in samsara. If we think of these situations, these hard experiences, what will happen in the future, it is something that makes tears come out, which really makes us terrified.

There is not even one small pleasure left in samsara that we have never experienced. It has been experienced by us numberless times. Just like this, there is not even a small suffering left in samsara that has never been experienced by us numberless times. Same thing, there is not even the greatest samsaric pleasure left that we have never experienced before. It has been experienced by us

numberless times. Even the greatest samsaric sufferings—there's not one single, great samsaric suffering that we have not experienced. It has been experienced by us numberless times. So, there's no interest in any samsaric existence or experience, and there's nothing to be attached to.

Releasing ourselves from samsaric suffering is not sufficient. If we're always concerned with our own peace we're just the same as animals, the foolish sentient beings.

The wrong conception, the self-cherishing thought, is the base from where all our suffering rises. Cherishing others more than ourselves is the base from where all the perfections and all happiness arises. The pure thought bodhicitta, from where it has to be received, from where it's coming is by depending on the sentient beings. Sentient beings are the field from where we have been receiving all the past perfections and happiness, as well as the present and future perfections—all happiness, including enlightenment. We have always been discriminating the mother sentient beings as friend, as stranger or as enemy, with ignorance, anger and attachment. In that way, we are creating so much negative karma.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to abide in equanimity, free from attachment and anger which discriminates some as close and others distant.
May they abide in equanimity.
I shall cause them to abide in this equanimity.
Guru Buddha, please grant me blessings to be able to do so.

However much the mother sentient beings desire happiness, because they are completely ignorant in recognizing the causes of happiness, they always destroy the causes of happiness. Think, "How pitiful it is." At the same time, think:

How wonderful it would be if all the mother sentient beings had happiness and its causes.
May they have these.
I shall cause them to have these.
Guru Buddha, please grant me blessings to be able to do so.

Dedicate, at the same time thinking that we dedicate our body, possessions and materials completely to each sentient being. This becomes the cause of all their happiness. Think that now all the mother sentient beings have received all the happiness.

Also think: "No matter how much the mother sentient beings do not desire suffering, because they are deeply ignorant and do not recognize the cause of suffering, they often run to create the cause of suffering. How pitiful it is."

How wonderful it would be if all the mother sentient beings were free from suffering and its causes.
May they be free.
I shall cause them to be free.
Guru Buddha, please grant me blessings to be able to do so.

At the same time, while visualizing all the sentient beings' suffering, think that you are taking all their sufferings in your heart and they hit at the self-cherishing thought. Think that they become free from all the sufferings.

How wonderful would be if all the mother sentient beings were never parted from all the happiness, having received enlightenment.
May they never be parted from this happiness.
I shall cause them never to be parted.
Guru Buddha, please grant me blessings to be able to do so.

Think: “Just wishing like this is not sufficient. As the mother sentient beings have been extremely kind, I must take the whole responsibility to release each of the sentient beings from suffering. I must actually work to do this, therefore I must achieve enlightenment. Receiving enlightenment depends on discipline of the body, speech and mind, therefore I’m going to take the ordination until tomorrow morning.”

Visualize the person granting the ordination as in the meditation of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, surrounded by infinite buddhas and bodhisattvas, and repeat the prayer.

[Ordination ceremony]

Lecture 20

Besides the action of listening to Dharma becoming Dharma, it should also become the cause of receiving enlightenment. Therefore, it is necessary to at least have a short motivation like this.

“I must achieve enlightenment for the sake of all the infinite mother sentient beings who are equal to infinite space. Therefore, I’m going to listen to the teachings on the graduated path to enlightenment.”

The listening subject is the Mahayana teaching, which leads the fortunate ones to enlightenment. It is well-expounded by the great philosophers Nagarjuna and Asanga. It is the profound teaching and it’s as if the essence of the unequaled magnificent pandit Atisha and the knowledge of the Dharma king of the three worlds, the great Lama Tsongkhapa, was extracted. It includes the 84,000 teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. All this is arranged for our practice of the graduated path and for our achievement of enlightenment.

This commentary on the graduated path has four outlines. The last one is how to lead the fortunate ones to enlightenment. That has two outlines: the last one is how to train the mind in the path to enlightenment by following the guru. And that has two outlines: the last one is how to take the essence of the perfect human rebirth, which is divided into three. The first one is the graduated path of the lower capable beings and the general path. That has two outlines: the last one is following the method that brings happiness of future lives. That has two outlines: the first is going for refuge and the second one is karma.

It is fortunate that we can take the vows of the refuge ordination. Taking refuge through repetition of prayers is making it more precise, trying to be more careful, making it more precise. Even though there is refuge received in our mind through understanding of the meditation—the meditation

practice makes it kind of clear—but this way, taking the ordination, taking the vows, becomes more precise. That means we have to observe the precepts of the practice of refuge more carefully. Then for our whole life until death time, we don't take refuge in other wrong founders, we only take refuge in the perfect being, the enlightened being—the perfected being who is qualified for all the four reasons and who has all the infinite knowledge of body, speech and mind. We only take refuge in such a perfect guide.

[Transcript ends here]

Lecture 21

We might as well finish all karmas tonight! [Laughter] The part of the karma subject is usually very, very interesting for the mind, very interesting and so helpful. Understanding karma is really extremely helpful to correct our life actions and it's also very helpful in showing us how to live our life purely. Understanding karma is very helpful. Also, usually it is very good to read [Dharma] books, instead of reading stories of people which don't help the life at all, which don't change our life or make our life beneficial and pure, which don't help at all, which just waste a lot of time and only cause more attachment to arise. Reading their life stories, how they live their samsaric life, how they went through the different trips, all these things, if we don't know how to read the book then reading it can become cause of attachment. It becomes the cause of attachment, increasing attachment and then, by reading that book we also want to get involved, we also want to make the same trip as that person did.

Many people copy like this by watching movies and reading books, you know, just of ordinary people's life stories, then they try to act like that, they try to become like that, not only in the West but also in the East. There are many people who do like this. However, since it takes much time to read those books, instead of spending the time doing that, using the time to read such a book, if we don't know how to read it, it all becomes cause of attachment. It all becomes negative action. Reading that book becomes the cause of increasing attachment, the negative mind. Besides, there's no need to talk about how much time we waste, we lose. No need to talk about that. Look at the people, so many people, so much time is wasted reading that kind of book, which only builds more attachment instead of bringing peace to our mind, making the mind happy, making the mind subdued, relaxed, which makes the life pure, peaceful.

Instead of reading that kind of book and wasting a lot of time, we can do many better things than that, so many things. There are many books on karma. There are many sutras. Maybe translated into Chinese, I'm not sure. There are many sutra teachings which talk so much about karma; they're very interesting, extremely interesting. So much talk about karma, stories of bodhisattvas, stories about the Buddha and many things like this. Reading that kind of book would be very interesting, fantastic for the mind. The more we read those Dharma books, the more time we spend doing that, it only helps the mind.

Especially in your family or in your life when there is quarreling, for instance, between husband and wife, when there is a big problem or something. When something is lost or something is wrong, when there's a bit of problem in your mind, then if you open Dharma books at those times—the

mind training teachings, Dharma books, like *Jewel Ornament* or whatever, the basic practices—just by reading Dharma books it's possible that your mind becomes detached from that problem, from that person or that object or that situation. It's possible. The mind becomes detached and your life becomes peaceful, happy.

Regarding karma, you should not think, you should not have the idea that even though you create some negative karma, you won't experience the suffering result. "Maybe I won't experience the suffering result of this. Perhaps the suffering result of this karma might get lost. I'm not sure whether I will experience the result; these things will get lost, they can disappear." This is a wrong conception. You have created negative karma and then, as you don't want to experience the result, you're expecting it to disappear without following any remedies, without trying to destroy it, without trying to stop it. That kind of thinking is useless. It never becomes like this, it never disappears as you expect.

Understanding karma and stopping these impulses is the most important thing. Each negative action creates so many new negative karmas. You should always try to apply the remedies, because as long as you don't follow the remedy and you don't try something, the karmic result never gets lost. No matter how heavy or how small it is, it never gets lost. The karmic result never gets lost, no matter how many hundreds of billions and billions and billions of lives it takes, it never gets lost.

