

LAMA YESHE



The ENLIGHTENED
EXPERIENCE

COLLECTED TEACHINGS, VOLUME I

Edited by Nicholas Ribush

Compiled by Sandra Smith

LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

THE ENLIGHTENED EXPERIENCE

Collected Teachings, Volume 1

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May whoever sees, touches, reads, remembers, or talks or thinks about this book never be reborn in unfortunate circumstances, receive only rebirths in situations conducive to the perfect practice of Dharma, meet only perfectly qualified spiritual guides, quickly develop bodhicitta and immediately attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

Bringing you the teachings of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche



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Preface



Lama Yeshe at University of California, Santa Cruz, 1978. Photo by Jon Landam.

This collection is drawn from teachings given by Lama Thubten Yeshe in the 1970s and 1980s, when he traveled the world extensively along with Lama Zopa Rinpoche and taught at many courses, seminars and public talks. Lama Yeshe was a pioneer in bringing the Dharma to Westerners and the teachings in this book demonstrate his understanding of the Western psyche and his ability to express profound truths in simple terms.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has described Lama Yeshe as a great, hidden yogi, with high attainments that weren't shown to others. As well as showing the path to enlightenment to his students, Lama was like a parent, giving advice and happiness. Rinpoche said, "Lama's particular skill was to know exactly what was needed right at that particular time, so even with just a smile or a few words he made others happy and gave them hope."

In this compilation, Lama Yeshe advises how we can transform our lives by developing warm-heartedness and "knowledge-wisdom," while maintaining a relaxed attitude to our practice. Lama discusses the principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, as well as giving general advice on relationships, educating children and a range of other issues. The collection includes *Integrating What You've Heard*, an edited transcript of the earliest recorded teaching given by Lama Yeshe at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1972.

These teachings have been published previously on the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive website and in other publications, including *Mandala* magazine. The purpose of this book is

to gather the teachings into one central resource. Most of the teachings in this compilation are edited by Nicholas Ribush, however, the editor of *The First Clear Step* is not known.

The archive numbers for the teachings are: 447, 072, 153, 443, 711, 147, 038, 046, 025, 009, 011 and 337. To access the teachings online, go to LamaYeshe.com and search for the archive number using the [Search the Archive Database link](#) on the home page. A [comprehensive glossary](#) of Buddhist terms in this book can also be found on the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive website.

Lama Yeshe consistently encourages students to recognize and develop their limitless potential, and his dynamic teaching style means that his teachings are as relevant and accessible today as when first taught. We hope you enjoy this collection, which is the first of a two-volume series of ebooks.

Sandra Smith
June 2019

The Simple Art of Meditation



Lama Yeshe at Kopan Monastery, 1982. Photo by Dan Laine.

From a teaching at Bloomington, Indiana, 1975.

Meditation is very simple. When hearing about meditation for the first time, you might think, “That must be very special; meditation couldn’t be for me but only for special people.” This just creates a gap between you and meditation.

Actually, watching television, which we all do, is a bit like meditating. When you watch television, you watch what’s happening on the screen; when you meditate, you watch what’s

happening on the inner screen of your mind—where you can see all your good qualities, but all your inner garbage as well. That’s why meditation is simple.

The difference, however, is that through meditation you learn about the nature of your mind rather than the sense world of desire and attachment. Why is this important? We think that worldly things are very useful, but the enjoyment they bring is minimal and transient. Meditation, on the other hand, has so much more to offer—joy, understanding, higher communication and control. Control here does not mean that you are controlled by somebody else but rather by your own understanding knowledge-wisdom, which is a totally peaceful and joyful experience. Thus, meditation is very useful.

Also, if you exaggerate the value of external objects, thinking that they are the most important things in life, you ignore your inner beauty and internal joyful energy; if you look only outside of yourself, you neglect your most precious human qualities—your intellect and your potential to communicate in higher ways. Thus, meditation shows you clean clear which objects of attachment confuse you and with which kinds of mind you relate to them.

Furthermore, meditation is a very quick method of discovering the nature of reality. It’s just like a computer. Computers can check many things extremely quickly, put them together and all of a sudden, pow!—we’re on the moon. Similarly, meditation can quickly make things clean clear, but we don’t have to go to the trouble of learning by trial and error through laboratory experiments. Many people seem to think that making mistakes is a very important part of learning. My point of view is that this is a misconception. “To learn the reality of misery, you have miserable experiences”? I say that this is not so. Through meditation we can learn things clean clear, without having to experience them.

Thus, meditation does not mean the study of Buddhism philosophy and doctrine. It is learning about our own nature: what we are and how we exist.

Some books say that the purpose of meditation is to make us conscious, but despite the usual Western connotation, the terms “awareness” and “consciousness” are not necessarily positive. They can be selfish functions of the ego. Awareness and consciousness do not mean the fully awakened state of knowledge-wisdom. Awareness can be simply an ego-trip. I mean, many times we’re aware and conscious, but since we possess neither wisdom nor understanding, our minds are still polluted. We think that we’re conscious, but our minds are foggy and unclear. Therefore, awareness and consciousness are not exclusively the result of meditation. What has to happen is that through meditation, awareness and consciousness must become knowledge-wisdom.

Another idea that many people have is that meditation is beautiful because it produces calm and relaxation. But calm and relaxation are not necessarily the result of meditation. For example, when we are asleep and our mind has sunk to an unconscious level, we are relaxed. Of course, this is not the same relaxation that meditation brings.

Meditation releases us from the uncontrolled, polluted mind. Automatically, we become joyful and can see meaning in our life. Hence, we can direct the energy of our body, speech and mind in beneficial directions instead of wasting it through not knowing what we want.

In fact, most of the time we don't know what we want. We try something, but then, "Oh, I don't want this." So we try something else, but again, "I don't want this either." Our life is constantly changing, changing, changing; again and again, our energies are sublimated into one thing, then another, and we reach nowhere—doesn't this sound familiar?

We should make sure we understand our behavior. We put ourselves on so many different trips and into so many life situations with no understanding of what direction is really worth going in, thus wasting enormous amounts of time. Meditation purifies and clarifies our view, enabling us to understand the different lifestyles and beliefs of basically every sentient being in the universe. Thus we can see which are worthwhile and which are not. A human being, sitting at one place in meditation, can see all this. It is definitely possible.

When our minds are clean clear, we can choose a beneficial way of life.

What is Dharma?



Lama Yeshe teaching at Lake Arrowhead, California in 1975 during the first American course with Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Photo by Carol Royce-Wilder.

From a teaching at Chenrezig Institute, Eudlo, Australia, September 8, 1975.

Now, supposedly all of you should be Dharma practitioners, including myself. But the question is to know what Dharma really is. Generally, the word Dharma has many meanings, many different connotations. We have philosophical explanations but we don't need to get involved in those. Practically, now, what we are involved in is practicing Dharma.

First of all, it is very difficult to understand what Dharma really means individually, for each of us. The reason is that, to some extent, we have to understand the relationship between Dharma and our mind or consciousness. So, in order to understand that, we should understand that the mind or consciousness has two characteristics. I am sure you have heard the philosophy of relative nature or character and absolute nature or character. And the relative character of the mind or consciousness is—and I am sure people who learned the mental factors from Geshe-la have some understanding, and for them this is easy—but, however, we explain that the relative characteristic of mind or psyche or consciousness is clarity and perception; the clear energy which has the ability to perceive reality, to allow the reflection of reality of all existence. That is what we call the mind. I want you to understand that our mind or consciousness is the clarity and clear perception which can take the reflection of the reality of existence, that is all. If you understand it in that way, the advantage is that when we talk about buddha potentiality then you can say, “Sure, we have buddha potential and we can reach the same level as the Buddha.” We understand the relationship between the Buddha and ourselves.

Otherwise, most of the time, sentient beings, including Australians, have the tendency or dualistic attitude to think, “I am completely dirty and unclean, totally deluded and hopeless, and sinful, negative, wrong, worthless.” Whether we are believers or non-believers, we human beings always have the tendency to identify ourselves in such a negative way; in other words limited, like a passport identity. Our ego gives each of us such a limited identity. The fact that we believe we are such narrow limited energy already begins to suffocate us. We are suffocating because we have a suffocating attitude.

You cannot make me limited; you cannot make me suffocate. My suffocation comes from my own limited neurotic thought. Do you think you can? You see, for that reason, each of us is responsible. I am responsible for my confusion; I am responsible for my happiness or liberation or whatever I think are good things. I am responsible. The Australian animal, the kangaroo, cannot make me satisfied.

Then maybe the question comes that if the mind is clean-clear perception, why do we become confused, mixed up? And why do we become neurotic? Because our way of thinking is wrong, and we do not comprehend our own view of perception. So the perception of consciousness is here on your side, and reality is there on the other side, and the view is somewhere between the reality and the consciousness—the perception view is somewhere between here.

You see, we are too extreme. We are too obsessed with the object and grasp it in such a tight way, the conception is so tight. That is what we call confusion, not the perception itself; perception itself has the clarity to perceive garbage also. Its good side, its natural clarity, perceives the garbage view, but we don't look at that clarity perception, we can't see it. What we see is only unclear. So we do not even touch the relative nature or characteristic of the mind. Forget about the absolute!

Thinking that human beings are hopeless is wrong. My thinking that I am hopeless, always with problems, is not true. From the Buddhist point of view that is not true. Thinking that my consciousness, my mind, is absolutely hopeless is wrong. It is making a limitation which has nothing to do with my own reality.

Somehow, we think that we are clever. We think we are clever, but the true fact is that we make ourselves confused, we make ourselves dull by grasping at the hallucinated wrong view. That could also be Dharma, the philosophy of Dharma, the doctrine of Dharma. Let's say I ask each of you the question, what does Dharma mean, what are you doing, practicing. If I ask, for sure, if you answer what you feel in a really open way, all of you will answer differently. I bet you. That shows; actually, that shows. That signifies that each of you has a different view of what is Dharma and what isn't Dharma. Even just Dharma philosophy itself makes confusion, makes some kind of thinking, trying to say what is Dharma, what isn't Dharma: “This is not Dharma, this is not Dharma, this way yes, this way yes, this way is Dharma, you should not put this way because my Lama says or Buddha says.” Before you contacted Dharma you were already so complicated, now when you take Dharma you become more complicated.

Of course, first, in the beginning you see good, fascinating, “Dharma, wow.” It is kind of new, a new adventure, a new discovery in this Australian kangaroo land. But in fact, if you

don't understand the relationship between your own mind and Dharma, Dharma also becomes the source of confusion. We do know, I have experienced with my students that many times they come crying, crying. Each place I go to—I am a tourist—they have the fantasy, the idea, “OK, Lama Yeshe’s coming, now I will tell him all my problems,” or “Oh, oh, I am so happy to see you,” and they cry, cry, cry, cry. “I broke this, this makes me upset. I told you when I met you a couple of years ago that I will be a good meditator and now I am not meditating therefore I am completely upset.” You see—what good is Dharma? Their meeting Dharma becomes the source of guilt and confusion, so what good is Dharma? I would like to know, what good is Dharma? Is that worthwhile or not worthwhile?

Actually, in truth, the Buddhist teaching is very simple, very simple. Mostly emphasized is knowing these two levels of truth of your own consciousness, and then making it more clear. Making it more clear sounds like it was first totally dirty. It is not necessary to think that way. Also it is not necessary to think that at first it was perfect. What we should understand clean clear is that our conceptualization, which daily interprets things as good or bad, is exaggerating and neurotic, and with it we build up a fantasy, some kind of house. This means we are never in touch with any reality—inner or outer—nor leave it as it is.

Good example, when you grow in Western society—we bring the child into life, into the world—when you are like fifteen or between fifteen and twenty, or twenty-five or thirty or something in that area, confusion starts; more confusion, more neurosis. I want you to understand why. You check it out. The Buddhist teachings show you what life is, your lifestyle. You check out each age, how you were confused; you check out for what reason you were confused. It was because you had the fantasy attitude of grasping a certain reality. You think that is real reality, solid, you have some kind of notion of indestructibility. You think, you believe that way, which is unrealistic.

Especially check out your up and down. Each day, how many times are you up and down, each day how many times do you say good or bad? It is like you believe that you can bring a piece of ice to Queensland, here, and sit on it saying, “Now I want to stay here for a whole year.” How can you stay there? The temperature is too high, so the ice is going to melt. But still you believe, you hang on as if that can happen. Such a polluted ambition. That's the same thing that we have. I definitely say that Western life, the confused Western life, is unbelievably up and down, up and down; more than primitive country life like in Nepal and India. You can see why this up and down disturbs all your life, makes you unstable. Why? Because you hang on to the unrealistic idea that you hold in such a concrete way. There is no way you can hold, no way you can hold.

It's the same thing with relationships that human beings have with each other in the West. A good example, human relationships with each other. It is also like the fantasy with the ice. You put such a piece of ice here and say, “This is fantastic, I want it permanently.” But the nature of ice is to melt, so disappointment is certain. That is why there is one time disappointment, broken heart, two times disappointment, broken heart. You know what broken heart means? I am not sure what broken heart means; I need an interpreter! Broken heart, broken heart, shaking your heart, crying. Each time you cry, cry, down, down, dissatisfaction each time. So you make it, build up, build up disappointment. And each time your heart is broken you get more insecure, more insecure, more insecure. That is the source of the confusion. And also we do not rely on each other. Each time you break with human

beings, “He did this, she did this,” you distrust this, you distrust that, you distrust this. Then you distrust everything.

Perhaps you people think, “Primitive country people hang on and have some satisfaction, but we change, we often change, so we become advanced.” That is not true. That is garbage thinking. I am not saying only the relative point of view; the point is that in your mind, first you think that it is concrete, it is lasting, you determine that, and the next second it disappears. That one, that is the point of suffering. I am not saying you do this, this is wrong, this side. But the conception, always thinking this way, this way, this way; that is painful, that is really painful. That has nothing to do with advanced modern ways of thinking. That makes you more split rather than the complete modern man.

Now, the point is that, remember, the human consciousness, the human mind, has a relative nature which is clean-clear energy and has the ability to reflect all existence. Therefore, if we contemplate on our own relative characteristic or consciousness, which is the clean-clear energy, it automatically eliminates the concepts which make us irritated, trouble us. So, we say the human being is profound. I am sure that Lama Zopa explained the precious human rebirth. The reason it is precious is because it has profound potential, profound quality. Even you can say pure quality, pure quality. The sense of this is that the relative character of the human consciousness is not totally mixed up with negativity or sin. That's all I am saying, that relatively thinking that the human being is negative and sinful is wrong.

In one of Maitreya's texts is an example of how the potential of the human consciousness is clean clear; how it has never been of negative character and will never be of negative character either. It is like the nature of the sky—the sky nature is always clear, it hasn't got the character of clouds and will not have. This example is so clear. The cloud character and the space character are different. It's the same thing that our consciousness has clean-clear nature. But when we are caught by the ego's wrong conception way of thinking, the concepts that identify that-this, that is what is wrong. But I am not saying that that is always wrong, the that-this thinking. But most of the time our thinking that-this has nothing to do with reality, it's only a superficial fantasy.

My point is, that any time, no matter how much you are confused or fearful or in a suffering situation, if you look into the clarity of your consciousness, your mind—it is always there, always there. This is the human beauty: the human being has the ability, the human consciousness has the ability to perceive things—good or bad, whatever it is—and also to use the wisdom which discriminates what is worthwhile and what is not worthwhile. Good or bad, impure or pure, we can discriminate—that is the human beauty. Don't think that human beings are hopeless; that's not true. You are not a good meditator therefore, “I am hopeless,” that is also wrong. “I cannot sit like this for one hour, therefore I am not a meditator.” Again, your limited judgment. We do. Who in Buddhism said that you can only sit this way to become enlightened, who said that? Where is that man? That's why the human beauty, human profundity, is always existent, always existent. Even though intellectually you make yourself too limited, it is always existent.

You should not think, “Buddhism makes me good or bad. But now I have many things to count by, this is good or this is bad.” As long as the relative mind is moving, concepts moving, day and night, twenty-four hours, the karma, or good-bad is existent. It is like, if I

ask you Western people when we produced television, “Is television a fantastic vehicle?” When it first came out everybody said, “Wow, yes, fantastic.” But now maybe some hippies say television is horrible, because there are too many garbage reflections. Similarly with our consciousness; it is kind of like a clean-clear screen: it has the ability to reflect phenomena. So you look at this one. Here you have real television; your consciousness is television, so we should look at it, we should contemplate on that clarity, and penetrate. So in that way we can discover tranquility and peace.

When we say “Dharma,” Dharma is our consciousness, part of our mind. Dharma book is not Dharma. Dharma teacher is not necessarily Dharma. Dharma philosophy is not Dharma. Dharma doctrine is not Dharma. Dharma is the action of part of our wisdom energy which has the power to eliminate one thing in particular, the concepts of delusion. In other words, it becomes the antidote or solution to particular delusions and dissatisfaction. Then it is worthwhile; that is the reason the Dharma is worthwhile. That's the reason that we say Dharma is holy, Dharma is worthwhile. Otherwise if you understand wrongly, Dharma is not worthwhile, Dharma becomes a problem. You know—we already talked before how Dharma becomes a problem. So developing comprehension of the relative mind or relative consciousness is the source of developing comprehension of the absolute character of the mind.

Also, that relative mind is an interdependent, composite gathering, interdependent gathering of energy; not one absolute thing. When we say, “I am deluded,” you cannot blame this side, “The perception side is bad, I want to smash.” Also you cannot blame the object side, “That is bad, I want to smash.” Let's say, when you have some dirt on your face, you look in the mirror—“Wow! I am dirty, ugly. Oooh!” You cannot blame the mirror, nor can you blame your face, “I want to cut this off.” So what, what? The thing is that the gathering makes this phenomenon, isn't it?

So the same thing, no matter how much we think “I am bad” or “I am terrible,” the conception thinking these things, if you check it out it is a composite gathering. Many factors gather, and then we say that, “That is this, that, this.” If you know all of these things, each part gathers to make the relative phenomena, you can understand that there is no concrete relative phenomenon inherently existent. Then you can see. All relative phenomena are superficial, impermanent, momentary, set up in such a way; then we say that, this, that, this, that, this, including ourselves.

You see, actually, it has never occurred to our conception of ego, it has never dreamed, that the entire relative character of the I is composite energy, many parts of energy have gathered to become a bubble or some kind of cloud. As a matter of fact, our body is like a cloud—one bunch of clouds come, one bunch of energy comes—this is the body. Each day when you wash some part of the energy goes from the skin; each time you breathe some kind of energy goes out here with the breath. Then you eat and again some kind of energy goes inside. I think you know these kinds of things better than I, maybe.

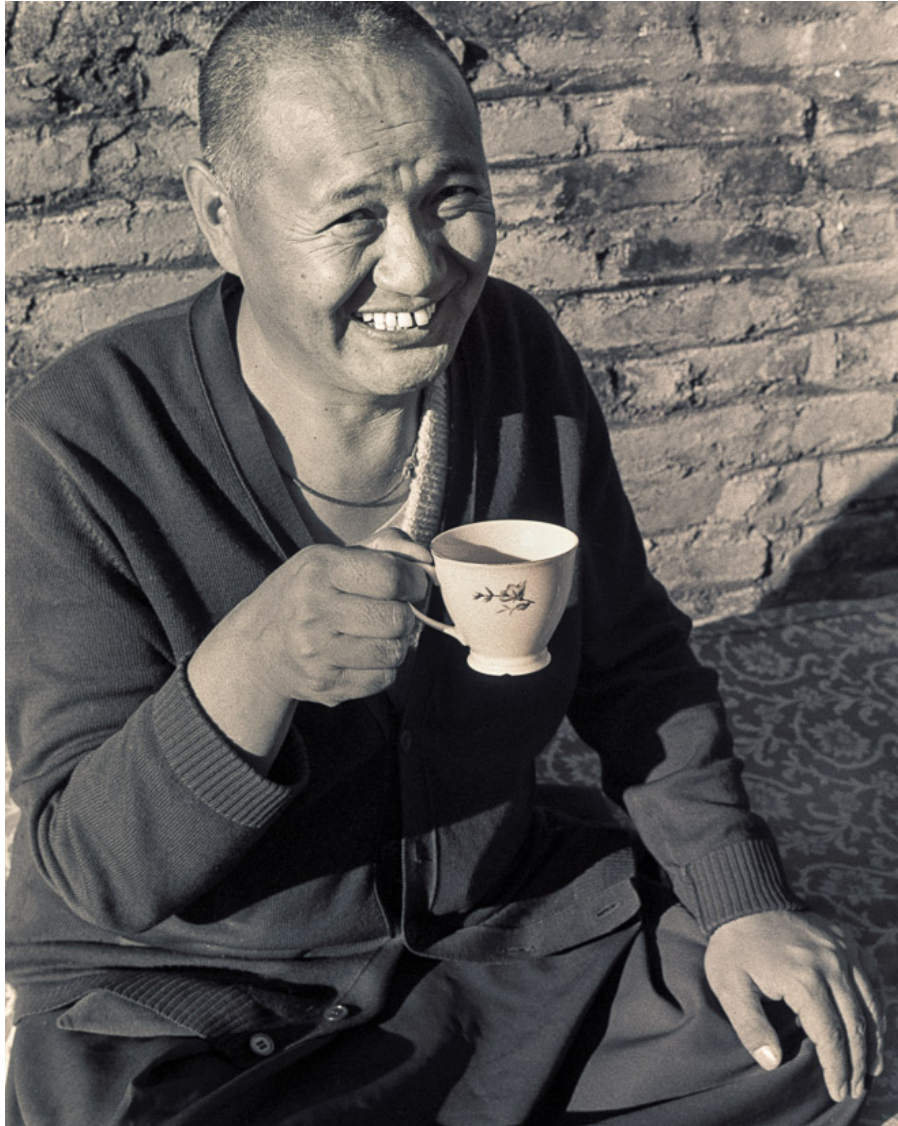
Therefore, the ego mind, the conception of ego, has never understood this relative notion of what I am, who I am, this relative way of constructing reality. It seems sort of indestructible. “I am, therefore you cannot say I am bad. I am always good.” Actually, when you say “I am good,” you try to prove “I am good,” that means you believe you are bad. I tell you,

psychologically, inside you believe you are bad. Superficially you try to prove it by saying, “I am good, I am good, I am good.” That's wrong—your mind is psychologically sick. You don't accept the relative truth.

When you begin questioning that, the view and the concepts of your ego mind, then the possibility of opening, of understanding the absolute quality or characteristic of consciousness begins. If you just leave it, if you never question, in other words if you believe that your concepts and your concrete view are true, then there is no way for you to enter discovering the absolute quality of consciousness or mind.

Especially, I think that Western scientific education has developed that a great deal—that the whole thing, myself and the whole thing, the object, is some kind of concrete existence. That is wrong. I want you to understand that the Western scientific way of thinking, philosophy, has basically built up the concrete dualistic entity. I want you to understand that, instead of being proud. Education gives us the tendency to hang on to this basic way of existence, to hold the world as concrete: concrete Australia, concrete Australian beings. So, we suffocate easily. Maybe you freak out now. “Now this man is making a revolution for us! Wait a minute!”

A Perfect Object of Refuge



Lama Yeshe having tea at Kopan Monastery, 1978.

From a teaching at Manjushri Institute, Cumbria, England, September 1976.

How many different religions are there in the world today? I'm not criticizing, but just look at how many followers they have and how these people are practicing their religion. What kind of refuge do they take? Check up.

Forget about materialists, who haven't discovered any religion; they only take refuge in material things. But even religious people, who have a little better understanding, still mostly take refuge in ridiculous ways. For example, statues of Lord Buddha are material objects; if we take refuge in them, we too are taking refuge in material things.

Many people are like this. They have no understanding that it's only the light of wisdom that can elevate you into liberation, nirvana, salvation or whatever you want to call it, so they take

refuge in mere atoms instead. They also engage in mistaken practices. Like in Nepal, many people believe that their religion says they have to sacrifice animals to the gods, so at certain times they can kill as many as 100,000 sentient beings in a day. The streets run with blood; if you were to go there you might slip and fall in it. This is just so wrong. I've seen the same thing about Africa on TV. They sacrifice animals and rub their blood on the god to appease him. Such wrong conceptions and wrong paths lead you to ruin your life.

I'm not criticizing other religions, merely trying to point out reality—if you engage in such practices you're leading the wrong kind of life. We're allowed to explain the way things are. Saying that one thing is right and another is wrong is not criticism. If, with a biased, deluded mind, you say, "My religion is better than yours; yours is just wrong," that might be considered to be criticism, but if, with discriminating wisdom, you point out the difference between right actions and wrong, that's a completely different thing.

It's similar in Buddhist countries, too. Simple, uneducated people take refuge by going to temples and folding their hands at their heart. That's how they take refuge. They light candles, make prostrations and pray hard for something but don't understand how their everyday actions could be leading them to liberation or the unified state of buddhahood and so forth.

The advantage of growing up in the West is that you receive a good education and intellectual training. In general, people from common Eastern families aren't trained to think, nor do they have much religious training, so all they can do is take refuge in the simplest way. Western people are very intelligent and good communicators and can examine all of the world's religions. That's good; you can see the whole picture rather than a narrow section of it.

And when you do survey the entire range of possibilities, you can see how worthwhile it is to take refuge in the preeminent qualities of the Buddha, the wisdom of the Dharma and the support of the Sangha, your Dharma friends who give you a good visualization and help you in your practice.

It's so worthwhile to take refuge in that which can truly liberate you. You have to understand that. Otherwise you'll see people taking refuge in the sun, the moon or something else up in the sky. People look up at the sky and, thinking God is up there, fold their hands and cry, "Please help me." They look up pleading for God's help, yet down here on earth engage in ridiculous actions, somehow expecting him to reach down and say, "My child, come to me." God can't guide you that way. It's impossible.

However, taking refuge in Lord Buddha's good qualities and Dharma wisdom is not some kind of partisan political act—"Now I'm a member of the Buddhist party." Be careful. It's easy to develop that kind of attitude through attachment to your own ideas. You think, "I like the Buddha's philosophy; now I belong to his party," and then look down on others. You look down on others but you don't look within yourself.

Lord Buddha's philosophy is actually a way for us to relate to our own everyday life. It's a boat to cross the river of delusion, an elevator to the heights of everlasting peace. Its

purpose is to take us beyond delusion, to make our mind happy and healthy. That's why we take refuge, why we practice Dharma. Be careful that that's your purpose too.

Lord Buddha's teachings are incredible, absolutely too much! You can see how they can elevate you, but when you listen to or try to practice teachings, your conceptions flavor them. It's like when you bake a cake you can add this flavor or that. Similarly, Dharma means one thing but you flavor it to mean something else; Buddha means this, but you make it that. It's actually extremely difficult to act purely with the right understanding of reality.

However, it's so worthwhile, really worthwhile, just to discover that, instead of superstitiously looking outside of yourself, seeking happiness out there, there's something much better than the material world to be found within. Discovering that and deciding to seek happiness within you rather than out there, you take refuge in the wisdom of Dharma and the knowledge of the Buddha, knowing that if you act in accordance with his knowledge, you too can attain his level of understanding and become a buddha yourself.

That's why we practice the Guru Shakyamuni yoga method. Normally we have the dualistic mind that tells us, "Buddha's up there; I'm down here, nothing." Guru yoga closes that gap: Shakyamuni Buddha dissolves into us and we unify with him. By training in this way we destroy the dualistic mind.

We should be open and honest with ourselves and admit that for countless lives, and even in all of this one, we have been taking refuge in the external world. What has been the result? Confusion and more attachment. Who has the power to release us from all this? It's only the Buddha and his knowledge-wisdom. Through his profound wisdom, he's the only one who can show us the reality of who and what we are.

Of course, it's not only about us; we're not the ones with the greatest suffering. All mother sentient beings are in the same situation—seeking satisfaction in the external world with the wrong attitude and experiencing misery as a result. Although all they want is happiness, because of using the wrong method, they end up more miserable than ever. So we also need to generate compassion for them.

Lord Buddha, the ultimate physician, is a perfect object of refuge because he has perfect knowledge. Ordinary, worldly doctors don't even come close to this. They cannot see our inner nature, the evolution of our delusions or how to attain liberation, so of course they can't show us all this. Lord Buddha can, and does so clean clear.

He also has universal compassion and doesn't discriminate between beings. For example, let's say my dear wife loves me and I love her...we clearly discriminate in such relationships. Lord Buddha's compassion, however, is non-dual; we can completely rely upon his universal compassion. We can never rely on somebody who is selfish, unequal or partial—such a person is obviously not a perfect object of refuge; not completely reliable.

Lord Buddha, with his knowledge and universal compassion, shows us the light of Dharma clean clear. This is actually medicine, and through it we can realize the light of wisdom within ourselves. It's possible.

So think, “From now on until I gain perfect and complete enlightenment, I forever take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.”