Karma is really an interesting subject to understand and it is a very wide subject. Karma is an extremely wide subject; it's not a small thing. Karma is the thing that we have to always think of, to be concerned about all the time. Whether we make the life happy or unhappy; whether we make the life happy without having confusion or suffering, all depends on karma. All is derived from karma. What life we are going to have in the future all depends on the present karma.

For instance, karma is definite. Usually, we may not have the idea, we may not think, "I want to kill myself." When we hear some other people have committed suicide, we think "Such action as killing myself I'll never do in my life." When we hear things like this, we think that such things will never happen to us. You know, dying by being burnt by fire or things like this. We think we're in a different place. When we hear such things, we think, "It will never happen to me. I will never do like this; such a situation will never happen to me."

We think like this but it's not sure, not sure. When the time comes, when the karma is ripened, when the result manifests, it's without choice.

Even though you thought like this before, that it would never happen to you, in time somehow there is the uncontrollable urge to kill yourself. This can happen. You have to shoot yourself or you have to kill yourself; these things happen, it's uncontrolled. No matter how much you thought it would never happen to you. That means, even though you thought before how horrible it was, however, when the time comes, when the karma result has ripened and is ready—not sure when—you have to experience the same uncontrollable trips as another person. Not sure. Karma is really very powerful, very powerful, very powerful, very powerful, very powerful.

For instance, the fly which jumps in the flame—these flies jump on the light but they can't stand it there and again come out, then again they go there and again come out, and again go there—the same place where they suffered before they keep on going there. They keep on going there. It doesn't mean they don't feel the heat. They feel hot there. They feel hot and they burn their legs.

When the flies go there they come down, they can't fly so well and they come down like this. Sometimes those poor flies get stuck in the light. Once they get there, they can't get their legs off and they get stuck there and die. However, you see, even though they are so hot they again jump there; they keep on going there. That shows how the flies' karma is really powerful, really powerful. Because the karma has already ripened it pushes them. Also, due to craving, they keep on jumping there; they keep on jumping. No one forces the flies to jump there, no other sentient being forces them but they go there, even though they burn there, even though they are so hot there.

By watching like this, by watching the nature of those sentient beings' lives, this is the explanation of karma, what we see just around here. Just the evolution of life that we are experiencing, that is the nature of life; that is the explanation of karma, life always is up and down, all the time. All this is the explanation of karma. So, it can be things happening that we didn't know about before, all these things are the explanation of karma. What we see outside, other sentient beings, other people, insects. Therefore, even in the present time we have to be very careful about creating actions that cause [negative] results.

So, when we meditate on karma, as I explained the relationship earlier—after refuge comes karma. We can remember and think about that!

Then after that, I think also here, one point is about the Dharma. The actual refuge is Dharma and then that whole thing is based on observing karma, observing even our tiny actions. So that is karma. The actual thing is checking on each of our actions, how they are done. Then after checking the actions of this life, we can think like this: "I also did this a number of times in my previous lifetime." Then, on the basis of all these negative actions, we use each one specifically—how karma is definite and karma is expandable.

Karma is definite, which means we will definitely get the result in our life, as I told you in the example of the seed.

Like this, also we may have wrong conceptions about creating negative karma, such as thinking that negative karma can bring the result happiness. We think perhaps this could be possible. Then think about the billions and billions and billions of karmas that are created and collected in the mind. For example, we put into a big cup of curd some raisins, peppers and all kinds of different tasting things, some which taste acid, which taste sour, which taste hot or sweet—we put all kinds of things in the curd and we mix it up. However, when we taste it, when the pepper comes we feel hot, when the raisin comes it tastes sweet, when salt comes it also tastes hot—according to whatever comes we get its taste, the taste never changes. The taste of pepper does not go sweet, the taste of the pepper does not become the taste of sugar, the taste of the raisin does not become the salt taste. It doesn't change, like this. Whichever comes, we get the taste of it.

So like this, there are many billions and billions and billions of karmas created in the mind and nothing gets mixed up. Karma is created in the mind—actions, potentials, intentions, seeds. Happy results, suffering results—nothing gets mixed. Perhaps it is possible some of you may think when so many negative karmas are created, maybe some results get mixed up and it becomes a sort of happy result, a good result. It's not like this, it's impossible, impossible.

Karma is expandable. Also you remember those examples I mentioned. There are so many things to talk about. But anyway, you can also understand by sometimes reading other books. There are many

stories and other things showing how karma is expandable. Karma is expandable. Try to understand it by looking at examples like rice, like crops.

It is impossible to experience the result without creating the cause; also remember those examples about the disease and those things. I'm just giving you an idea of how to check up. There are many ways to check up. There are so many examples; the world is full of examples. If you can check up, then it's not difficult to find examples. I'm just giving you suggestions, ideas, so that you can find similar examples. You can get many examples.

For general meditation on karma, you can think it is impossible to experience the result without creating the cause. How? This one is like this, this one is like this, etc. As you have experienced in your life, try to remember all this. Try to prove it. Why is it like this? Because without creating the cause, the result cannot be experienced. For instance, when you plant a potato in the field, you cannot expect to get corn on the cob or apples, maybe. You cannot expect to grow apples from potatoes. Without planting the apple tree or whatever, it can't grow. It can't grow. You can't expect apples to grow from a potato.

The result of the karma created is never lost, so you need to do confession. After this, you can see, your life is so clear, after checking all this karma, your life is so clear. It is very clear; how clear it is. You can see after checking this.

“Now my life is like this, and after this, if I die, where is it more definite that I'll be reborn? It's more definite I will be reborn in the suffering realms, where I will only experience suffering. There will be no chance to practice Dharma to be released from samsara, and I will keep on being reborn there and suffering there for a long time. Therefore, I must do something now. Right at this time I must do something with this karma. I must do something; I must purify these karmas before being born in the suffering realms. I must purify the karmas which make me go into the suffering realms.”

You can think like this: “Before being born in the lower realms I must purify the negative karmas. I must do something with the karma. I must try as much as possible not be reborn in the suffering realms.” Think like this; it builds some energy. Then, after that, you can make confession.

The last one is the way of thinking how to stop karma. How to stop karma is the last thing.

You start with how mind is beginningless, from there, then the perfect human rebirth. All these methods, actually, are methods to stop karma and to be free from delusion and karma. All these methods, starting from beginningless mind, are all methods to free us from delusion and karma. All these teachings, all these meditations, generally, are like this.

Anyway, it is good to make confession after this because, you see, after meditating on karma, your mind becomes so clear and you have so much energy there wanting to purify, to do something to stop the karma. So if you do confession after this, your confession becomes very powerful, very powerful.

The perfect way of doing confession is according to this method, which has gathered all the four points.⁴ It is the perfect confession and has definite power to purify. It is necessary to remember

⁴ See *Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 137.

these four points. They are called the four faculties or remedies. Remedy to what? Remedy to negative karmas.

The first thing is to take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, like the meditation during refuge time: *La ma la kyab su chi o*, etc. You recite this prayer. That itself is with understanding, with devotion to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; taking refuge is always that. That is the first thing, which is the faculty of refuge—the faculty of refuge, which means Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Next one is feeling repentance for the negative karma that has been created since beginningless samsaric lifetimes. The repentance should have strength. It should be skillful repentance, a great feeling of repentance of so much incredible negative karma that has been created from beginningless samsaric lifetimes. That arises because you have been observing, because you have been checking on karma like this, therefore you don't need to spend a lot of time here. You are checking on karma and feeling great repentance. The more and more you check, as you gradually check this life and other beginningless samsaric lifetimes, remember as you check the energy, understanding how much negative karma you have created, "What incredible negative karma I have been creating!"

Realizing this, that feeling itself is the repentance. Feeling kind of upset, feeling sorry about doing the negative actions, that feeling itself is repentance. You don't need to spend more time on that, it does not depend on the subject. It is OK as you have meditated on karma. That is the subject of repentance. If you want to make powerful confession, to really purify as quickly as possible, it's most important to make the feeling of repentance as strong as possible.

The stronger repentance there is, that much better you can do the fourth one, which is vowing not to repeat the sin. You determine not to create that action again next time. You are making the decision now to not do it again, to not create that karma again; you are making the decision now.

Why repentance is important is that if the feeling of repentance is very strong, our decision to not do these negative actions again also becomes very strong. Our decision becomes very, very strong. That is the psychological way to work. The feeling of repentance is very strong. We feel that having created this negative karma is unbearable and so definitely the decision becomes stronger, thinking: "I don't want to do it again. I really don't want to do it again."