The most profound way of doing this is with great compassion for all universal living beings without partiality for family and friends. This way is an incredibly powerful way of destroying the fanatical, schizophrenic view of the deluded mind.

The First Clear Step



Lama Yeshe at De Kosmos, Netherlands, 1979. Photo by Ina Van Delden.

This teaching was given at the seventh Kopan meditation course, held in November-December 1974. It is one of four teachings given to new students at the course by Lama Yeshe.

From Lama's point of view, Buddhism is about you. The subject of this meditation course is not Lama—Lama is not interested in talking about Lama—the subject of this meditation course is you; this course is about you.

So, learning Buddhism—learning about yourself—is that simple. It really is such a simple thing.

And Lama is not trying to be mystical, as written in some books, saying, “I am a magic Lama.” We don’t try to teach you that way. Actually, we don’t need to show you how to make magic—your mind is already magic, isn’t it? We’ve always made magic: for countless lives, and even from the time of our birth until now, we’ve been making magic, cheating ourselves. Nobody else has had to teach us—we’ve taught ourselves to cheat ourselves.

Our schizophrenic mind always blames others for our problems. From its point of view, “He is causing my problems, she’s causing my problems, my parents are causing my problems, this society is causing my problems.” From Lama’s point of view, these are completely wrong conceptions; this way of thinking is schizophrenia, this is mental disease; with these wrong beliefs, misconceptions, you will never be able to solve problems.

We often think, “This is negative; that is negative.” But we have a wrong conception about what causes negativity and the problems we experience are reactions to this wrong conception.

Therefore, you have to be determined that during this meditation course you are going to realize completely that the problem is your misconception and that the blame definitely does not lie with others.

We always think, “He makes my problems, she makes my problems,” because our mind is not integrated. Our mind is split so we always blame this and that. We don’t have straight understanding, right understanding, right view, right wisdom—that’s why we’re always confused.

But this time you have to decide clearly what really makes you happy and joyful and your life meaningful, and what makes you unhappy, sorrowful and depressed. If you come to this conclusion then your meditation course will have been worthwhile.

Don’t think that meditation means merely sitting still trying to concentrate on only one thing. It’s not just that—that’s not nearly enough. If it were, that would mean that when you went back down to Kathmandu your concentration would disappear and being left without wisdom there would be no benefit from having taken the meditation course. Rather, you should have great determination to develop discriminating wisdom by understanding perfectly clearly—at least intellectually—what really causes problems. In this way, even when you are not sitting cross-legged, trying to concentrate, but walking down a Kathmandu street or back in the West, you have something to hold onto, something that allows you to judge how your mind is interpreting things—you are aware.

Otherwise, if you don’t have at least some intellectual method, how can you check yourself? There is no other way that you can check to see if your mind is on some illusory, samsaric trip, full of wrong conceptions or perceiving the right view. Without this, how can you know?

Why is it that many people say, “I’ve been meditating two years, six years, more ... but I’m nowhere. I’ve gained nothing.”? It’s because they don’t have understanding knowledge-wisdom; they cannot discriminate between right actions and wrong; they can’t see.

Maybe you can say intellectually, “Oh, what is right? What is wrong? Right and wrong are the same thing.” I’m sure many people in the West say “Oh, what’s right? What’s the use of saying this, Lama? It’s all the same thing. Samsara is the same as nirvana.” But this is a wrong conception; everything is mixed up. They cannot discriminate between what is reality and what is false, and all they are doing is using the terminology of Dharma wisdom in the wrong way.

Of course, in absolute terms the ultimate reality of right and wrong, or samsara and nirvana, is the same thing. But when somebody makes you agitated or angry and you get red in the face and start to tremble, can you say your peacefulness and your anger are the same thing or not? That example shows you reality and you should not get hung up on some intellectual point of view that is way up in the sky, while you are stuck down on the earth all tied up by that. It does not help because the words that you say are not true.

If somebody says to you, “Oh you are such a bad person,” and someone else says, “Oh you are so good,” it should never affect your mind. Good and bad come from within you and other people cannot make you good or bad. You have to realize this and once you have, you cannot be moved by what people say.

But, if somebody tells you how good you are and you say, “Oh yes, yes, yes,” grasping at it, and somebody else tells you how bad you are and you say, “No, no, no,” getting depressed as a result, that shows that the words you say—“Good and bad are the same thing”—come from merely intellectual garbage rather than from the realization of reality. If you really realized reality, it is reflected in your actions, which are not in conflict with your words. So whatever situation you are in, it does not matter—your mind is not moved, you always have control.

We usually think that our point of view is correct. Yet if somebody comes along and says, “You’re completely wrong,” we get nervous because we’ve picked up his idea—and that’s all it is—and believed what we are doing is wrong. The idea alone makes us freak out. So our becoming agitated and freaked out does not come from absolute reality, does it? All we have picked up is the relative idea, yet we have become confused and upset. This shows how we are, how our relative mind functions in normal, everyday life.

Checking this is much more interesting than talking a lot about some philosophical point of view, some higher subject. This isn’t interesting; it does not help us because it is merely intellectual, it is still an idea. So when you get angry? Your anger is not an idea! Your jealousy is not an idea!

And also, you should know that Buddhism is not a diplomatic religion. Lamas are not diplomatic people! Without hesitation Lama will tell you about dirty things and kaka. It’s true!

We always talk diplomatically, saying, “Oh, you’re nice, you’re nice,” or “How are you today?” and so on. Of course, this is necessary in everyday life when we contact other human beings; being respectful to others is worthwhile. But when talking about the truth, Dharma wisdom, being diplomatically nice cannot help. You have to check up the nature of negativity; you have to check up the nature of positive. You should check up every day. But I’m sure you people—all European people—always want to see only positive things in their life, and the negative side gets hidden beneath your sweater!

But this is not the character of Lord Buddha. This is not the character of Buddhism. Really! Buddhism tells you exactly the way you think, the way you lead your daily life. Therefore, when you really communicate with Lama or with a Dharma book or whatever, you can correct your actions. It is fantastic for your mind—you can solve your schizophrenic mental problem. And then, whether others tell you that you are right or wrong, it does not matter. Your being right or wrong does not depend upon the words of other people.

So you can see how much we’re suffering from schizophrenic mental disease. Somebody will tell you that you are good: “Oh yes, yes—I’m good,” you’re up. Somebody tells you that you are bad: “Oh no, no—I’m bad,” you’re down. So that’s really our mind’s nature. That mind is samsara. Lama thinks that is samsara. Lord Buddha thinks that is samsara.

What I am saying is that you should have perfect determination, knowing that understanding knowledge-wisdom is the only solution to problems, the only source of happiness and joy.

So that we call Dharma. Understanding wisdom is Dharma. Dharma is not this robe! And actual Dharma has nothing whatsoever to do with the culture of a particular country: it is not the culture of Western people nor the culture of Eastern people. Culture is the point of view of the ordinary people, the unwise majority who spend their whole time grasping at sense pleasures with attachment. Dharma wisdom has nothing whatsoever to do with the point of view of the foolish common people. Perhaps you could say that your understanding knowledge-wisdom is your own culture.

Lama does not discriminate in favour of Eastern culture. You try to interpret the nature of your own mind, the nature of your own motivation. When you come to the conclusion that understanding knowledge-wisdom alone can make your life happy, joyful and meaningful, and is the only solution to problems, then you no longer hold the common view that, “As long as I have ice cream, I’m happy; if I can’t get ice cream, I’m unhappy.” I mean, this is just an example, but we always think this way, don’t we? It’s a wrong conception, a wrong conception.

You know the Western way of life; since you were born, your parents have been teaching you what are the best things to eat, how to be healthy and, especially, how to show that you are good. Everything is for show, for showing others how good you are, for ego. So your mind also grows that way. You think, “I should have good things. Comfortable property, a comfortable house, a comfortable wife, a comfortable husband. Perfect this, this, this” So much dreaming! You check this up—it’s not just Lama’s words, you know. You check up.

Check your own life’s experiences. Once you might have dreamed, “If I could only get this I’d be happy, perfectly happy.” You decided something like that. So you got what you

wanted but two or three days later: “Oh if only I had that, then I’d be happy.” Such experiences accumulate because the wrongly conceiving mind, believing incorrectly, always functions in this way. The constant interest, “I want this, I want this,” can never finish. Desire is unlimited.

Of course, in the West the great explosion of material makes people think, “Ah, I can feed my desire. As long as I have money, I can buy everything and satisfy myself.” You think like that, but it’s a wrong conception; it’s not true. How can you satisfy desire by feeding it? The philosophical or psychological point of view of Lord Buddha is that this is impossible—desire is unlimited and there is no way that you will be satisfied by feeding it with objects of desire. Impossible! Impossible! You check up now—we can debate on it. True, really!

So you can really see, to make your life meaningful, to satisfy your mind, the only solution is Dharma knowledge-wisdom; knowledge-wisdom—understanding your own psychological nature. That is what makes you really happy; that makes you controlled. It’s natural, it’s natural.

But perhaps you people think that being happy through control is pretending—a pretence by religious people. But it’s not pretending, it is natural. You check up now, your experience of these first seven days of the meditation course. Just one hour’s good meditation and good concentration in the morning and the whole day goes so smoothly. Just one hour’s meditational experience and for all the hours of the day you can be healthy and happy, communicating with others well instead of nervously. So this is your own experience—experience, not just an idea. That’s much better, isn’t it?

You know—after one hour you can control your mind and be happy, just naturally. From Lama’s point of view this is much more realistic than saying, “Everything is the same thing; I don’t want to hear that it is not.” That’s just an idea. An idea is not realistic.

Realistic means action! Action! Your action. For instance, your present action of checking is more realistic. Although relative, of course, still relative.

So you see, through your own small experience, the experience of your morning meditation, you can discover that your life—your body and mind—can progress continuously until you discover everlasting, blissful peace within your mind. You don’t discover it with intellect or Lama’s words but through your own experience.

It’s so logical: if meditating for a short time in the morning gives you the control to be evenly happy all day, instead of up and down, then by keeping this meditation up for a year, you can be peaceful for two or three years. That peaceful mind can be developed continuously until you become everlastingly peaceful, joyful and understanding with people. I mean, you can see this possibility; that’s what Lama’s talking about.

I think it is most worthwhile each morning you people putting much effort into sitting here in this unusual position, with pain in your knees. You have some understanding to do this; it is meaningful. It is action rather than hypocritical talk about Dharma or religion.

Dharma or religion are not merely a philosophy, a doctrine, an idea, not just words. When you put it into action you can feel, “My life is hopeful, meaningful.” But if you don’t put it

into action, keeping only the idea, you become depressed. Then you think, “Oh I am hopeless. I cannot do that. My life is not meaningful.”

You don’t put the idea into action, so you think like this. But if you do, you will know it’s really worthwhile, because you can see the result within you. You can see your karma—acting with such wisdom brings such a good result—through your own experience. Then you can say: “Ah, I think my life is hopeful and useful; it can be meaningful.” Then you can solve problems and eradicate depression.

Often you are up and down. Many times, you say “Oh I’m hopeless.” This comes from being hypocritical. You talk about Dharma, but don’t act. You don’t actualize; you’re not integrating your life with Dharma. Therefore, you get depressed.

You people think that Dharma or religion is just an idea, but it is not. Therefore, we make mental rules for you to observe while you are here. Those rules are to help you—it’s not that Lama is on some power trip! It is useful very useful, really useful. You see, Lord Buddha’s psychological treatment of the patient is not wrathful, not wrathful. We don’t put you in jail. Instead, we put your mind into such an atmosphere of discipline. This is Lord Buddha’s treatment, psychology. The environment created by mental rules is our mental hospital.

Of course, you people are mentally healthy. I’m joking when I say “mental hospital.” But we can interpret the rules in such a way. Still, you need to check up continuously and develop by realizing your own mental attitudes, which is not the approach of Western psychologists. The way psychiatrists tend to interpret problems only increases the patient’s superstitious mind instead of decreasing it. For example, telling a person their suffering experience is the result of something their mother said or did during their childhood only produces more problems. It makes them angry with their parents, which merely makes them more sick. These are wrong interpretations. Instead of trying to get you to understand your own nature they use different methods; the Buddhist methods of psychological treatment and those of the West are not the same. But that’s just for now—who knows how it will be in the future? Western psychologists often take something from here, something from there and put it into Western terminology, so you can guess how it might go.

Therefore, this meditation course is not easy—we know it is not easy. Why? Because Lama wants you to become the perfect psychologist, fully knowing your own mind and others. So for you to become a psychologist through Lord Buddha’s method takes time; and the process itself is difficult. We understand that it really is not easy, and you also should understand this point. I mean, how many years does it take for a Western student to become a psychologist? And we only have a month to try to make you a psychologist, to make you perfectly healthy mentally, understanding what you are, how you are. That is all we try to do, but it’s a lot, isn’t it? I think so! I think it is a lot. But worthwhile.

It is possible, you know. For someone who has wisdom and can put it all together, it is possible to quickly discover all this, rather than always changing one place for another, thinking, “Oh, this place is no good,” going somewhere else, and then leaving that place for yet another. One day playing with monkeys, then, “Oh monkeys are no good,” then playing with dogs. Then, “Oh cats are not good,” and then another something.

This is not like that. This school, or whatever it is called, is not for only learning ideas. Here, at the same time ideas are received, they are put into action. Action! Action! That's the way you learn. So learning with action is much more difficult than learning ideas at the university from professors; putting yourself into action is much more difficult than just talking about ideas.

I think that's all. Thank you so much, thank you. You check up, wisely check up. Thank you. I'm very happy, thank you so much. Excuse me, thank you.

Integrating What You've Heard



Lama Yeshe teaching at the 12th Meditation Course, Kopan Monastery, 1979. Photo by Jeff Nye.

This is an edited transcript of the earliest recorded Lama Yeshe teaching by at least two years and was given at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, on January 2, 1972. The recording is the only one that has survived from the early 1970s, when Lama Yeshe gave Sunday afternoon lectures at Kopan Monastery and people would come from where they were staying in the immediate vicinity (very few people were able to stay at Kopan at the time) or Kathmandu.

You've spent quite a lot of time with me now, listening to my explanations of Lama Tsongkhapa's approach to both the fundamental human problem and your individual ones. After all these months, you need to come to a conclusion from what you've read and heard; you need to integrate the teachings within yourself.

Listening to my words you might think, "Yes, what he's saying is true," but experience and actualization are very different from mere intellectual understanding. Therefore, to experiment with what your intellectual knowledge-wisdom has understood from what I've said, to see if it exists in reality or not, is very important.

Otherwise, what happens is that, while we understand intellectually that happiness, unhappiness and so forth do not depend on outside conditions but on the interpretations of our wrong conception mind, we still believe what our ego tells us; we don't realize the meaning of our words; we don't follow our intellectual understanding wisdom. Although our intellectual knowledge-wisdom agrees that external phenomena are not the main thing, that

the objects our senses perceive depend on the interpretation of our own mind, we don't actually understand this; we have not yet realized it. To arrive at this deeper wisdom you have to experiment within yourself, without listening, without reading.

That's the reason retreat is very important. Whereas modern science conducts experiments on external phenomena, we experiment internally, examining mental phenomena introspectively and penetratingly.

So I think you people have gained enough intellectual understanding but have not yet actualized the teachings to the point of gaining realizations. Therefore, at this stage you need to say, "I understand that I've been following my old habits for countless lives. I no longer want to go on like this; I want to stop following the interpretations of my wrong conceptions." If you begin to experiment and act in accordance with your intellectual understanding, then you'll really affect your mind.

Otherwise, you might know all the words, but when real trouble comes you go berserk, the same as you always have. If you don't change your mind, you will continue to react in the same old way, no matter who you are—a lama, a yogi, a meditator in a cave—arrogantly thinking, "I'm special." If you get down and depressed when difficulties arise, that shows you have no understanding.

The ancient Mahayana practitioners of India and Tibet would first listen to teachings and study deeply. When they felt they had gained enough knowledge, they would go into solitude and, avoiding all contact with other people, look completely within and experiment with inner realizations. It's now necessary for you people to do the same thing.

What's the point of listening, listening, listening to teachings, collecting words, but then not integrating what you've heard with your mind or gaining realizations? You're not here to learn language from me! Your English is much better than mine. You're not here just to listen and collect words; don't believe that it's only through listening to words that you can gain realizations. That's a wrong conception.

You have to integrate into experience whatever you understand. Once you have gained experience and realization of one topic you need to go on to the next, which takes you further down the path. Without moving forward step by step, it's impossible to progress; you can't simply collect high-sounding words while leaving your actions down here on the ground. Collecting words that talk of flying to the moon doesn't mean you fly to the moon; with words alone you remain earthbound. It's the same if you think arrogantly that you can get higher realizations simply by listening to Lama's words. Without actualizing that which you understand and integrating it within you, you can't.

We think we learn from people: "I spent a long time with him and learned a lot." What did you learn? I don't think you learn from somebody by spending time with that person. You learn from yourself, from what your own mind says—everything's in there. For example, the thoughts of everybody in the universe are already within you, so you can learn from your own mind; others' expressions are already within your mind; if you listen to yourself, to your mind, you'll find others' expressions are there. So you might say "I'm learning from him," but I don't think you are. Listen to your own mind; check yourself—that's the way to learn

and solve your own inner problems. I don't think it's so beneficial to always be looking, listening and searching outside. That's just externalism.

Check up, for example, why you can't stay alone for a week without seeing or talking to anybody. Why can't you? What makes it difficult? The difficulty comes from your own mind.

You should realize that all such experiences—happiness, peace, good, bad—completely depend on the interpretation of the individual wrong conception mind. If you realize the teachings beyond words, you'll really be able to solve your inner problems.

So from this Sunday until February the 28th there'll be no more of these classes. At that time Lama Zopa will begin a one-month meditation course. But if it's beneficial, from two to three next Sunday afternoon you should come together for a one-hour practical Mahayana philosophical discussion without me present. If any unresolved issues remain or complications arise, if it's useful, I can come for an hour on Monday afternoon to answer questions.

Why am I stopping these Sunday afternoon talks? You are beautiful people; I like spending time with you. One thing is that I have duties around the center; during the day I need to keep an eye on how things are going around here [the first Kopan gompa was being built around this time]. These can interrupt the class and that might disappoint you. Also, for the next couple of months I want to retreat in the mornings and evenings. So there are several reasons I want to stop for now. I hope you won't be angry!

Next Sunday's discussion should cover subjects such as: What is Dharma? What is samsara? Where do samsaric beings come from and why are we born on this earth? Why do we die? What causes death? How do the twelve links come and go? Those things are necessary to understand. None of this is talking about external phenomena; this is all about their inner expression. Without knowing how these things express themselves within you, you can't go beyond the wrong conception mind.

So if you're going to come to these discussion groups, read and think about these topics and then question each other with compassion. Discussion, or debate, doesn't mean, "I understand; you don't." It's not like that. Compassion between Dharma friends means, if I don't know the answer to a question I'm given, I think about it and try to reply as best I can; if my answer is unsatisfactory, you kindly explain the right answer to me so that my understanding will become more definite and not like a yo-yo. Most of the time our knowledge is like a yo-yo: today I say yes; tomorrow somebody contradicts me and I say no. This really is a problem.

The Mahayana Buddhist philosophical doctrine is like a diamond, indestructible, but our inner doctrine, our understanding, is like a yo-yo. Doctrine means inner understanding, not words in a book. Therefore, if you really understand doctrine, things make much more sense within you.

What I mean when I say "yo-yo" is the situation where somebody tells you something and you think, "Oh, that's nice," then somebody else tells you something contradictory and again you think, "Oh, that's nice." Accepting every interesting thing you hear just makes you

confused. Somebody persuasive tells you one thing and you accept it; somebody gives you good reasons for something contradictory and you accept that too. Two opposite things cannot both be correct, but because your discriminating knowledge-wisdom is weak, you have no ability to discern what's right. So, like a yo-yo, your understanding goes up and down according to what people say.

You're never sure of anything. You think that Dharma is interesting, but when you encounter a few difficulties you think Dharma is complicated and give it up. That means you don't really understand.

Dharma philosophy is not just ideas. Practical Mahayana Dharma philosophy is within you. It's about your consciousness, your conceptions, not trees and plants. Biology doesn't affect your mind but understanding practical Mahayana Buddhism does; it makes your understanding better and stronger.

In the past, religious doctrine and expression were widespread in many countries but because such things are inner phenomena, people didn't really understand them. What they understood much more easily is the doctrine of materiality—people understand objects of the five senses without being taught. They see others get jobs, work, make money and buy things. It's obvious; nobody has to explain it.

Because material philosophy is so much easier to grasp than spiritual philosophy, nowadays many more people are interested in material things than in religion. This is simply the way the human mind evolves. It's so simple: you work, you get material; you make something, you get material. You don't need anybody to teach you this. It would be silly to teach this in school—everybody knows it automatically: if you work, you get things; if you sell something, you get money. This is the philosophy, doctrine or conception of materialism.

Check within yourself—don't look outside. How strong is your material philosophy? Don't think, "I have no philosophy or doctrine." Everybody does. Your concepts are your doctrine. The idea you have that it's better to go out for dinner than to cook at home—that, in a small way, is your doctrine, your philosophy. Don't think doctrine and philosophy can only be grand ideas.

I know you people understand something, but you haven't realized it; you haven't actualized what you know intellectually. But if you engage in philosophical discussion—how, why, reason, enumerate, look, think—and go deeper in a skillful way, you will develop great understanding.

A simple example: go home and check out your mother's philosophy. It's reflected in the way she arranges things in her house: "I want this here; I don't want it there. Don't tell me to change it." This is her philosophy, her doctrine.

Now, say somebody says to you, "I don't believe in the spiritual life any more. I don't think that happiness and unhappiness depend on the interpretation of your own mind." What are you going to say? What sort of rational, logical refutation can you come up with? Saying, "I believe in the Dharma because Lama said so," means nothing. You have to come up with the why and how.

“Happiness and suffering are externally caused. The shape and color of phenomena do not depend on the mind. Things exist in and of themselves, out there. You can make them; you can see them.” If somebody tells you that, how do you reply? If you have truly realized the way in which things exist you can calmly, slowly, refute these statements without emotion and make the other person understand. But if you have a yo-yo mind, you might actually come around to that person’s point of view and that can be the end of your spiritual path. It doesn’t take much to change a weak person’s mind.

When the Chinese tortured the Tibetans, they’d lock them in a cell without food or clothing and say, “You believe in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Let them feed and clothe you.” Those with little understanding might think that since the Buddha didn’t bring them food or clothing in prison, the Buddha doesn’t exist. But the Dharma teachings don’t say that Buddha gives you food. People who think that Buddha gives food or Buddha causes problems misunderstand Buddhist doctrine; when you tell them, “When you were in prison and asked Buddha for food he didn’t give you any; therefore there’s no Buddha,” they might accept that as true. And even though it’s false logic it can be enough to destroy the faith of somebody with no understanding.

The same thing can happen to you. You come here to Kopan for teachings with certain expectations and when the conditions change you make some excuse and leave. This shows that you don’t have a rational, logical understanding of the diamond philosophy of Buddhism. Don’t believe the Western view that philosophy simply means conversation. It’s deeper than that; it’s about how things affect the mind: what causes bring what results and what can stop them.

Deep understanding is very, very important. And Mahayana philosophy is also very practical; it doesn’t simply describe external phenomena. Everything is linked to better understanding.

I’m not telling you what to do. I don’t care. But I am saying that if you’re interested, make sure that what you do becomes real. I know you understand something; I know you’ve discovered something. But much of what you’ve understood is simply intellectual and not yet at the level of realization. Therefore you need something more.

So the topics for next Sunday are what I mentioned. We’ll decide those for the following week next Sunday.

That’s all, thank you so much. If you have any questions, please ask.

Olivia: Isn’t understanding also very much dependent on good karma?

Lama: Of course. Good karma means that you have to work for understanding. Without your putting in the effort, there’s no understanding. Understanding doesn’t just fall out of the sky, like that. You have to put much effort into meditating. That’s what makes Olivia a smiling, happy person. Without Olivia’s effort there’s no relaxed, happy Olivia. The deeper your understanding the more you’re relaxed, the greater your happiness. Definitely.

Olivia: I think my understanding has more to do with Buddha than me.

Lama: Yes, when you understand Buddha's qualities within yourself, you become peaceful. So of course it has something to do with Buddha, because you discover these things through his teachings. But that doesn't mean Buddha gives it to you bam! just like that.

The many beings who solved their own problems and attained everlasting peaceful realizations did so by practicing the Buddha's teachings; to the extent that they were practicing his teachings it has something to do with him. Although he passed away over 2,600 years ago, the power of his mind still permeates the world. We're enjoying it here even now. But we have to make an effort. For example, if you want that delicious Kathmandu cake, you don't get it up here at Kopan just by thinking about it. You have to be practical: get your money, go buy it and bring it back.

Look at how you live here in Nepal. The houses are cold; the toilets are not what you're used to. You can live much more comfortably than you do here, but you still enjoy yourself here: "I'm much happier here; I have everything I need." It all depends on your mind. That's what you've discovered. Your mind does not need luxury accommodations to be peaceful and happy. Nobody told you this is good; you discovered it for yourself. Even if somebody told you it would be good here, without understanding you wouldn't be interested. You can't just put anybody into this situation. But with understanding, you enjoy your Nepalese house, Dharma friends and simple food.

Olivia: I think the essential things are here in Kopan.

Lama: Thank you so much. If there are no more questions...

Steve: I have one question. [Yes, thank you.] You had mentioned that one can't learn, or whatever anyone can tell oneself, you already know, inside. [I don't follow you completely.] You said that whatever you can hear from someone else, whatever someone else has said...

Lama: You can hear what your mind has to say but you have to know how to listen. Lord Buddha spoke about airplanes and rockets but he didn't learn about those things in school.

Olivia: Many times you mention that Lord Buddha said this and that but we don't have those translations.

Lama: If you want those things translated, bring me a hundred writers; I'll bring the books and we can translate them. We have books in which Lord Buddha spoke about medicine, chemistry, all kinds of things. None of those things existed on earth at that time but he listened to his inner voice and could see, imagine, how things would be on earth in future times. He saw such things much more clearly than we see each other sitting here right now.

Q: You mentioned answering questions with compassion to help people understand something that you understand. How do we develop compassion with understanding?

Lama: Developing compassion means first understanding that all human problems come from the ignorant mind. On that basis we develop the wish to share our own understanding with others, wanting them to reach beyond their ignorance. Most of the time people investigate external phenomena, objects of the ego, but it's much more beneficial to learn about everlasting peaceful liberation, which is totally beyond ego.

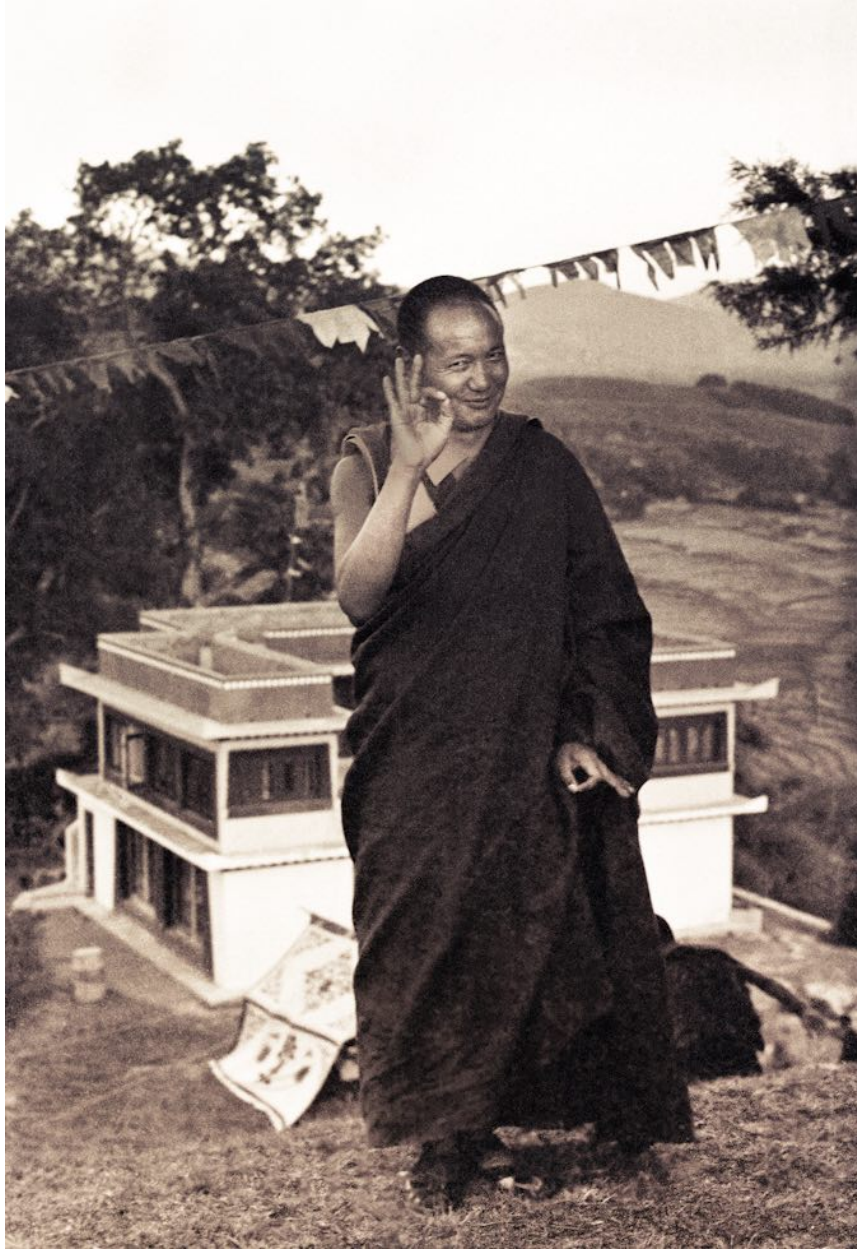
In debate and discussion you also learn patience. Somebody tells you, “You’re wrong, because this, because that....” Now, the personality of ego is to always think you’re right, so when somebody tells you you’re not, you have a tendency to react. I’m not saying that you have ego, but ego’s personality is like that and to see and deal with it is another benefit of discussion. It has really helped me.