The decision comes so strongly. Not just intellectually thinking, "Oh, I don't want to do that," just superficial words, but really from the depths of our heart we're making the decision, "I really don't want to do that!" Like if we're about to do something negative, then afterwards we realize, sort of, "I'm really not interested, I'm making a big decision." This one we really care about. So, in this way—by strong repentance and making the strong decision not to do it again, making a vow—this makes confession really powerful, so powerful, really powerful. So repentance is very important.

There is a difference if, while we're working or digging, while we're building, while we're doing something, while we're working with materials, even though it isn't in the mind, animals get killed. Normally we don't kill but somehow there's no choice, somehow they get killed. However, not having the desire to kill, that's so important. That's very important. Not having the desire to kill, that's so important. Not having the desire to kill even though we had the desire to kill before.

After the action is done, anytime, whenever it's done, if we have repentance, feeling sorry for doing this, if we have genuine repentance, the negative karma of killing becomes lighter. If we don't have

repentance the negative karma is heavy. It's heavy by not having repentance. Having repentance makes the karma lighter. It's very helpful to have repentance, feeling sorry. This is a method to make the karma lighter.

Then penance to purify, the action of purification: the faculty of practicing the remedy, like reciting the refuge prayer *La ma la kyab su chi o*, according to how much time you have you can do like this. Even normally you can also do, at retreat times or even normally, as much as you want can do like this. *La ma la kyab su chi o*—like we did before. Half is done with white light and half reciting with yellow light, knowledge light, coming. Purifying like this.

La ma la kyab su chi o. You don't have to say it loudly, you can say it quietly, you can say it very quietly, with no sound of your voice, very quietly, so even other people don't hear it, very quiet. You can recite like that and also with *Sang gyä la kyab su chi o*—with each one you can do like that.

During the times when you purify with Guru Shakyamuni prayer *La ma la kyab su chi o*, those negativities created by depending on the object, the guru, also all the rest of the negative karmas that have been created from beginningless lifetimes are completely purified. Just as when a bottle is very dirty, when we clean the dirty bottle with water, as we clean the bottle, which is transparent, which has marks inside, all the dirt goes down and it becomes clear and transparent, all the dirt goes down. Like this, all the white light is coming inside the body and all negativities are going out. Those are created by depending on the holy object and also all the negative karma we have been checking before; all these are completely purified, going out, so we feel very light, very transparent, very light. Like this, as you usually do in Guru Shakyamuni yoga meditation.

This recitation of the refuge prayer, making meditation, is also called the faculty of using the remedy, practicing the remedy. The third one, which says here [*Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 137], “Penance, to purify negativity.” The Tibetan meditators recite this refuge prayer 100,000 times each one—*La ma la kyab su chi o*, *Sang gyä la kyab su chi o*, *Chö la kyab su chi o*, *Gen düm la kyab su chi o*—and they make purification like this. That is also recognized as doing purification.

There are many other actions of doing purification as penance. There are many actions—any recitation of mantra is purification, any meditation, any listening to Dharma. Generally, listening to Dharma, making meditation, anything becomes an action of purification. So does reading texts; this also becomes an action of purification. There are many different ways to make purification; there are many different methods. Also, people build [holy objects] for purification. They make many statues or they make many thangkas—they also do like this. There many different ways to purify, such as building stupas or even cleaning the holy places. There are many methods, such as making offerings.

There is also a purification practice based on the deity called Vajrasattva, a powerful tantric deity. Meditators also do the retreat and they do much purification by reciting this deity's mantra. There are long and short mantras of that deity. They repeat that mantra 100,000 or 400,000 times, reciting the mantra and making purification.

So like this, there are many different methods. Through the purifying methods, such as by continuously making confession, there are different things that cause us to not completely experience the negative karmas. And even though we have to experience the suffering result of the karma, for instance by being born for four hundred or five hundred years in the lower realms—the animal realms or the naraks—being born and suffering there, as well as suffering in the upper

realms, doing purification can cause us to not experience the suffering result completely, even though we could not do so much purification that we don't experience it at all.

Even though we still have to experience the result, instead of being born in the suffering realms for a long time, we just have a small headache for one day, for a short time, or we have pain in the stomach or we experience a small danger of life. By experiencing this, all the negative karmic result which we would have experienced in the lower realms for a long time, or in the upper realms—all that result is finished by experiencing a small danger for a short time.

Even having horrible dreams, even just by that, all the suffering results which we would have to experience for many lifetimes finishes by making strong purification. Just by experiencing horrible dreams all the suffering results are finished. It depends on how much we purify whether the suffering result of karma is impossible to be experienced or maybe it doesn't have to be experienced. Maybe we have horrible dreams or a small sudden disease for a short time, maybe we get sick for one month or one week instead of being born in those suffering realms for a long time, for many, many lifetimes, five or six hundred years. Maybe we get sick for a short time instead. Instead of being born in the upper realms, maybe we get sick for one week or one month, and that finishes the suffering result. However, it all depends on how strong our purification is.

Student: [Unintelligible]

Rinpoche: Yes you can destroy the seed, yes. You can make it incapable of bringing the result, like making a seed incapable of producing a sprout. It helps.

Student: [Unintelligible]

Rinpoche: The purifying method, yes, we are doing confession to completely destroy the karma. The sutras say the heavier, closer or more habitual the karma, the sooner the result will ripen. If all are the same, the result of the closer one comes first. So there are many things: heavier, closer and more habitual karma. If all karmas are the same heaviness, the closer comes first, it brings the result first. If all are the same habitually, then whatever was created first brings the result.

The next meditation, Meditation Three, is checking meditation on the suffering of the upper realms and checking meditation on the general samsaric sufferings.⁵ It is also very useful doing checking meditation on the sufferings of the upper realms. There are specific sufferings in the human realms and in the asura and sura realms. As explained in the *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, it is easy to check the human realms, for example, the problems the poor people here have and the problems even rich people have. The king, the president, rich or poor, whatever, all these people have different problems in their life. They all have dissatisfaction, things like this. Check like this, do meditation like this. The most effective checking meditation, especially on the upper realms, is the checking meditation on the eight sufferings.⁶

The part of the checking meditation on the suffering of rebirth is also very helpful. Each time it is necessary to think like this: after you think of the suffering of rebirth, after you've made checking meditation according to the method explained here, you decide there is so much suffering that there

⁵ See *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 141.

⁶ See *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 150–154.

is no reason to create the karma to be in samsara again. There is nothing to get attached to in this samsaric body. Like this, if you can think like this after each one it is very helpful.

Then, also after checking the suffering of old age, also think that therefore there is no reason to create negative karma. This is all talking about the suffering of the body. There is no reason to create the negative karma to be born again continuously in samsara; there's nothing to get attached to in the samsaric body. That means our own body and all the other people's bodies.

So now, also the suffering of the body, which was created by negative karma. After that also think the same thing—there's no reason to be attached to the body.

Then also, after that, there are six different types of sufferings.⁷ The whole samsaric birth, how it is in suffering nature. That covers much more and is also very beneficial.

Lecture 22

[Reading from *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, pp. 153–54]

5. The suffering of release from beautiful objects and attachments

In these times, first of all try to remember all suffering is not something that is not ours, that we never experience and that only someone else experiences. Not like this. First of all, it is necessary to remember whether we have had this suffering, the release from beautiful objects and attachments, whether we had this. Separation and fear of separation from loved ones, enjoyments and possessions cause suffering during our whole life. These things end. This is the usual thing that happens in our life. We always have this problem—the suffering of release from beautiful objects, whether from possessions or parents or objects of attachment, from our partner or our children.

We always have this suffering. Our possessions become decayed and then we get scared. We get upset when our possessions become decayed and then we get scared. Decay, like food or whatever. When we are born we start to decay but when we change, when we become ugly, we get upset. Try to remember all these things, not just one example.

You should check up when you make this meditation, you should check up. Try to find many examples of experiences in your life. “I had this, I had this.” Like this. For instance, the situation of couples: when the husband goes somewhere then the wife feels upset. “When my husband leaves me, we split up or whatever, he goes away, then I feel upset, my mind is not happy. My mind does not want him to go away, alone. Or my mind doesn't want him to be with other people, or something.” It is very easy to check up because this is always our experience.