Q: What is the best method to do this, since I still have ego? Is the best method to speak up anyway, even though ego is involved, or to keep quiet until the ego is no longer involved?

Lama: The best thing to do is to try to generate compassion for the other person who is talking. You don’t necessarily have to make a big show of “You are my object of compassion,” but that’s how you should feel within yourself.

Thank you, thank you so much.

The Enlightenment Attitude



Lama Yeshe on the hill above Kopan Monastery, 1972.

Excerpted from a discourse given when Lama was bestowing bodhisattva vows at Chenrezig Institute, Eudlo, Australia, September 14, 1979.

The thing is, from the Buddhist point of view, it is very important for one to have the enlightenment attitude. It is an important thing. The reason is, I think I can say, that without some kind of attitude or thought with which to transform the actions of our daily life, life seems to be a disaster. If you are living in a couple relationship, or even if you are just a single person, you still have to relate with human beings. Even if you go into the Himalaya Mountains, you still have to relate with sentient beings, human beings. There is no place that

you can go where you don't have to relate with human beings, so it is very important to have this attitude, because all actions, both good and bad, depend on it. You know—I'm not going to tell you that, you know already. So in order to transform our lives, to live in the best way, we desperately need to constantly have the divine quality enlightenment attitude, bodhicitta.

Anyway, the attitude is so important. We always say “profound life,” don't we, in the West? We do say, everybody uses the words, “profound life.” Profound life means profound meaning, profound destination or profound aim. The reason that we human beings are bored with each other is that we don't have a profound destination. We shake hands with each other and that is it, that is the aim, our aim is finished. Then we are bored. We can't see that besides shaking hands there is some profound meaning and reality, we can't see. That is what's wrong. Really, the point is that we Westerners should live as much as we can by taking what life and society offer. You should have a comfortable life, you can do that, you can take that advantage, you can use that. But at the same time, you should know that sense pleasures and comfort of this life are not the only things to live for. We can do better, better. Each day we can live a better life. It doesn't matter whether I'm young or stupid or old at the moment. Still my potential for a joyful life can grow infinitely.

Also, you understand the characteristic of the bodhicitta attitude is that one is not concerned with the comfort of only one's own life; moreover, one is not only concerned with one's own liberation. One sees or recognizes that the potential for everlasting peace and the blissful state exists within all of the universal sentient beings. Last, one takes the responsibility of leading all these sentient beings and fertilizing their potential—taking the responsibility all by oneself. This attitude is very important.

For example, often we have friends. Sometimes your friend might say, “This time I need somebody to do this.” He expresses a need for something, some help from you. He doesn't ask in a heavy way, and our self-cherishing thought doesn't have room or sensitive awareness or understanding to take that vibration into our mind. We are already blocked. You see, the human psychology is that really, if you have not prepared yourself in such a way, even when your friend expresses his need to you like this you just ignore it. You can see, your friend is not stupid. He knows, “I tried to express myself in such a way but look, he never heard, it never went into his mind.” Unbelievable, that's the way it goes. I think we all do this. It's not so good, is it?

You have a relationship with another person, and sometimes that person really gives their life, their energy, everything to you for such a long time. And when he has a difficult time and expresses his need in a very gentle way, your concrete mind is so strong that it never occurs to you that he needs something. It just goes off from here. Can you imagine? I mean the other person is going to be hurt, isn't he? That means you have no preparation; you have no foundation to receive, you have already rejected, “Urrr,” you have already built a wall. Or maybe as Westerners say, the door is already closed. So there's no room. That is the way human problems and conflict come.

Then the next day perhaps intellectually you say to your friend, “Wow, can I do something for you?” And he thinks, “Forget it. Yesterday I told you so many times that I needed help and you didn't pay any attention. Today you are just saying, ‘Hello, can I help you. Do you

want something from me now?” It’s true, completely true. You see, this is the way all the human conflict comes. Some reason, incredible. I tell you, that takes tremendous energy. Just to hear, let alone your sharing. Some reason, I don’t understand human beings; just to hear, just to be receptive is difficult, let alone saying, “Oh, you have this problem; I’m sorry, I have compassion.” Even though these things are not new, still, to be kind of sympathetic also takes time. It takes time, we are just like stone, so much like stone; with no response to the needs of any humans or other sentient beings. That is the problem. So in human relationships it is very important to be open to each other, sort of willing, determined, wanting to help each other. If you determine in that way, then there is room for the gross information to come in through here to here. [Lama points at his ear then his heart.]

The Tibetan yogi, Lama Je Tsongkhapa said that the enlightenment attitude, bodhicitta, is the essence of the Mahayana vehicle and it is also the foundation of development of the six *paramitas* and the ten bodhisattva *bhumis*. It is also like alchemy, the energy that has the ability to transform iron into gold. Similarly, by having the enlightenment attitude, it is possible to transform our mundane Western life into the transcendental bodhicitta path to enlightenment, the path to enlightenment. It is possible.

Different People, Different Methods



Lama Yeshe in Amsterdam, 1979. Photo by Jan-Paul Kool.

From a weekend seminar in Christchurch, New Zealand, June 14, 1975.

The characteristic nature of all of Lord Buddha's teachings and methods is psychology and knowledge-wisdom. And what he taught was not just theoretical but practical and based on experience.

In general, theories and ideas are inadequate if they lack the key of understanding. We need to know *how* to put them into practice. Because of this, the Tibetan tradition has always emphasized the importance of passing the experiential lineage, not just the theories, from guru to disciple, and in this way the living teachings of the Buddha have come down to us today.

There are four different schools of Tibetan Buddhism but their similarities are far greater than their differences. They all contain the complete methods for reaching enlightenment, from beginning to end, and all practice tantric yoga, the Vajrayana. But while they all have the same methods, some emphasize certain meditation techniques over others. That's the main difference. But they're all equally Mahayana and all practice both Paramitayana and Vajrayana.

While the Hinayana, the southern school of Buddhism, contains neither the practices of the Paramitayana nor those of the Vajrayana, it in no way contradicts the Northern, or Mahayana, schools. Lord Buddha sometimes said “yes” and sometimes said “no.”

We can understand what he meant by looking at how a skilled physician treats a patient. When somebody is sick the treatment can vary during the course of the illness. For example, at first the doctor may recommend fasting, but later, as the person recovers, the doctor may recommend meat and other heavy foods. When that happens you don’t get angry with the doctor for contradicting himself: “First you said no, now you’re saying yes! Don’t you know what you’re doing?” No—rather you think how kind and wise he is.

It’s the same thing with Lord Buddha’s teachings. Different people need different methods. For example, I’m a monk. I took my vows on the basis of my own decision. Strictly interpreted, according to the vinaya rules I’m not supposed to stare at women’s faces. I can look at men but not at women.

The Mahayana view qualifies this. For monks, just looking at women isn’t the problem; it’s looking at them with an attached, grasping mind, with craving, emotional desire. That’s what disturbs you. You can’t say that just looking automatically means you’re sick. It depends on your mind.

Similarly, Lord Buddha never said that monks can’t touch women, just like that. He never proscribed any actions without explaining why and under what conditions. Lord Buddha’s vinaya psychology is incredible. He explained in minute detail with what kind of mind, what kind of attitude, you should avoid doing this or that. He never, ever said, “You can’t do that because I said so.” There’s a profound psychology behind all his teachings.

So, monks cannot touch women with craving desire and nuns can’t touch men with craving desire. Doing so makes you lose conscious awareness. That’s the danger. If you have the power to stop your finger from burning, you can stick it into a fire. But if you don’t and your finger will burn, why stick it into a fire? That’s all Lord Buddha is saying. Anyway, whether or not something will burn when it’s put into a fire depends on what kind of material it is. It’s not automatic that whatever’s put into a fire will burn.

So you can see that there’s no contradiction between the Hinayana and Mahayana schools of Buddhism. And with respect to the four Tibetan schools, there’s no such thing as “this one takes this kind of precept, that one takes a different kind.” All four schools take the same precepts.

Also, it’s not necessary that everybody who wants to practice Buddhism takes ordination as a monk or nun. The Mahayana offers people many different ways of practicing Dharma. In particular, the Mahayana does not emphasize external signs of practice; those are not important. What matters is mental attitude. On the other hand, the Hinayana, or Theravada, school does emphasize physical actions—how you act and so forth. Some of their rules are very strict and definitely needed. But none of this is contradictory.

We Think We're Conscious but We're Not



Lama Yeshe teaching at Lake Arrowhead, California during the first American course in 1975. Photo by Carol Royce-Wilder

From a weekend seminar in Christchurch, New Zealand, June 14, 1975.

The nature of emotional pride is such that you go around with your nose in the air. You never want to see what's in front of you or look down. The antidote is to do prostrations.

When I talk about prostrations I don't mean that you prostrate to only the Buddha. As Shantideva said, we can also prostrate to all mother sentient beings by remembering that the basic, fundamental nature of their minds is as equally pure as that of an enlightened being.

Furthermore, doing prostrations doesn't necessarily mean doing either the full-length or five-point ones. If you're out on a busy city street and suddenly go down on the sidewalk people are going to freak out. Instead of doing that you can simply make mental prostrations. Remember, there are three ways of prostrating: with body, speech and mind.

The Buddha was so skillful. He gave us methods for every situation. So even if you're on a crowded street and want to make prostrations, instead of putting on a big show and doing them physically, where everybody's going to think, "What on earth is that?" you can just prostrate mentally.

If you do things with understanding, it's so worthwhile. If you do them without understanding and then ask yourself, "Why am I doing this?" you'll conclude that you're

going backwards instead of advancing. Practicing with understanding is helpful in treating your uncontrolled mind. If you practice like that everything will become worthwhile.

The same applies to making offerings. We don't offer food to the Buddha because he's hungry. We do it as part of training our mind to release emotional miserliness. The way we should look at charity is that no matter what the material value of what we give, the real value of generosity is in what we gain: knowledge-wisdom. Of course, it depends on your attitude. Even if you offer only one dollar you can still gain a lot. Basically you have to understand the psychology of the various Dharma practices you do, especially those that automatically make you uncomfortable.

But everything has meaning. For example, incense symbolizes the pure energy of body, speech and mind, especially pure thoughts. The real essence of incense is within you and the sticks we burn are external symbols of that. The real incense is in your mind. You have to know that, otherwise when you offer incense you're just imitating people you've seen doing it, just copying Easterners. That's not right. The real incense is your pure thought that gives pure vibrations to others.

It's the same when you're offering light. External lights have the function of destroying darkness, of making things clear. But the real candlelight is within you—it's your wisdom. So whenever you offer incense or light you should do so with a dedication like, "May my mind and those of all mother sentient beings be filled with the light of knowledge-wisdom and completely purified of the darkness shadow that makes us totally unconscious and causes all suffering."

In other words, everything we do that might look like ritual is actually training our mind and freeing us from agitated states and impulses. It's very useful.

Then why do we have all these physical objects on our altars? Buddhists are supposed to renounce material things and then we put all these statues and paintings here? That's kind of strange. Well, we think it's far preferable to having pictures of fashion models and rock stars on our walls. Those things automatically draw our attention and stimulate attachment. It's like when we're in the supermarket and see all these desirable foods and think, "Fantastic! How much money do I have? Oh, not enough, how can I get some?" and then we go, "Mom, Dad, can I have some money please?" "No, you can't!" and we're so disappointed.

That's all visualization. Expert marketers know how to display products in order to trigger our attachment and make us want to buy them. They understand people's basic psychological energy and how the combination of appealing object and craving desire reacts. That association makes us go *pam!* There's contact and we go berserk. We lose wisdom and become unconscious.

We have to know this. We think we're conscious but we're not. When we're overwhelmed by attraction and attachment we actually become unconscious. If you check carefully at such times you'll find that perhaps at first your mind is very clear but as attachment takes over, something dark seems to envelop your mind. Check up. That's experience. You see, Lord Buddha's psychology is not about what you believe but what you experience. Go into town right now and see what happens! That's reality.

And that's why I always say that Lord Buddha's teachings are so scientific. They're very different from Western modes of religious expression. I'm not complaining. I'm just saying that Buddhist psychology and teachings may be different from what you were brought up with. They're not about believing certain things and then going to heaven when you die; not about doing something now and waiting for a long time to experience the result. No! If you act correctly with wisdom right now you can see the result in the next second. It's so simple.

Spiritual Art Gives You Wisdom Vibrations



Lama Yeshe at the 11th Meditation Course, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1978. Photo by Robin Bath.

From a weekend seminar in Christchurch, New Zealand, June 14, 1975.

The material objects you see on the altar and hanging on the walls of this meditation hall, these statues and thangkas, are symbolic. What do they symbolize? Wisdom, or understanding. Tibetan Buddhist psychology would say that these physical objects are talking to you beyond words.

Take my dorje and bell, for example. The person who created them had pure motivation, so they have a certain energy, what we might call “good vibrations.” This energy too communicates with us beyond words.

Similarly with pictorial representations of buddhas, bodhisattvas, realized lamas, yogis and yoginis. Yoginis are sometimes shown as dancing—if you want to dance, realized dancing is OK! Anyway, such art also automatically transmits informational energy to your mind. Spiritual art gives you wisdom vibrations rather than the emotionally ignorant energy that ordinary art conveys.