6. The suffering of encounters with ugly (disagreeable) objects

⁷ See *Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 156.

Suffering arises by contact with an enemy, having a catastrophe or involvement in problem situations.

Not only people, enemies, but also possessions, many things. Again there is this kind of suffering that we experience.

7. The suffering of not obtaining desirable objects

Not obtaining the desired objects is also one of our greatest sufferings. Always not obtaining, not receiving, not becoming successful or not receiving the desirable object. There are many examples of this if we check up. We find out there are many desired objects that we want to have, we want to receive and we do not obtain. Or if we obtain them, then we're not satisfied with them and we want more, things like this. All this is suffering.

8. The suffering of this body created by delusion and karma

These ways of checking are also extremely useful, to know how the body is living in suffering, how the body is in suffering nature. It's very clear. After you check this for yourself you can check on other people, other beings who are also living in suffering. They have all experienced a suffering rebirth and are suffering; an incredible number of beings experience a suffering rebirth. Right at this time, after checking on yourself, right at this time, if you check other people, there are an incredible number of people who are experiencing a suffering rebirth. Even at this very time there are an incredible number of beings suffering from all different kinds of sickness. In different places, in different countries, right at this time there are an incredible number of beings suffering like that, suffering death in different ways. Right at this time, in the East and in the West, there are also an incredible number of people suffering encounters with disagreeable objects, disliked objects, and also an incredible number not obtaining the desired objects.

For instance, just check, try to remember one city, like New York or somewhere. Remember. Look at all the people running in the street, working in the shops, going by boat or airplane. Just watch in your mind, you know, as in a movie, and you'll see all these people involved in these sufferings. All involved in these sufferings, so many of them suffering. So many of them are running, in the house or outside working, no matter what they are doing, they are living in this suffering. It's very clear, very clear.

I left out the suffering of old age—I completely forgot! Anyway, they are living in the eight sufferings. If we really watch like this, it is very clear that all these people, just constituting one city, all those who are working inside or out, doing different things, no matter what different work they are doing they have all these sufferings. Some have extreme suffering due to release from desirable objects. So many of them have extreme suffering, even right at this time, so many of them.

Also we see them suffering in the country, having the suffering of meeting again with disagreeable objects, enemies or danger, fighting, war, many dangers, many things.

And look at this next section: the suffering of not obtaining the desired object. Just watch all the people, watch it in your mind. All the people are running, running on the ground or running in space, wherever. All are trying to get something; all these people are trying to get something. All these people are trying to get something; they're trying to get desirable objects and they're running—

by boat, by ship, whatever they do, on land or flying in space. Whatever, they're always running, trying to get desirable objects or suffering by not getting the desirable object. Trying to get the desirable object and suffering by not receiving the desirable object. Worry, much worry. However, look at this, just watch it. It's incredible when you watch it. It's incredible. Just open your mind and watch the whole thing, like this. It's really fantastic to understand, the whole thing. The whole thing, no matter how they are doing, it's all this, it's all this.

Watch the people flying in space—it's all about this! Running to obtain desirable objects, objects of attachment, for that. No matter how they do it—rich ones who are going by first class or those going second class, it doesn't matter, it is just the same, same suffering. Just watch it. Same thing, people who are going by boat, by ship, people who are going by water, same thing, the suffering of not obtaining the desired object.

People who are living in a house, same thing. They are running, going on land by cars, bicycles, trains, same thing, you see. This is the nature of samsara. That explains it. We see it. Now we can see this clearly; they're always running after the object of attachment and suffering by not obtaining it. And they're not satisfied, even if they have it. So, they're always working for this; they're spending their whole time for this. All these people, this incredible number of people.

When I was in Delhi, one day just walking in the street, I wondered about this country, in this city right now. Who is creating good karma, who is creating virtuous actions? So many people are doing work—all kinds of running, running, all kinds of flying, all kind of things—but how many people right at this moment are creating virtuous actions? By looking from the outside it is almost impossible to find! However, it's very helpful, after checking on oneself if we check others. Then it's very clear to see how samsara is. If we really check up in this way, it's something that makes tears come out. You know, such an unhappy life, such a limited method of life.

Also, if we can remember the different types of sicknesses, it's very good. There are, as explained in the Tibetan text, about four hundred different types of sicknesses. It's also very useful to understand this, and it's helpful for checking meditation.

From birth, we should give up the samsaric body, we should not be attached, because if we are attached to this samsaric body, it causes us to take rebirth again, again and again, again and again. In this way we continuously suffer, taking the bodies in suffering. Besides that, from rebirth to death we receive suffering. From rebirth to death there are all types of different sufferings coming. There are also so many problems which have to be experienced; all kinds of problems, like feeling a little bit cold or hot. All these problems, even what's going on inside. Meditation time feeling difficult, having pain—everything is coming from this body. All these sufferings are the fault of taking this body, the samsaric body, which is under the control of delusions and karma.

For instance, taking this deluded body causes suffering even in the future lives, and not only this but many other future lives' suffering come from taking this samsaric body, by taking this un-free body.

c. Suffering of suffering and

d. Changeable suffering—both arise because the body is controlled by delusion and karma.

Changeable suffering means all the temporal pleasures. All the samsaric temporal pleasures are changeable suffering.

e. Pervading suffering, the suffering of conditioned existence, exists merely because the body exists. I am born in the nature of suffering—I decay and perish.

Actually, the meaning of pervading suffering is that the body is controlled by delusions and karma. In the second line of changeable suffering [see *Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*, section 8, p. 154] it says “... because the body is controlled by delusions and karma.” This actually means that the body is in the nature of pervading suffering [pervasive compounding suffering].

Why do we receive this body without choice? This is birth without choice because we are not free from delusions and karma. Being under the control of delusions and karma we have to take this rebirth uncontrollably, uncontrollably.

Another clear way of saying it is that the delusions and karma that we had in previous lifetimes forced us to take this rebirth. We are forced to take this samsaric rebirth, this body; delusions and karma forced us. So, when we are born, we are born with the seed of delusions and karma. Because of that, this body becomes a base for all future sufferings and we always experience suffering.

One most useful thing regarding suffering—just to give a few examples of how to meditate—is the suffering of the indefinite nature of samsaric pleasures, because the happiness they bring is never lasting. Is there any explanation in these notes of how to meditate on this? How to meditate on this? I see. Then I don’t have to repeat.

How to meditate on the six sufferings, using an example of the suffering of the indefinite nature of samsaric pleasure, for instance, just an example. In the realms of the gods, for hundreds and hundreds of years they are spending their life, always enjoying—a beautiful, gorgeous wife, many who are called friends—always playing, always enjoying with them, almost impossible to separate from them. However, whenever even that much pleasure is received by being born in such high realms there is nothing definite, because after that life it’s possible to be reborn in the lower realms. They’re always surrounded by many hundreds of friends, beautiful friends, always playing, enjoying—however, nothing is definite, even those high pleasures, nothing definite. Again they are born in the naraks, the lowest samsaric realm, the narak realm and surrounded by very fearful protectors and much torture, giving much suffering. Like this.

Also, being born in those higher realms it is so beautiful and they are always enjoying beautiful parks, beautiful places, even the ground, the whole place is very shiny, all around. Very shiny and like a rubber bed, very soft. As you walk, it’s very soft. It’s very shiny and the house, everything is made of jewels, everything is built by mirrors, a reflection is coming, the body reflection is coming, like this. They have such great pleasures like this, but there’s nothing definite, so whenever that karma finishes, again they are born in the narak realm, in the red-hot iron ground.

Nothing is definite; they have that much great pleasure and the place, their friends and food are all the best great quality, but nothing is definite. They have their own natural light; they do not have to depend on other light. They have their own light. Even in the house they have the light of jewels. However, even if they have that very powerful body, there is nothing definite and after that karma is finished, they are reborn in the preta realm or the narak realm, the cold suffering hell where they don’t see anything, they are completely in darkness. They don’t see their own body and they are

suffering with the cold, things like this. They can't even see their body and they can't even see other things. So like that. Nothing is definite, nothing is for sure.

Even great pleasures like this, there is nothing to get attached to, even these great pleasures of their place, friends, food, clothes, whatever it is. I'm not talking about human enjoyment; I'm just talking about the great pleasures of the god realms. There's nothing to get attached to.