You can see this even here. I think Westerners find this kind of thing easy to experience. For example, at this seminar you're all sitting in the meditation posture for long periods of time, whereas at home you might find it difficult to sit like this for even five minutes. You're surprising yourself: "In my life, I never thought I'd be able to sit this way!" Don't you think that people new to this tradition might think like that? "I can't believe I'm sitting cross-legged in this way. I never dreamed I'd be able to do that. But here I am at this meditation course doing it."

This is partly because of the influence of the Buddha statue on the altar and the thangkas on the walls. You think, "He's a human being; I'm a human being. He's sitting like that; I can sit like that."

Then there's the female buddha, Tara. She's an enlightened being with perfect power and perfect knowledge-wisdom in female aspect, in a female body. She's completely controlled; a female who has attained realizations equal to any male. So when women see her they think, "Wow, if she can become a buddha, so can I."

Look, I can't generalize, but I've heard many women say, "I can't control my body; my energy's too strong." We always devalue ourselves like that. It's a weak mind that does so and many women feel their mind is weak. They feel that they need somebody else to depend upon. Without grasping at another person they feel lonely and lost. This is symptomatic of the weak mind. As long as you're on this earth, there's no way to be lonely. You're surrounded by all living beings. But when people—both men and women—are depressed, they do feel lonely because the lonely mind is unrealistic and emotional. So archetypal images of perfection are part of Lord Buddha's psychology and really are very helpful.

Tourists come to the East and see Buddha statues and so forth in the temples and think that we believe that these material objects are God: "Buddhists worship graven images." You can even read this in books. Isn't that silly? We don't believe that those material images are Buddha. They're symbolic.

So you have to know this, otherwise you'll get yourself into trouble. Mahayana art is not Buddha, Dharma or Sangha. When we place light, incense, flowers and so forth on the altar we're not making offerings to the material objects there, we're making offerings to the Buddha's mind, his wisdom consciousness.

So it's very good that you keep images of enlightened beings in your room. Just looking at them can give you control and everlasting peace. They give you positive imprints in your mind; they impart knowledge; they give you teachings. They're like a full-time meditation course. So it's very helpful for you to have holy objects in your room rather than ridiculous samsaric pictures polluting your mind.

Actually, when you go to your friends' houses you can see what their interests are by the art on their walls and the way they decorate their rooms because what they do is a projection of their minds. You can see what trip they're currently on, no matter what they say. People can talk all they want but what they actually do speaks louder than any words.

The way people put their lives together demonstrates whether they're living with delusion or wisdom because it's symbolic of their state of mind. You can see what's going on in their mind because its vibration manifests externally.

The Dharma of Dancing



Lama Yeshe teaching at Bodhgaya, India, 1982.

After an intensive meditation course taught by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Chenrezig Institute, Eudlo, Australia, in 1979, there was a one-day festival, where the students picnicked, sang, danced in the gompa, played music and hung around eating. Lama Yeshe also gave the following talk.

From the Buddhist point of view, the human consciousness, or mind, is the source of all human activity. Therefore, human beings can do all sorts of things, internal and external; human power is such that we can do anything. We can put our energy into any direction we choose. That's the power that humans have.

The human mind is the source of all people's happiness and unhappiness, and the Buddha's teaching emphasizes the gaining of discriminating wisdom so that you can see the reality of your mental attitude and thereby direct your life and energy in the right direction toward tranquility and peace.

From the Buddhist point of view, basic human nature is beautiful, profound and clear. This is how you exist; it's simply a matter of recognizing your own profound qualities and seeing that you have the potential for limitless development. Meditation on the four immeasurables—limitless love, limitless compassion, limitless joy and limitless equilibrium—indicate this.

The reason that these four attitudes are called limitless is that fundamentally, we do have love, compassion, joy and equilibrium, but they are limited. We have love but it is limited love; we have compassion, but it is limited compassion; we have joyful appreciation of each other's lives, but that joy is limited; we have a certain degree of equilibrium, but it too is limited. What prevents us from realizing the four immeasurables is our ego; the ego mind. The view the ego mind perceives is wrong, partial. Therefore, our loving kindness is very narrow. First, we have to recognize this in order to expand it.

Look how we limit our enjoyment. Intellectually, our minds create the fabrication, "This object is my object of joy; I cannot enjoy the rest." Such preconceptions cement our minds into fixed positions and are the result of our ego mind making mistaken judgments and placing limitations on our thought—"Only this object can bring me joy."

The purpose of practicing meditation on the four limitless qualities is to free ourselves from extreme, neurotic ego games. But don't think, "Oh, now I understand that this is just an ego game—tomorrow I am going to give up ego games forever," under the illusion that overnight you can change radically and that the next day your entire perspective on life will be completely different. That sort of change is impossible. Powered by your ego mind, you have constantly been generating deluded energy since beginningless time; you can't suddenly transform overnight simply by changing your intellectual ideas. The way to overcome negative energy is to act with understanding and awareness day by day, every day. That's what makes it possible to change and transform your life.

The reason we need meditation is that the ego game is extremely subtle and can function at the level of the unconscious. Detecting the activity of the ego game at the unconscious level is very difficult. We need great energy and strong penetrative insight to counteract the accumulated ego energy that has come from eons of repeated ego games. To reverse this energy force, we have to balance it. Therefore, it is not enough to merely think, "Now I understand that the ego is the problem; now I have understood," as a brief flash of insight. "Now I am liberated. Today I have discovered my problem. This Buddhist philosopher monk has told me all about my ego. Now I'm liberated." You can't do that; that's dreaming. What you have to do every day is to develop comprehension of your own attitude, your own mental activity, as much as you possibly can. This is a very important point.

Today, for example, you've been playing and dancing. If you have inner awareness, you'll see that your ego has been reacting in a certain way. One song is a favorite, another song you dislike; I am sure each of you has had this experience. When you dance, there are certain

moves you like; you think they're good; they make you happy. There are other dance moves that you feel are stupid; no good. That's the way you feel, and every time you dance, you're reacting in your mind. What Buddhist meditation allows you to do is to see that good dancing has value but so does bad. There's nothing to react to emotionally.

Also, the main reason I agreed to this festival, with its dancing, fun and games, was that I thought you could learn something, test and examine yourselves after doing the meditation course.

Each of you should check up: you've done many things today—have any of them really made you happy? Ask yourself this question, right now: do you feel that what you've done today constitutes a really happy life? Exhausting yourself through singing and dancing—is the exhausted life a happy one? This is very simple: your mind interprets, “Today is festival day; we're happy. Today we're going to get cake. We can give up morning meditation; nobody's pushing us to meditate.” So you simply hang about, wandering aimlessly here and there, looking around. Do you think that's happy?

Some people will learn, “Dancing and cake are good, but they're not the purpose of life.” In other words, you should not feel that being allowed to dance and do whatever you like is the definition of a really happy life. That's a wrong attitude. However, you don't have to be miserable, either. If you can interpret dancing as misery, similarly, you'll think that sitting in meditation must also be miserable.

Buddhist philosophy teaches you to think logically; the Buddhist religion is a philosophical religion, a logical religion. Let's say that you've been dancing for a while and suddenly stop. Your ego reacts, “Oh, now my pleasure has gone.” Many people's ego will react like this, casting them into the same old darkness. They're up, full of energy; suddenly the party finishes and they come back down. This up and down comes from ego, not understanding what is real happiness or the reality of life.

All such activity has to change; nothing lasts. Somehow you have to learn to let your pleasures go without grasping at them neurotically. This is very important. That's why Buddhist philosophy teaches that the whole world is like an illusion—you cannot hold an illusion permanently; there is no solidity. What you enjoy from moment to moment cannot be held permanently. Its nature is impermanent, transitory; it passes, passes, goes, goes, finishes, finishes. That's the whole reality of life.

Therefore, it is very important to be aware of and accept that kind of reality, as it is. You can do it. The Western ego suffers greatly because of the quickly changing nature of society. When you find you cannot function because society is moving so quickly, you blame society. The nature of society is that it is going to change; it is your own nature to change; it's the nature of weather to change. Therefore, it is very important that your attitude is such that you follow the middle path and avoid extremes. But doing that is not an easy job; you need penetrative wisdom.

That's why we say meditation is worthwhile. Meditation does not mean going into a cave. Just contemplate the movement of your own actions—your breath, thoughts and everything else. That's enough. Also, don't think that you are irreversibly confused and unclear. That,

too, is wrong. Your mind has clarity; clarity is your mind's ability to receive reflections of good and bad. Everybody has that, even children. When children play, they have some kind of discrimination. That is the beauty of their consciousness. You can contemplate on your ability to discriminate; that is the clarity of your mind. Contemplate on that. If you believe that you are confused all the time, of course, you'll be confused.

Now, instead of my going on any longer, are there any questions?

Q: Lama, today we were dancing in the gompa and I had a good experience. It combined what you talked about in meditation. There was the action but there was stillness as well. I was exhausted, but I also got energy from it. I think organized dancing is a good check-up meditation, and I was wondering if that sort of thing could be continued here?

Lama: Well, that's beautiful; I'm very happy. That was my idea in having a festival, for people to relax and enjoy themselves. We should not think that we are meditators, exclusive, special people, and that the rest of society is dirty, sinful and negative. That's wrong, isn't it? We are down to earth and understand and can relate with people. That's good. Anyway, the purpose of Chenrezig Institute is to serve the people in society. We all come from society and therefore we need to help the society.

Q: I'm still not sure what you are suggesting is the most suitable social life for the Western mind. You seem to be suggesting that dancing and such activities are bad.

Lama: No, I'm not saying that they are bad. Dancing is normal; it is good. But I want you to understand, my point is that if in dancing today your ego identifies that now, after suffering for ten or fifteen days in the prison of meditation, today is the happy life, if your ego interprets in this way, that is a wrong conception. The reason I am using this example is that it is fresh from our experience today. So our experiences are our resource from which we see what is reality. Normally, I use as examples whatever is close. If I see a flower somewhere, to make a point I hold up that flower. So, we were dancing today, and I use this energy as an example to demonstrate reality.

Q: I think you mean the mental attitude, Lama—the way you approach meditation as two weeks in prison; the attitude you dance with.

Lama: That's right, if the attitude is the ego game, it produces the reaction of dissatisfaction and confusion.

Q: I was wondering how to acquire self-discipline?

Lama: If you can recognize how your mad elephant mind functions, you'll become disciplined automatically. When you finally recognize your own mad elephant, undisciplined mind, you feel that you cannot go on like this any longer, always leading yourself on the wrong path and always finishing up miserable. So you question and examine your own mind, and then put some limits on the wrong attitude. When you find the right attitude coming, let go. From the point of view of Buddhist philosophy, discipline comes from wisdom; it is not something imposed upon you by lamas or priests. For example, I have to make my own discipline; nobody can force me to stay here. If I want to go to Brisbane tonight and enjoy myself in a nightclub I can choose. So, we need to discipline the mad elephant mind;

everybody has to. But once you reach beyond the mad elephant ego, you don't need discipline; you are already disciplined.

Q: Lama, I've found that dancing complements meditation and is not necessarily a temporal pleasure, that dancing can have lasting benefit.

Lama: I'm very happy that you've had that good experience. I am not saying that dancing itself is simply a fleeting pleasure; it depends on mental attitude. Your experience of dancing has value. If you contemplate on and remember your experiences continuously, that continued memory can keep you from depression. The thing is that if we cannot recollect good experiences, cannot maintain their value, later we can get depressed. Just as you have experienced, everybody else has to some extent had some sort of clear, blissful experience. The thing is that we can't maintain the continuity of the memory of that good experience, the clarity. Therefore, one minute we are clear, the next, polluted. That's why we need some kind of balance—so that we can hold the memory of the good experience instead of thinking garbage all the time. That's what makes us up and down. However, every human being has such clear, happy, blissful experiences. The problem is that we don't contemplate in a penetrative way or remember those experiences continuously.

Q: Lama, how can Westerners approach sex in a more positive, unattached way?

Lama: Well, the simple way is to have a giving attitude instead of a grasping one; to be more concerned with giving or sharing pleasure with another than with, "I want pleasure."

Q: But often that is interpreted as feeding the other person's ego.

Lama: No, not necessarily. Anyway, your responsibility is to develop a giving attitude. The other person may be self-cherishing, but that is his or her responsibility. Your responsibility is to abandon your uptight, grasping game. To do that, you need to develop giving. Most of the time, I tell you, the ego game between Western couples is that neither of them is satisfied by sense pleasure and then they say, "Oh, you're no good; I don't like you." They blame each other. If you are not concerned with fulfilling your own sense-gravitation attachment, it's okay. Are we communicating or not?

Q: It's a difficult one, though.

Lama: Yes, of course! That's why you came to the meditation course. It is difficult, but definitely you can learn. The thing is that Mahayana Buddhism teaches that you can touch this flower without having the neurotic, grasping mind. If you can see the possibility with this flower, ask yourself why. Then, slowly, slowly you can relate this experience to other relationships as well. First of all, the Western mind strongly believes, "I should have satisfaction from this." Let's say that I'm a Westerner and you are my girlfriend. I have the attitude that you should make me satisfied, otherwise you are the failure. Can you imagine that? Completely egotistical mind. From the Buddhist point of view, that is completely wrong. That is a completely wrong attitude: you are my girlfriend, so you should give me complete satisfaction, and if you don't give me that you are a bad lady. It's the same thing in the reverse way, with ladies too. Basically, this is wrong.

First of all, I should recognize that my satisfaction comes from myself, from me, not from you, my girlfriend. If I believe that basically my happiness depends on my girlfriend—"As long as she exists, I'll be happy; if she no longer exists, my happiness will be lost." That is a very dangerous, deluded thought. There are many things in the Western attitude that need to be changed. The Western attitude is so concrete. Scientific education teaches you wrong conceptions and beliefs—the belief, "This should make me happy. If this doesn't make me happy, I'm lost."

Q: Could you please give me some advice on how to relate to people who have not had Dharma teachings when I get home?

Lama: First of all, when you go back home, I think it is better if you relax and be natural, simple and spontaneous. Act according to Dharma as much as you can, but do not talk philosophically as we have been doing here. If you push the intellectual side too much, people will treat you as some kind of outcast; it will be strange for them. But if you are happy, relaxed, logical and reasonable, they will feel, "I don't know this man. How come? Something is going on in his mind; he's changed so much for the better." Perhaps one day they will ask, "What are you doing? Tell me what you're into." At that time, you have to be ready with sharp wisdom and give just the right reply. Until then, relax; be simple.