Also we should think of those friends in the human realm. Our friend is not always going to be a friend in the samsaric realms. It always changes. It always changes—in one day it changes, in one month it changes, in one year it changes. Even if they are a friend in this life, they become an enemy in some other lifetimes. Nothing is definite, therefore, there's nothing to be attached to, same thing.

Also, all the possessions that we have now, all our possessions, this and that, we should think, "The possessions that I have are also nothing definite. It's always like this; not sure. Not sure, nothing is definite. Maybe I'll leave these possessions tomorrow. I'm not sure. Tomorrow maybe I'll leave these possessions or maybe tonight! Or next year, I'm not sure. Maybe they'll also get broken or decay or get lost. Many things can happen. Nothing is definite. Nothing of this is definite, therefore I should not be attached."

The main thing is to control attachment, to stop it. After checking each of the six sufferings we should always emphasize this, thinking, "Therefore nothing to be attached to." Like this, then we know for what reason we are meditating. It's very clear, very helpful for the mind.

The Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun book is just giving the outline. You can find many examples by checking, like making commentary in your mind. I think maybe there are more examples in that notebook, Volume 2.

Then, all the samsaric sufferings are categorized in three.

Suffering of suffering: this is the usual suffering which we recognize, which animals even recognize—being wounded, sickness, these things.

Changeable suffering is more difficult to recognize. Only by practicing Dharma, only by studying and listening to the teachings and by checking—mainly by checking—we can experience, we can recognize this. Changeable suffering is all the samsaric pleasures which do not last; all these are changeable suffering.

Pervasive suffering means not being free. Not being free, being under the control of delusions and karma—that is pervasive suffering. This body is pervasive suffering, being under the control of delusions and karma. You can see this very clearly. This body is always like this. In any rebirth—rebirth in the upper or the lower realms, even the sura, asura or human realm, all the rebirths—all these bodies have that nature. There is not one samsaric body that does not live in the suffering nature. Without the suffering there is nothing; all sentient beings are living in suffering, even though they may not be experiencing it.

There is always the suffering of suffering, which can be recognized by people and even by animals, who are also always living in the changeable suffering, the temporal samsaric pleasures. I explained before how the samsaric pleasures are suffering, using the example of the person sitting and

standing and carrying his luggage. So, if you don't remember how samsaric pleasure is suffering, try to remember those examples.

All the samsaric pleasures that we experience with the body of enjoyment, all these things, their nature is suffering because when the suffering of suffering decreases, it's called pleasure. It is not called pleasure by completely ceasing this suffering; the pleasure is not complete cessation of suffering. What we call pleasure is when the suffering of suffering decreases or goes down, then it's called pleasure. So, actually, it is suffering. When that suffering decreases a little bit, that's what we call pleasure. Then again it's suffering of suffering when it increases. Like having a fever, then we check the thermometer and sometimes it comes up, sometimes it goes down, but it's always there; there are certain numbers.

If we really check, we can't find any pleasure there. We can't really find any pleasure there. Just all suffering and we can't find any pleasure, it's just a matter of what we call it. So like this, changeable suffering—the nature of samsaric pleasure itself is suffering and doesn't last and otherwise becomes heavier suffering.

Pervading suffering means this samsaric body, which is experiencing samsaric pleasure, is also suffering and usually, since it is a samsaric body—even sura, asura and human—it is always in the nature of suffering, the pervading suffering. This is the most difficult one to realize. It is pervading suffering because it is under the control of delusions and karma. It is under the control of delusions and karma. In other words, it is bound by delusions and karma.

You see, because our body and mind are always bound by delusions and karma, we are living in the nature of pervading suffering, therefore no matter how much we dislike experiencing suffering, we have no choice. No choice of not having rebirth, no choice to not have problems, no choice to not have pain. It does not depend on our desire. All these things show that we are not free. We are not free. All this shows we are bound by delusions and karma. All these uncontrolled life experiences show that we are bound by delusions and karma.

Simply talking, it is like this: if the body and mind were not in the nature of pervading suffering, not under the control of delusions and karma, we would never have problems of rebirth, death, old age or sickness. Nothing would be suffering. There would be no uncontrolled death, going through death without choice, none of these problems. We'd be completely free, completely free. In other words, for instance, if we did some killing action and somebody wanted to put us in prison or kill us, the whole problem is because of this body. If we were not under the control of delusions and karma, we wouldn't have to experience the punishment, we wouldn't have to be killed. We would not have to depend on that body, thus we would not have pervading suffering.

We are not free of delusions and karma, therefore we are not free from this body. So therefore, whenever the body gets problem, we have to experience it. We have no choice to leave the body, to run away. If we were free, we could do this—we could leave the body there, leave our mind. That would be no problem for us, nothing, no problem, not one problem, so easy. No one could catch our mind!

Taking one example, all the life problems that we have to experience due to the body are because we are not free from the body. Why we're not free from this, how we're not free from this body is very clear. This body is like luggage. We are like the person carrying the pot, and we are not free to get

away from the pot, the luggage, because we are bound to it by rope. The person, the potter is bound to the luggage by rope; tied to the luggage by rope. Like this we're stuck in this samsaric body.

Think, "This is me, I'm stuck in my samsara, this body, the suffering body. I'm stuck. What made me so stuck, not free from this body—what caused this?" It is by the delusions and karma, the rope that ties the luggage to the potter. We are tied by the rope to the pot, the luggage, so the potter is not free to get away from the luggage. Wherever we are, we have to be with the luggage, enduring much pain, much suffering. Why is it like this? Because we are bound to this samsara, to this body by delusions and karma. We're stuck there, and whatever we call the various experiences, due to the body we experience them. We experience them because we are stuck to this. If we're not bound to this samsara, this body, by delusions and karma then rebirth, all these samsaric sufferings such as birth and death do not happen. There's no reason to experience them.

So, suffering from being under the control of delusions and karma itself is pervading suffering. That's pervading suffering.

We often say samsaric ocean, which means this body, all the different beings' bodies—sura body, asura body, preta body, animal body, human body—which are all in suffering, being controlled by delusions and karma. All these bodies, that is the samsaric ocean. "Ocean" is just to get an idea of many, an infinite number, many.

What is samsara? Samsara is not a house; samsara is not a country; samsara is not clothes; nothing like this. Samsara is not a lay person's house, a country house or clothes—nothing of this is samsara! Nothing of this is samsara. Possessions, material things—nothing of this is samsara. What is samsara? The body, the aggregate. Not only the body. The body is one thing, one aggregate, one part.

Like this, just the outside box, without talking about the inside machine, just outside is one, just the base, just one part, without talking about the inside machine. So, the body is one thing. However, the whole collection of aggregates, which are under the control of delusions and karma, all these aggregates are the thing, the human realm body and mind aggregates on which we exist. Aggregates, on which is called "I," such as a person, a monk or nun.

The aggregates that circle continuously in the samsaric realms, that is samsara. That is samsara. That is the meaning of samsara. At the moment, just to be specific, this body that we have now is samsara. What is really samsara, if we want to find out? It is this body that we are not free from, which we are bound to by delusions and karma. We are bound to this body by delusions and karma—this is samsara, this body is samsara.

The one who circles is the person, and we circle on the aggregates of the six realms. In the present time we circle in samsara, the human body and mind. Next time, if we are born in the asura or sura realms, then we circle on *those* aggregates. Like this. Then we have the body in the narak and we circle on those aggregates. Why have we always got stuck on those aggregates? That is by the delusions and karma, which make us circle on those different aggregates.

What makes us circle is the delusions and karma. Same thing as I said before, what it is that makes us stuck, not free, in the present time—this body, these aggregates, and also the different aggregates of the different realms—is the delusions and karma. So, at the moment, if we want to find out

clearly what is the real samsara, it is this body and mind, which are under the control of delusions and karma, which are always living in the nature of pervading suffering. That is samsara.

To be free from samsara, free from these aggregates—not continuously taking these aggregates, taking rebirth—to be free from these aggregates, free from samsara, we have to be free from delusions and karma, which bind us, which cause us to be stuck there or make us bound to it. We have to be free from delusions and karma, which are like the rope.

The circler is the samsaric being, the person. Where the person is circling is on the aggregates, which are in the nature of pervading suffering, which are under the control of delusions and karma. So in that way we are under the control of delusions and karma, suffering under the control of delusions and karma. For example, if this body has a wound we say, “I have a wound,” if we are feeling pain.

The explanation of samsaric suffering is very logical, and nothing is made up, nothing is made up that really does not exist. Just our mind, or a theory that our mind made it up, some extra belief, it’s nothing like that—it’s not like this at all. The more we talk about this, the more clearly we talk about it, it all becomes proven more and more, exactly, with the experience of our body, with the experience of our life. Like that, like a picture.

We need to recognize the delusions, the true cause of suffering. We need to recognize the different types of delusions. It’s also very useful to remember this in our checking meditations. There are six principal delusions and twenty secondary delusions. This is also good, remembering these different delusions, trying to recognize each one of them. This also makes very clear in our mind which thought is delusion and which thought is not delusion. This makes it clear.

In the twelve links it explains how the delusions produce karma, and how delusions and karma fix us in samsara. The delusions and karma force us to circle on the samsaric body and experience suffering. The twelve links’ evolution explains that. Understanding the twelve links is very useful.

After the twelve links, there is Nagarjuna’s quotation. [Reading from *Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*, p. 170]

Two deluded actions (links 2 and 10) arise from three deluded causes (links 1, 8 and 9); seven uncontrolled results (links 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 12) arise from those two deluded actions. Again three deluded causes arise from these seven results. Such a wheel of life goes round and round.

If you can understand, if you can discuss with people who took courses before from me, maybe with Ann or whoever, try to understand this quotation. After understanding the twelve links, what each one is, after knowing each one, then the most important thing to know in this part is the meaning of this quotation of Nagarjuna. This explains it and gives the whole idea how everything works. How there are twelve links and how they work.

Each of these six realms of rebirth—sura, asura, the six different realms of rebirth—has to have its own twelve links. Each one has twelve links, for instance, our present body has twelve links. Each one has its own twelve links. For each of the twelve links there are certain causes, which finished before, in the past life, and there are certain links we’re experiencing this time. In the twelve links, after going through and understanding the general things, the main thing is this. Perhaps, by

discussing it you can understand, so it's good to have discussion time and maybe in retreat time when you do one session or something, you can try to clarify.

When we talked about karma, each karmic action brings four results, and one result is doing the action again and again. So, like this, each time, as we do the action again and again and again and again, the third result of the karma, which we create again and again and again and again, like this, each time we do these actions with negative mind, the twelve links are always created. It always creates the twelve links; it always starts the twelve links. In other words, greed, ignorance, hatred, each time, whenever we do certain actions with these negative minds, the twelve links are always created. Each time we create karma with the delusions—simply talking, each time the negative mind arises, we create karma. Each time, like that, we create karma, we start the twelve links. We start the samsaric twelve links. Right here!

When we think about the twelve links, all these trips, like the trip from rebirth until this present life, from rebirth until this day, there are so many problems. Before, we talked about them briefly. So, even one trip is extremely difficult, full of suffering, difficult. Even just one trip, just one trip, just one set of these twelve links. From rebirth until death, just one set of twelve links is full of suffering. It's unbearable. Each time a negative mind arises, we're creating karma. We talked about how karma has four results—one lower and the third, fourth and second one we experience suffering in the upper realms. Now we can think that according to the twelve links, how we get stuck in the lower realms. Each time, the result of the negative actions that we talked about is that we always end up in the lower realms. Each time the negative mind arises, the twelve links have started; the twelve links of the lower realms.

We can check: "How many negative actions did I do?" By checking, we find so many of these. Like that, each of us has problems, so checking like that is extremely useful. The clearest explanation of samsara, how samsara is working is by understanding the twelve links, then we can understand.

Each time, after we meditate on these different sufferings, after checking on ourselves, we can try to see other people, how they're also doing the same thing. Try to see, this helps very much. Right away, right after, after we check on ourselves, then the second time we can try to understand how others are involved in the same trip. Before, we had great feeling; before, we could clearly see our own trip, so we felt a little bit of renounced mind. There was a little bit of renounced mind coming. Right after that, we can think of others—how other sentient beings are also suffering the same trip, feeling the same thing, and how they are more in suffering because of not understanding Dharma, not having the method and not having the wisdom to understand Dharma. Not understanding the six sufferings' nature.

If you think like this each time, after the eight sufferings and the six sufferings, after each of these, if you can think of other sentient beings, the second time, then it's very easy for compassion to arise in this way. It's very easy for compassion to arise. It's also very helpful for the mind, very helpful, very helpful. By thinking of others, how they don't understand the suffering nature, we can understand our own knowledge. By understanding others, by seeing others, how ignorant they are, we can see we have knowledge. We can see, we can feel we're fortunate. How fortunate we are because we have found wisdom. And then, not only understanding that we are fortunate, how good it is, not only that, but our compassion also arises. Our compassion becomes stronger. As our compassion for others becomes stronger, the thought of bodhicitta becomes stronger in this way.

So it's very, very helpful. Sometimes we can get a big surprise, a big surprise, because normally we don't think about other people's problems, how they're in the suffering nature. Normally we don't think about it; the level of their ignorance, the level of their wisdom doesn't come into our mind. [Laughter] Whatever it is! Like this. Normally we think, any beings who are enjoying, who have much material possessions, who are doing whatever they want and those things, flying or whatever they're doing; all the time when we're seeing this, we feel they are so happy, they are enjoying life, they are really having a happy life, something like this. But that's looking at it with ignorance; watching with ignorance. If we look at it with this understanding, we cannot find anything interesting in their life, nothing at all. They're just completely ignorant and their whole life they are always creating the cause of suffering with the negative mind, with attachment.

What they're experiencing now is the result of their previous karma. They're only finishing that result. It is not because they're competent, that they did something in their life. Not like this. It's never like this. It's only the result received by previous karmas. So now they have a chance for a little bit, for a short time to enjoy all this, having all these possessions and enjoyments, or going out, all these things. We can see how they are ignorant, how they have a suffering life. We can see very clearly how the sentient beings are suffering.

For instance, all the comforts and all the enjoyments we are experiencing now are all the result of previous karma, but we don't know this. We don't know this at all. Just realize this. Visualize all this. Even besides creating good karma in our life, even one day enjoying the result means the result is finishing. The result is finishing. It's OK if the result is finishing if we are creating good karma. But we are not creating good karma again. The way we are enjoying the good result is only with attachment. So it's only creating cause of suffering, starting twelve links. It's all negative action. We think we are enjoying and that we are happy but we do not realize we are continuously creating the cause of suffering by following attachment. We do not realize it at all. Our mind is full of ignorance. Like in our lifetime, no matter how long we live, even for eighty years, not one single good karma is created; difficult.

Just watch this movie, then we can really, if we try to look at it this way, we can really get big surprise. We can find not one tiny interest in all this. We can't find any knowledge there, any knowledge, any beneficial things in life. Any knowledge we can't find. It's only in this way, as we have wisdom, a little bit of wisdom method, trying, it can only become compassion. So, like this, in this lifetime we live like this, but we are only circling around in samsara. If we always take human rebirth, that's something else—but it's not like this.

I think the rest of these meditations are part of the Mahayana meditation method to release bodhicitta. This is actually quite clear, quite clear.

In the practice of the Mahayana meditation the most important thing is understanding the faults of the self-cherishing thought and the benefits of cherishing others more than ourselves. We should spend more time on the faults of the self-cherishing thought. And cherishing others more than oneself, bodhicitta—we should find as many of these benefits as possible. Try to understand how the sentient beings are kind; try to do checking meditation as deeply as possible. That's very important. Try to understand how the sentient beings have been our mother, how they've been extremely kind in the past, present and future, as I often repeat. Try to understand a little bit why this is so important. This and understanding the faults of the self-cherishing thought and the

benefits of cherishing others more than ourselves. This causes the generation of love, great love and great compassion.

Before doing that we have to go through the equilibrium meditation. Equilibrium meditation is when we have equalized all sentient beings—friends, enemies, strangers, mainly friends and enemies—when we have equalized them in our mind. When we have an equal feeling for all sentient beings, when we get to this point or feeling, concentrate on that. We should not give it up all of a sudden, we should just concentrate, just keep that feeling, hold that feeling. It's very useful. Hold that feeling, be conscious. Be conscious. It helps even during break times, when something comes we can get the feeling right away if we get used to it.