I also understand that you can't do the things we do here. Here we do early morning meditation, prostrations, prayer and these things. You can't do those things too much socially. But still, you can meditate without involving the ritual aspects. You can do internal rituals; external ones are not necessary. I think that's simple. You have to learn how to use each environment, how to actualize, how to utilize that energy in the path to enlightenment. I think that is necessary. Otherwise, you might feel, "Now I cannot meditate because I have no temple." Perhaps you thought that for meditation you needed a temple or some kind of material Buddha. "Now there is no Buddha, no lama, no temple, I cannot meditate." That's not realistic, but I understand.

Many people, after they have learned meditation and philosophy, go back home with the ambition of putting this small baby buddha into their family and friends. Then those people really dislike that; it's not so good. I think first we need to grow our baby buddha bigger and bigger. He should be at least middle-aged in order for us to push that energy to others. The first important thing is for we ourselves to be together; after that we can teach.

I think that's all. Excuse me, I would like to talk more, but time is running. What to do? Thank you very much.

True Dharma Practitioners Welcome Trouble



Lama in Java, 1979. Photo by Adele Hulse.

From a teaching at Grizzly Lodge, California, 1980.

Sometimes when people first hear Dharma teachings on happiness and suffering, they think that happiness depends upon suffering and that if they were to be completely free of suffering there would be no way to experience happiness.

I can see where the idea comes from. In a way it's quite logical: if there's no misery there's no happiness; misery and happiness are interdependent phenomena. This is human experience. It's my experience too.

When I was studying at Sera in Tibet from the ages of nine to twenty-four, I took many teachings and received many commentaries from excellent teachers. I was well looked after by my uncle, who made sure I never went hungry or thirsty and took care of me in general. It was a typical monastic life and it was really good. And from my side I tried my best to study and practice Dharma.

But still, in 1959, the Chinese kicked us out. Well, not exactly, but they did not allow people to practice Dharma, so I thought that if I want to keep practicing there was no reason to stay in Tibet. So I escaped to India. Not only were the Chinese preventing us from practicing, they were shooting people dead and even though I had been studying and practicing, I didn't feel ready to die.

So in that painful situation of uncertainty I had to look deeply into myself to see if all those teachings I had taken would allow me to cope with my new reality. I found that they helped

a great deal, and that gave me the confidence I needed to deal with the changing environment in which we found ourselves.

If you're not tested, you take teaching after teaching and think you're OK, but when you're confronted with a difficult situation it's possible that you'll find you're not OK at all. So that's why true Dharma practitioners welcome trouble. It gives them a chance to see if what they've been studying works or not, a chance to transform suffering into happiness. Otherwise you just go blithely along, completely out of touch with reality, thinking you're OK when you're not, because you haven't actually been practicing Dharma at all.

To put this another way, painful situations are a source of wisdom. How so? First of all, painful situations arise as a result of nonvirtuous karma. When we experience pain we should ask, "Why is this happening to me? How has this come about?" That sort of inquiry leads us to understand that it's the ripening of negative karma we created in the past. That basic understanding can grow into wisdom; the painful experience helps us develop a deeper understanding that is beyond the merely intellectual.

Of course, if you're completely ignorant, it doesn't matter how much suffering you experience, there's no way for that to lead to happiness. All you do is go from misery to more misery. If, on the other hand, you have at least a modicum of Dharma wisdom, when you're in difficulty you know how to use that experience to lead yourself into happiness.

One lama said, "When things go well, you're a great Dharma practitioner; when things go badly, your Dharma disappears. When your stomach is full and sunshine is pouring into your room, it's easy to look religious; but when difficulties arise, you come up empty."

It's like when I was a young boy in Tibet and everything was going well, I pretty much took it for granted that I was practicing Dharma. It could easily have happened that when it came to the crunch, I could have found my Dharma practice wanting—that I'd never practiced or even understood Dharma—and that could easily have led me to give it up, thinking that Dharma doesn't work.

Dharma practice is very difficult if you don't understand what it is. You need to realize that Dharma teachings are talking about you, your personal reality. You need to take them personally and integrate them with your life. It's no good if your Dharma understanding is like soup—many different ideas all mixed up—and you never make Dharma a part of your life. Then it can't really help you.

If you understand your own attitude and level and know what you need at any particular moment in time, you can fulfill your needs appropriately and will see yourself make real progress. Simply collecting information that's disconnected from your own reality doesn't make sense. By understanding Dharma from your own point of view, from the way you live your life, you have a much better chance of developing yourself. So that's what you should try to do. Base your practice on your own experience.

Anxiety in the Nuclear Age



Lama Yeshe teaching at the 11th Meditation Course, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1978. Photo by Robin Bath.

Lama Yeshe gave this public lecture in Berkeley, California, July 13, 1983.

I've been asked to say a few words on the topic of anxiety in the nuclear age. The first thing to observe is that the people who created nuclear energy are now afraid that it will destroy them. Is this realistic or not? First we create a situation; then we're scared of it.

We know that nuclear energy exists and is destructive by nature but that it can also be beneficial and enhance human pleasure. Nevertheless, we're still anxious and afraid of the harm it might do to us and the following generations.

However, there's no need for fear, worry or anxiety because, first of all, nuclear energy is a reality and secondly, our opinion of what's going to happen is just that—an opinion. It's not yet a reality; it's simply a presumption.

Perhaps you'll argue that even though it's only a presumption, we should still worry. If that's the case, we should worry about everything. We should be anxious today about what might happen tomorrow. Every day since the world began, somewhere on earth, there has been some kind of natural disaster—flood, electrical storm, forest fire, earthquake, volcanic eruption and death and destruction in general. It's natural. Nature itself is destructive by nature and has the capacity to do violence. Still, I don't think you should lose sleep over it; there's no need for fear, worry or anxiety.

I'm not saying that people who are against nuclear energy are bad guys. I, too, feel it is dangerous. But we have to educate the world about its dangers in a peaceful way—one that doesn't produce emotional reaction and hatred.

I've seen many people demonstrating peacefully on TV. Even though they felt strongly about the issues, they were very easygoing. I thought that was wonderful; they understood the importance of getting their message about nuclear danger across peacefully. I was very impressed. But I'm still concerned.

My concern is that if we allow ourselves to be anxious and afraid, emotionally disturbed, we'll only produce more confusion within ourselves. When we're confused, we spread confused energy to others and the environment. Bringing peace to the world is no small task. We have to take upon ourselves universal responsibility. As individuals, our first responsibility is to guarantee that we ourselves will never harm anybody else's life, to generate the indestructible resolve that irrespective of the circumstances, "I'm never going to touch weapons or kill other human beings." We must have that kind of determination. If you don't feel that way yourself, how can you make a big show of telling others to be like that. It's not realistic. In order to educate others about how harmful and cruel nuclear energy can be, we first have to educate ourselves.

So, we shouldn't worry about the nuclear age because it's already here. We're human beings; we created this situation. We lit this fire a long time ago. Of course, the earth has contained nuclear energy since it began, but it has taken human intelligence to make it as dangerous as it has become. In Buddhism, we call this karma. Once a situation has manifested, the best thing to do is to accept the fact and deal with it.

Now, there's no reason for us to hate each other, but anxiety breeds hatred. Therefore, we have to check our motivation for demonstrating for disarmament and against nuclear energy. Why are we doing this? Perhaps our reasons are selfish—what we're really anxious about is our own destruction. Instead, we should have concern for the whole of humanity. That's the right motivation. Then there's no emotion. Even though you're concerned, occasionally fearful, your fear does not come from an underlying, ever-present, emotional disturbance.

What's the good of worrying about things twenty-four hours a day, disturbing your mind and preventing yourself from having a peaceful and joyful life? It's a waste of time. Nothing's going to change just because you're worrying about it. If something's already broken, it's broken. Worrying won't fix it. This earth has always been destructive by nature, nuclear age or not. There's always blood flowing someplace or another. Look at world history. It's always been like this. Buddhism calls this interdependent origination, and that's how the human mind works.

Take America's war in Vietnam, for example. That brought people together in a movement for peace. That's also interdependent. Some people saw the horrible suffering, confusion, misery and destruction wrought by others, so they went the other way, thinking, "That's not right," and despite the difficulties, created a movement of peace and love.

But the right way to eliminate harm from this earth is to first free your mind from the emotional disturbances that cause irrational fear of destruction, and then educate yourself and others in how to bring peace to the world. The first thing you must do is control your own mind and commit yourself: "From now on, no matter what happens, I'm never going to use weapons to kill any human being." That's where world peace starts.

Human beings *can* control their minds and actions such that they will never kill others; people *can* learn to see that harming others destroys not only the others' pleasure and happiness but their own as well. Through this kind of education, we can prevent nuclear energy from destroying the world.

We can't just campaign for the complete abolition of nuclear energy. Like electricity, nuclear energy is useful if employed the right way. If you're careless with electricity, it can kill you too, can't it? With right knowledge and method, we should campaign to ensure that everybody on earth determines, "I will never use nuclear weapons to kill human beings." If that happened, a nuclear conflagration could never occur.

Not that it matters, but personally, I don't believe that nuclear energy is going to destroy the earth. I do believe, however, that human beings are capable of making a program to ensure that people everywhere, irrespective of whether they live in communist or capitalist societies, determine not to use nuclear weapons to kill other human beings. If we were to undertake such an effort to educate people, I think we could achieve our aim within ten years.

Here, I'm not talking from a Buddhist point of view; I'm not talking from any religion's point of view. I'm talking from a humanist point of view, a realistic point of view. If people's minds are out of control, they're going to use nuclear weapons. But irrespective of whether people are religious or non-religious, communist or non-communist, believers or non-believers, I believe every human being is capable of understanding the difference between harmful and non-harmful actions and the benefit of everybody's being peaceful and happy. Since it's a universal reality, we can educate people to see it.

With respect to fear and worry, the Buddha's solution is to analyze the *object* of fear and worry. If you do this correctly, you'll be able to recognize that you're seeing the object as fundamentally permanent, which has nothing to do with its reality. Look at it and ask yourself, "Is this really worth worrying about? Is worry a solution or not?" Analyze the object: is it permanent or changeable? As the great saints have said, "If it's changeable, why worry? If it's not, what's the use of worrying?" When you're afraid, analyze the object of your fears.

Particularly when you're emotionally disturbed and anxious, you'll find that there's a concept of concreteness in your mind, which causes you to project a concrete object externally. Neither concept has anything to do with reality. Buddhism asserts that the mind of fear and worry always either overestimates or underestimates its object and never sees its reality. If

you can perceive the fundamental, universal reality of your object of fear and worry, it will become like a cloud—it comes; it goes. When you are overcome with worry, you sometimes say, “It’s always like this.” That’s not true. Things never stay the same; they always come and go—that’s the reality.

Also, when you’re occupied by anxiety and fear, you might mean well, but you automatically have a tendency to generate hatred. Hatred has nothing to do with peace and happiness, does it? Buddhist psychology teaches that fear and anxiety tend to produce anger, aversion and hatred. You say you want peace and happiness but your very mental state causes hatred. It’s contradictory.

People who demonstrate for peace and other causes have to watch out for this, but you have to judge for yourself how far you can go without generating hatred. Everybody’s different.

Let’s say we’re out there campaigning for peace but then the president says something with which we disagree. Should we get angry? Should we hate the president? I don’t believe so; that would be a mistake. If our concern for peace and happiness makes us angry, there’s something wrong. The president is a human being. He, too, wants peace and happiness. At the bottom of his heart, he wants to be happy; he doesn’t want to be miserable. This is the universal reality.

Therefore, all of us in the peace movement should make sure that we don’t hate any human being. This is the most important thing. When we demonstrate, we should be true to our word.

Being a politician is not easy. Even being a wife or a husband is not easy. Most situations come with responsibility and obligation. We can look outside and blindly criticize people who work as administrators and so forth, but realistically, their position can be very difficult.

To be successful, the peace movement should be selfless. If we who campaign for peace are coming from a place of selfishness, a basic concern for, “Me, me, me,” we have little chance of success. If, instead, we have a broad view based on concern for all human beings, understanding that everybody wants happiness and nobody wants to be miserable, and can educate others to see this, if we work toward this goal continuously, ultimately we’ll achieve it.

There are many meditations you can do to eliminate anxiety. But meditation doesn’t mean going off to the mountains. You have the key to change your mind at any time, wherever you are. You can learn to switch your mind from emotion to peace and, each time you get distracted, gently bring it back to peace again. Practice this over and over again. You can do this; it’s human nature. You have to realize what you’re capable of.

Check your own life, from the time you were born up to now, how many times have you changed your mind? Who changed it for you? Buddha didn’t change it. Jesus didn’t change it. Who changed your mind? Analyze this for yourself.

That is the beauty of being human. We have the capacity for liberation within us; we come with that ability. If we utilize our energy and intelligence correctly, we can discover that liberation and happiness are already there, within us.

The fundamental principle of Buddhism is not to kill. As Buddhists, this is our main obligation. I think most of you could promise never to kill another human being. That makes me very happy. We all have the same aim; we think alike. Even though I'm a Tibetan monk, an uneducated mountain man, and you're educated people from industrialized, capitalist societies, we have the same understanding. We don't know each other, but we can still work together. That's the most beautiful thing about being human. We can communicate with others.

We should try to educate people all over the world to the point where everybody says, "For the rest of my life, I will never kill another human being." If every human being on earth could agree to that, what would there be to worry about? Who could possibly be paranoid?

In one way, the peace movement is beautiful, and if we act according to its ideas, there'll be no more racism, no more nationalism. We'll be equally concerned for *all* people. There'll be no more fanatical religious concerns; we won't even care if people are religious or not. Our only concern will be peace. All that will matter will be that people everywhere love and take care of each other. Who cares who's communist or non-communist? What's in the human heart is what's important, not whether people are communist or capitalist. If we talk to each other, we can change the human heart.

At present, we might be located in a non-communist country, but we shouldn't project that communists want to kill people who aren't. That's not true. People in communist countries are ladies and gentlemen, too. Like us, they want to be happy and desire not to be miserable. Therefore, together we can reach conclusions without involving the dogma of philosophy, the dogma of religion, the dogma of nationality, the dogma of racism; we can come together without any kind of dogma. That is beautiful. That is the beauty of the human being—to bring human unity and understanding without being blinded by categories.

If you go to Russia and ask people, "Do you want to be killed by nuclear missiles?" they're going to say "No!" For sure, they don't want that to happen. Therefore, we have to educate people to understand the difference between what is beneficial for humanity and what is destructive—for the individual and for all. It's simply a matter of education.