To receive bodhicitta quickly depends on quickly receiving compassion and love. That depends on how much we can see, how much we understand how the sentient beings are kind. They are not always our mother but they're kind all the time, in the past, present and future. They are kind even when they are not our mother; they are kind all the time, all the time. That's very important to try and discuss with each other. During discussion time talk with each other, with someone who understands. Who has extra ideas and can explain it. Like this. Then you help each other very much.

When you do checking meditation, on the basis of this book, when you find your own commentaries, please write it down. If you can, write it in a book, write as you discover. What is in the book, on the basis of that you find your own commentaries and logic. If you write in a book then next time, if you keep on remembering that, if you bring it up again it helps so much for your mental development, for your deeper understanding of the meditation and to experience it quicker.

Then, the part of bodhicitta, a little bit on how to think, how to generate bodhicitta. That part of the motivation, just the essence.

Anyway, I think doing retreat on lamrim is very fortunate, extremely fortunate, more fortunate than those people who have healing powers, who have great psychic powers, who see even the past, present and the future but are not free of karma. They have no choice to practice bodhicitta and there's no chance to practice the path. Even if they have magic powers to fly, things like this, it is nothing surprising. Making retreat on lamrim, that's more surprising. It's much more fortunate, much more fortunate, because the only way, the actual way to be released from samsara is this. Without experiencing this path, it is impossible to get out of samsara, so of course no chance at all to receive enlightenment.

For instance, how many people in the world have time to meditate? How many people know lamrim? How many people have understanding, have time to make a retreat? You can't find many. Generally in the East and in the West, wherever, it is extremely rare to find people making retreat on lamrim. It's extremely rare, especially on lamrim, very rare, especially in the West, in such countries or places, and also in such a time. However, doing meditation on this is the cause of all the happiness, of all peace, including enlightenment.

Then there are visualization prayers, things to be done at the beginning of the sessions. These are things to be done. Those prayers we will record and then it's easy. Then you can imitate that. Prostrations and different prayers to say for purification, to actualize the meditation, to stop the hindrances to meditation. There are methods to stop the hindrance to the meditation, for Dharma practice to become successful and to actualize the path sooner.

Working on the lamrim path brings the mind closer to realization. As you have that much impression left on the mind doing these meditations, that much you become closer to enlightenment. It is very fortunate to have this chance, using your effort for the lamrim meditation. Also, it's much easier to understand in the future when you hear the teachings again.

Then also, one thing is very important, to do always do the prayers to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and Avalokiteshvara. Always pray to actualize the meditations quicker, as much as possible and to stop, to destroy all the hindrances—all for the benefit of mother sentient beings. Praying is always important, always important. It is also, how to say, the mind of praying, not just saying the words; it is experience, to make our meditation successful.

And if you don't meditate, since you want to make this life and all the future lives happy, it is good to at least read lamrim. If you can continuously do Guru Shakyamuni purification practice in the morning or at night, whenever you have time, that's very good. That's so important. And if you can do twenty-five minutes of meditation on lamrim that is great, and very, very, extremely helpful for the life. In another way it is like making kind of retreat, if you always do twenty-five minutes' meditation on lamrim. On different days you can do different subjects, like this, starting from perfect human rebirth down to bodhicitta, and then again you go up like this. It's extremely helpful—even though you can't imagine it!

You people have been taking ordination in spite of feeling cold and all these things in the morning. I wonder if I have done one thing, among all these Dharma subjects, which does not hurt your mind! What to say, there are plenty! [Laughter] It is quite surprising and sometimes I think in my mind, I am quite surprised, because usually Tibetan people have the energy to experience suffering for Dharma. For Tibetan people I don't get surprised because this is kind of the usual thing. But you didn't know Dharma before and this is the first time you have met the Dharma. And actually, if you didn't want to take ordination you could leave it; there were no police coming to arrest you. So I think it is a surprise. For Tibetan people it is not a surprise—they are used to it, or it's their culture or something. So for that I really want to thank you. I think that's all. That's all. Thanks a lot!

Lecture 23

MOTIVATION FOR TARA INITIATION

To receive the blessings of Mother Tara, the mother of all the buddhas, the noble Arya Tara, to receive the blessings of the most venerable Arya Tara's holy speech, body and mind, for your speech, body and mind to become oneness, totally to achieve a higher enlightened stage, think, "As I am purifying the hindrances, all the hindrances to achieving this are completely dispelled."

Try to think and feel, as I repeat:

"From beginningless samsaric lifetimes until now, I've been circling around and experiencing the suffering in samsara. At present I have received perfect human rebirth and met the teachings leading me on the path to enlightenment. However, just not having been born in suffering lower realms is

not sufficient. I must be released from the samsara, because wherever I will be born in these samsaric realms, the upper realms, wherever I will be born, it's all in suffering nature. It's all suffering nature. All samsaric pleasures are in the nature of suffering. There is nothing created that can last.

No matter where, in any samsaric realm, wherever I am reborn, it's just like walking around on red-hot iron ground; wherever I walk feels hot, burning. No matter if I walk or try to go away, it's always on the hottest part of the iron ground, always burning, feeling hot. Just like this, same thing, in the samsaric realms, wherever I am born, whatever body I take, it always has a suffering nature. Nothing of this body is interesting. There is nothing to get attached to.”

Try to feel all the different bodies of the samsaric realms; feel that all these different samsaric bodies are just like red-hot iron ground. Visualize this.

“The whole of samsara is in the nature of suffering, therefore I must be released from samsara, even in this life. Only releasing myself from samsara is not sufficient. This is a selfish motivation; it is very poor in nature. This self-cherishing thought is the cause of all suffering. From this self-cherishing thought all the hot narak sufferings come, and experiencing all the cold sufferings is also the fault of the self-cherishing thought. All those common narak sufferings and those also on this earth, all these are due to the self-cherishing thought. All the preta sufferings, all these are also the fault of the self-cherishing thought. All the animal sufferings, all these are also fault of the self-cherishing thought; experiencing these is also due to the self-cherishing thought.

“The eight sufferings are also the fault of the self-cherishing thought. The six general samsaric sufferings are also the fault of the self-cherishing thought. The three samsaric sufferings—the suffering of suffering, changeable suffering and pervading suffering—all these are also the fault of the self-cherishing thought. However, even in the human realm, all these different life complications—becoming unhappy, always getting sick, all the different diseases, the suffering of food, the suffering of problems, the suffering of receiving a bad reputation—all these are the fault of the self-cherishing thought. They all come from the self-cherishing thought.

“Same thing with fighting, which many people find difficult—that also is the fault of the self-cherishing thought. If there is no self-cherishing thought, it would not happen. Two countries fighting is also fault of the self-cherishing thought, not having peace in both countries. All sorts of fighting are also the fault of the self-cherishing thought; between teacher and student; between families; parents and children all fighting each other. Or between one couple fighting each other, becoming unhappy, complicated, divorcing, running away or running after another one. One after another, after another, one after another—all because of the self-cherishing thought.

“All the past beginningless samsaric sufferings that we have been experiencing are also due to the self-cherishing thought. Not receiving enlightenment, not receiving the cessation of samsara, not receiving any realization in the past is also the fault of the self-cherishing thought.

“As long as there is the self-cherishing thought it will continuously bring all these problems, all these different types, billions and billions and billions and billions of different types of samsaric sufferings of the animal, preta, narak, sura, asura and human realms. And as long as there is self-cherishing thought, it will continuously hinder me from receiving enlightenment, being released from samsara and receiving any realizations. It will continuously oblige me to suffer, never giving peace.

Therefore, since the self-cherishing thought is my worst enemy, which brings all the sufferings, why should I care about it? I must dispel it right away, as quickly as possible.

“Also, there’s no reason why I should cherish myself more than others. I care about myself more than others but there is no reason. We are exactly equal and just as I desire happiness and do not desire suffering, other beings also desire happiness and do not desire suffering. We have exactly equal feelings, exactly equal. There’s no reason, not one tiny reason, not one reason why I am more important than others, or why I should take care of myself more than others. There’s no reason at all; we are completely equal.

“Since the self-cherishing thought is my worst enemy, which brings all suffering, and bodhicitta, cherishing others more than myself, only brings benefits and happiness, why don’t I change? Why don’t I change? If this is the source of all happiness, why don’t I change instead of having the self-cherishing thought?

“I’ve received all my past happiness, perfections, all the pleasures, tiny pleasures—even when I am feeling hot, wind blowing, feeling a little bit cool—any pleasures that I have been experiencing in these six samsara realms, any pleasure that I have been experiencing from beginningless previous lifetimes, all these beginningless pleasures that I have been experiencing are received from the thought cherishing others more than myself, from bodhicitta. All the present perfections and happiness and all the future happiness and perfections, everything—all the pleasures in samsara, even the great everlasting happiness of nirvana, enlightenment—all this is received from the pure thought of bodhicitta, cherishing others more than myself.”

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and numberless other sentient beings have received enlightenment before us. That is also due to having received bodhicitta, cherishing others more than themselves. Because they have received this pure thought of bodhicitta before we received it, therefore they received enlightenment first. That is also how Guru Shakyamuni Buddha has received enlightenment first, even though he was a sentient being before.

Asanga, one of the philosophers, was meditating on Maitreya for twelve years to try and achieve Maitreya. After three years of meditation, he had not received that, and then again for another three years he meditated, but still did not receive that realization. Then again he meditated for three years, and did not receive the realization. Finally, the last time he came into the town, as he was coming along the path he saw a badly wounded dog with maggots inside its wound, in the flesh. By seeing that dog he received incredible compassion, bodhicitta—cherishing others more than himself.

When he saw this badly wounded suffering dog, incredible bodhicitta, compassion, cherishing others more than himself, arose in his mind. Because he received such incredibly strong bodhicitta, cherishing more others than himself, that became such great purification. As this strong thought came, it became great purification. Then, all of a sudden, he saw the dog transformed into Maitreya. He saw Maitreya. Instead of seeing a wounded dog full of worms, he saw the actual Maitreya, on which he had been meditating for many years. Until then he did not see Maitreya. At that time he has received incredible bodhicitta, strong compassion and due to this it became great purification, so he saw Maitreya. Right away like that, right away, right away.

Then he requested Maitreya to give teachings. He was taken to the pure realm of Tushita by the psychic power of Maitreya, and he received many teachings which explained the whole path, such as

the four noble truths and many things. Then Asanga asked Maitreya, “I have been meditating on you for many years. Why didn’t you come to see me?” Maitreya told him, “I was in your cave all the time; the proof is you spat around the meditation place, so I have got your spit here on my body!” He proved, he showed where he had spit. All that, such as seeing Buddha Maitreya by Asanga, is due to the power of bodhicitta, cherishing others more than oneself.

Another example is, in a previous time, there was a great pandit yogi called Ngagpa Chöpawa. This great yogi Ngagpa Chöpawa, when he went from one place to another he never walked, he flew, he always flew in space surrounded by many dakinis. He went in space, in the sky, sitting cross-legged, surrounded by many dakinis, the female aspect, dakinis, many goddesses. When he went from one place to another, when he flew, he always went with them and was always surrounded by them. It was always like this, with beautiful music, the sound of dakini music, he always he went like this. That’s why he was called the great yogi Ngagpa Chöpawa.

Ngagpa Chöpawa was supposed to have received enlightenment in one lifetime, but his disciple received enlightenment and went to the pure realm before him. His disciple was called Getsul Tsimbulwa. Ngagpa Chöpawa had incredible power but his disciple went to the pure realm before him.

How it happened, the disciple and teacher, when they were going to one holy place, on the way there is a big river. And at the river, one lady who was full of disease, leprosy, full of wounds, an extremely ugly lady at the river, was waiting there to be taken across to the other side of the river. So, this teacher, Ngagpa Chöpawa, the great yogi would not take her, he left the lady there and crossed the river by himself.

His disciple, Getsul Tsimbulwa, at the time saw this lady who was full of leprosy disease, and he had incredibly strong bodhicitta, cherishing others more than himself. So, without caring how dirty or how ugly she was, even though he was a monk, he put this lady on his back, then he carried her across the river. While he was carrying her across the river—this was actually not an ordinary lady, this was a transformation—as this disciple, this simple monk, carried her across the river, before they reached the other side, this lady transformed into the deity called Vajrayogini. She transformed and appeared in the aspect of the deity. Then, while holding her, without even the need to leave this body, he was taken to the pure realm. All these are the beneficial power of bodhicitta.

This bodhicitta, cherishing others more than oneself, is the source of all happiness. Where is this thought coming from? This is only coming from the sentient beings. If there were no sentient beings, then that thought could not be received. All the happiness, all the perfections are coming from the sentient beings. In daily life, from morning until night, tea, breakfast and lunch, everything—each type of food, vegetables, rice, everything—has to be received by the kindness of sentient beings. So many sentient beings are killed when working in the field, when people are walking and planting crops, the insects get killed. All these crops are received by the kindness of other sentient beings.

Even just drinking water, even the water to make tea, so many sentient beings get killed, many tiny worms. Without them suffering, there’s no way to get water, no way to get food at all. So, all this is due to the kindness of the sentient beings; receiving all these pleasures is due to the kindness of sentient beings. For even just one cup of tea, even just one plate of rice, incredible numbers of sentient beings are killed or suffer. Without depending on them suffering, there is no way to receive

even one plate of food. There is no way to receive even one grain of rice. Rice has its own seed and incredible number of sentient beings suffered for that seed, just eating one grain of rice. So it's not easy.

Having comfort and pleasure, living in a house, is also due to the kindness of the mother sentient beings. Without the sentient beings suffering, killing insects, without sentient beings working, building, there is no way to enjoy this pleasure. Same thing with cloth—without depending on other sentient beings' kindness, working, suffering, there's no way to get the cloth. Same thing with beautiful clothes, animal skins and medicine. Everything is received by depending on the kindness of mother sentient beings.

“The one enemy who cuts my body into pieces, for instance. All the past, present, future happiness is received from Dharma. Where did Dharma come from? Buddha. Where did Buddha come from? Bodhicitta. The bodhicitta, where did it come from? By depending on sentient beings. So, if this enemy who cut my body into pieces, if this sentient being did not exist, there would not be bodhicitta, which is received from that person. There would not be that Buddha. If there is not that Buddha, there is no Dharma. If there's no Dharma, there would not be all my past, present and future happiness.

“Where does all my past, present and future happiness come from? I'm receiving it all by depending on each of the sentient beings, including this enemy. All my past, present and future happiness, all perfections I am receiving from this enemy. Even receiving enlightenment, all the realizations, everything I am receiving by depending on this enemy. Therefore, they are extremely kind, extremely kind. In thinking this, even to gain this little pleasure, it is something that I can dedicate my body, possessions and merit numberless times for them.

“All the mother sentient beings, however much there is happiness, they don't recognize the cause of happiness. As they have been my mother numberless times, who is responsible to help them? That is me, from whom they should expect to receive help, it's me. Therefore I must lead them to sublime happiness, enlightenment. It's not enough just to let them have temporal pleasures. They have experienced temporal pleasures numberless times in samsara. The mother sentient beings are extremely suffering because of always creating the causes of suffering by not knowing what the cause of suffering is. They have no method leading to the path of enlightenment, they don't have that perfection, and each movement of body speech and mind is always a negative action.

“Numberless times they have been creating good karma for me, and they have also created so much negative karma for me, in order to help me. I am not only letting them create negative karma in order to take care of me in the present time, but they will also do it in the future. I've been letting them suffer so much in the past time, also in present time and also in the future time. They've been suffering so much for me in the past, present and future times.

“One sentient being suffering, even one sentient being suffering, is unbearable to me. So all the sentient beings who are suffering in the lower realms—it's unbearable for me. If I had to experience all this, it would be unbearable. All the sentient beings who are in the samsaric suffering, all this, if I have to experience that, it's incredible. Therefore I must make the determination, right at this time, to release them from all the causes of suffering, by myself.

“As in the ordinary world, among ordinary people, anyone who suffers for another person by working, then the other person is responsible to help that person, to get them out of suffering, out of the problem. Therefore, I’m responsible. They’re extremely kind and they’re suffering for me, and I let them suffer. I let them create bad karma. So I’m responsible to release them from suffering and all the causes of suffering right at this time, right at this moment. Therefore I must receive enlightenment.

“I must lead all sentient beings into Guru Tara’s enlightened stage. To do this, I must achieve Guru Tara’s enlightenment, therefore I’m going to take the profound blessings of Guru Tara.”

Think that receiving Guru Tara’s enlightenment is only for the sake of sentient beings.

[End of course]