Lord Buddha stressed the importance of generating loving kindness for all people irrespective of race, nationality, creed or anything else; he taught that all human beings and even animals were the object of loving kindness. This is the best guarantee against nuclear war, because each individual has to maintain control and take personal responsibility for the welfare of all beings in the universe. Taking universal responsibility is the guarantee. If each individual doesn't take personal responsibility for the welfare of all, it won't work.

To bring happiness and peace to earth, we have to eliminate every situation leading to hatred and anger. That means totally eradicating our own hatred and anger. We have to make our own lives peaceful and happy. This is the way to work for peace twenty-four hours a day. If our minds harbor destructive, angry thoughts, any talk of peace is just a joke. It's merely artificial; there's no guarantee. The only guarantee is to fertilize our minds with peace and loving kindness toward all; that's the way we should do it.

The question remains, is it possible to spread these ideas throughout the whole world? Can we get everybody in the world to agree to abandon the use of nuclear arms and not to kill any human being? Can you make that determination yourself? We can spread this philosophy or not? What do you think? We're not using religion in this; we're not using Buddha, we're not using Christ, we're not using religion or non-religion, we're just concerned for the welfare of all human beings. What do you think? Do you think it's possible to make this kind of program and reach that point or not? I'm not talking nationalistically or making any philosophic argument; I'm just talking about feeling secure, taking care of each other, loving each other, bringing peace and happiness to each other. It's a very simple thing.

Therefore, in our daily lives, each of us should dedicate ourselves to bringing peace and happiness to all beings, and this determination itself is a powerful way of bringing peace and success into our lives. But this doesn't mean not to act, either; to just be passive. But when you do act, act with wisdom and without selfishness, hatred or emotional fear. In that way, you will educate yourself and others.

Don't worry. Any talk of nuclear destruction of the earth is still speculation. It's just a mental projection; it's not yet reality. Therefore, relax and enjoy the rest of your life as much as possible. Be happy and peaceful, and don't waste your time with pessimistic thoughts, fear or worry. Thank you so much.

Christmas Dharma



Lama Yeshe at a fire offering (puja), Vajrapani Institute, California, 1979. Photo by Ricardo de Aratanha.

From a teaching at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Pomaia, Italy, on Christmas Day, 1982.

Somehow we're still alive and aware enough to remember how long it is since Jesus was born. It was one thousand, nine hundred and eighty-two years ago, right? And I myself am fortunate enough to have been born in the Shangri-la of Tibet, to have come into contact with the world of Western *dakas* and *dakinis*, and also to somehow have this chance to acknowledge the history of the holy guru, Jesus.

I've found that having a little understanding of Jesus's life helps me develop my own path, but it's not easy to fully understand the profound events in Jesus's life. It's quite difficult. Of course, the superficial events of his life are fairly easy to understand, but there's not enough room in our mind to comprehend his high bodhisattva actions.

Even at the time when Lord Jesus and Lord Buddha were here on earth it was very difficult for ordinary people to understand who they really were. At that time, very few people understood.

Today I was looking at the Bible, at the Gospel of John in particular, and he was talking about the miracles Jesus performed and how few people understood the profundity of his liberated mind that allowed him to perform those miracles.

Anyway, whenever I'm at a meditation course such as this at Christmas time, I like to talk about such things. But you need to understand that when I do, I'm not trying to be diplomatic. I don't need to negotiate my relationship with you in that way! It's just that from the bottom of my heart, I sincerely feel and believe that just to remember Jesus's life is an incredible opportunity.

In a way, of course, it doesn't matter where people come from—East or West—or what color they are, those who eliminate their self-cherishing thought and give their life for others are exceptional human beings. For that reason I'm happy simply to bring Jesus to mind and reflect on what he did.

Also, to some extent I'm responsible for my Western students' psychological wellbeing, so if we're going to bring Buddhism to the West we need to do it in a healthy way rather than introduce it as some exotic new trip. We don't need new trips. We need to do something constructive, something worthwhile. Anything truly worthwhile does not diminish any light; it only enhances it.

And with respect to psychological health, we're part of the environment and the environment is part of us. Therefore, those of us who were born in the West should not reject the Christian environment into which we were born. We should consider ourselves lucky to have been born into a Christian society and to have the wisdom to understand what that means for our mind. Such understanding is very useful if we're to remain healthy.

Especially these days, when there's dangerous revolutionary technology everywhere and the world is overwhelmed with fighting and war, we really need to actively remember the lives of our unselfish historical predecessors.

So John was explaining how God sent Jesus to us as a witness to the truth, but most unfortunately, some ignorant people failed to recognize who he was or understand what he was teaching and killed him.

In my opinion, the Buddhist point of view is that Jesus was a bodhisattva, not only in the sense that he had realized bodhicitta and overcome selfishness, but in the sense that, as a performer of miracles, he was a saint, like Tilopa and Naropa or, to name a living example, His Holiness Zong Rinpoche—somebody completely free of superstition who sometimes instinctively does strange things that the rest of us don't understand.

For example, John says that one day Jesus was near the water when a woman came by to fill her pot. Jesus then said to her, “How can you satisfy your thirst with water? It’s water that makes you thirsty in the first place.” He told her that since it’s water that makes her thirsty, how can water be the solution to her thirst. It’s some kind of reverse thinking. Who can understand that? It sounds crazy, doesn’t it?

What he meant was that only spiritual water can truly slake your thirst. So you can see, the actual meaning is somehow beyond words. The woman is taking water; he says, “Why are you doing that? It’s not going to solve your problem of being thirsty.” It’s crazy talk. Nowadays we’d probably hit somebody who spoke to us like that. But luckily, back then Jesus didn’t get beaten up for talking in that way.

John also said that since Jesus was born from God, his disciples were also derived from God’s energy. That’s similar to what the Buddhist teachings say when they explain that all *shravakas* and *prateyakabuddhas* are born from Shakyamuni Buddha. The sense here is that such followers are born from the teacher’s wisdom truth speech. Through internalizing that they discover the truth for themselves and become such realized beings.

Philosophically, of course, we can say that Buddhism doesn’t accept that God is the source of all human beings and things. But from another point of view we can say that Buddhism doesn’t contradict that statement either.

For example, where does the human realm come from? The Buddha said that the human realm is caused by good karma. That’s true. If the upper realms do not come from good karma, then where do they come from? Then, from the Buddhist point of view, all good karma comes from the Buddha...or, you can say, God. Therefore, the human realm comes from God, from Buddha. Because of the Buddha’s holy speech, sentient beings create good karma. I want you to be clean clear about this.

Still, philosophically you can argue this point one way or the other. It depends on how you interpret it. You can interpret the statement negatively or positively. Actually, you can do anything with philosophy.

Universal Education



Lama Yeshe at Borobudur, Java, 1979.

From an interview with Ven. Connie Miller at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Pomaia, Italy, September 1983.

Let me try to explain what Universal Education is and why we need it. The world needs a new system of education because the old one is too dated for the intelligent people of today and produces a great deal of conflict and dissatisfaction in the present generation. I first proposed this project back in the mid-1970s but it wasn't until last year [1982] that I found somebody to take it forward [Ven. Connie Miller].

The reason I call it universal is that people need to understand the entirety of human reality. Nowadays, most people in the world do not. They don't understand the totality of their being and they don't want to accept spirituality. And many of those that do accept spirituality reject scientific reality. This is a common conflict in the Western world. I see it all the time.

As a result, I started thinking that there must be a middle way, whereby people are educated both spiritually and scientifically such that they can take care of themselves physically and mentally and free themselves from any kind of material or psychological problem.

With today's education system, there's a lot of knowledge and wisdom but the way it's presented is too narrow. Students are taught too dogmatically. This dualistic reflection is what brings them into conflict with one another. We can counter this by teaching them the entire lamrim and even tantra without using any Buddhist terminology. I can do this. You can do it, too.

This new form of education would be free of categorization and, as a result, people would not create what I call a self-pity imagination of themselves, the sort of low self-esteem that we so often see. We would eliminate that and become free, universal beings. We would completely understand our own psychology and our own physical makeup. That's why I call it universal education.

Buddhism definitely has this universal education quality within it but we need to change our clothes—cut the Buddhist terminology. Don't use religious Sanskrit words like *nirvana*, for example, but simple scientific language that is free from any religious connotation or association. We should develop some kind of neutral explanation.

Old, outdated concepts are what lie beneath the human symptoms we see. People project the way they do because they have a narrow connotation of things; they label things in a very narrow way. We have to get rid of people's old concepts and give them a new imagination; a new, broad way of looking at themselves and the world. That's what I mean by "universal."

Universal education does not mean, say, "I'm part of the Universal Education organization; I can't be a Buddhist nun." Wrong. You can be a Buddhist nun maintaining Buddhist ethics and at the same time understand universal education and its aims. If an experienced practicing Buddhist monastic can't do it, who can?

Then people are going to say, "*You* can't do it because you're not universal. English people can't do it; Americans can't do it; Tibetans can't do it because they're from Shangri-la in the Himalayan Mountains and up there nobody knows what's going on in the world!" So then it comes down to nobody being able to do it. That's wrong too. We do have a clear vision of what we want to do, what we should be.

So, there's no requirement that Universal Education students have to take ordination as monks or nuns. Far from it, anybody in the world can become a student of universal education—monks, nuns, laypeople, married or single; everybody.

This is because Buddhism contains teachings on both the universal attitude and the nature of universal reality. So we need to take these teachings and shape them such that their language

is intelligible to people the world over. That is important. That is the way in which we can contribute. And our students are the main resource for putting this into action. They have a realistic point of view and the dedication to make it happen, to help others to understand.

That's why I've always said that Universal Education covers lifetimes from birth to death and even extends into future lives. We can educate children, people who are dying and everybody in between. This is what we have to plan for. We should start gradually, but at the same time be clear about our long-term aims.

Also, putting this plan into action should be practical and realistic, not merely intellectual. Start small with something for children expressed in simple language that nevertheless gives them a deep understanding of human potential, and progress from there, step by step. Contribute to the process by producing A, B, C, D books written by our students as a resource. People will listen and slowly, slowly be inspired, especially when they see the benefits.

Of course, I'm looking into the distant future, many generations forward. For us, it's over. We've already had our childhood education. We're too old. But we have to think about today's children, babies and those who have not yet come into their mother's womb. We need to have great concern for the coming generations. Don't think there'll be no future because the world's about to be destroyed by a nuclear holocaust. Don't worry; that's not going to happen. New children are coming.

However, to make sure that we don't lose the essence of the Dharma when creating these new programs, we need very skilled and knowledgeable Dharma students on the Universal Education board and writing teams. We also need experienced regular teachers because just because we're doing this doesn't mean we're completely throwing out the old education system. We use the old system but take out the words that make people narrow and closed and reshape and flavor them to give students a deeper understanding of human nature.

Universal education does not mean we abandon mathematics or other Western subjects. Of course, we keep whatever has value, but to it we add elements that give it more totality, a deeper nature. As I say, every subject contains the totality of method and wisdom. When we talk about tantra we always say that method and wisdom must be practiced together. In the same way, every topic has its own totality and contains method and wisdom. So in universal education you have to learn how to introduce that concept in a scientific way.

On Educating Children



Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche at the 12th Meditation Course, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1979. Photo by Jeff Nye.

Lama Yeshe gave this talk at Kedron Park Teachers College, Brisbane, Australia, on April 29, 1975. One of Lama's students, a trainee teacher, had invited Lama to the college to talk to some of the other student teachers.

The purpose of education is to benefit people. We all know this. However, different countries have their own ideas of what constitutes benefit according to their individual inclinations. What some countries consider to be bad education other countries consider good. In other words, what makes education good or bad depends on how one interprets good and bad.

These days, people live in so many different environments, societies and communities—rural, urban, industrial, intellectual and so forth—that education itself has become confused. For a start, no one person can learn every existent technology; that’s obviously impossible.

Therefore, the decision as to what constitutes a good education depends very much upon personal interest, but ultimately we have to decide whether what we’re learning benefits us and helps us benefit others. If we’re not clear about this from the beginning we can embark on one course of study but finish up thinking, “Oh, this doesn’t help,” and drop it, then try something else but that doesn’t work either; then something else again...we go on so many educational trips but eventually finish up empty.

I think everybody—especially people in the West—should at least receive a basic, general education in such things as writing, mathematics, cooking, gardening and housekeeping. Those things are essential. If we simply focus on theory and technical education and ignore the practicalities, we won’t even be able to make ourselves breakfast. That’s not realistic.

Life in the modern world demands we know the fundamentals—how to prepare food and how things work. The benefit is security. What use is abstruse technology if we suddenly find ourselves alone? We could die of hunger. Don’t think it couldn’t happen; in this world we can never be sure. And don’t think it’s easy to survive because we have money. Money isn’t everything.

Therefore, an education in the basics of human necessity is essential. Studying technology without knowing the fundamentals of survival can be very dangerous.

When it comes to teaching others, we have to take into account and foster our students’ abilities and interests and try to develop those qualities in the classroom; if we don’t, the students just get bored or upset. Especially at this time, it’s not wise to teach in an authoritarian, dogmatic way—“Sit there! Learn this!” Children nowadays are very intellectually free and don’t respond well to force. So we have to arouse their interest. Skillful teachers know how to make their students interested in the subject being taught, whatever it is; that’s a uniquely human ability. Simply pushing students isn’t just unwise; it doesn’t work.

In Tibet, we taught students language, philosophy, science and so forth from the beginning but we always made sure the students were interested first. We never pushed. As a result, they’d feel that education was their responsibility, not something that only the teacher wanted, and thus they learned easily. You can’t teach students through force.

Being a teacher is a big responsibility. But learning alone doesn’t make a teacher; we have to know how to interest our students in what we want them to learn. If we don’t, it’s impossible to teach. A good teacher should know each student’s individual character and temperament and how to work with that. If the teacher’s attitude is “My way is the only way” and the student’s is different, it becomes a problem.

Another quality that a good teacher should have is equanimity. Good teachers don’t favor those students who make them happy and forget about or reject those who are slow, temperamental or difficult to communicate with. That’s not right. If the teacher gives off a

good vibration, has a good relationship with all of his or her students, makes them interested in the subject and benefits their life, that's wonderful.

However, there are unskillful teachers who put students down and focus on their bad side: "He is this and that; she didn't learn anything; his character is bad" and so forth. If you put people down, they'll feel insecure, but it's natural for people to have shortcomings—we all do; it's not just this one child. Don't think that some people are unaffected by criticism; it's not true.

Also, we all have different aptitudes. We learn some things quickly and others slowly; we understand some things the instant we hear them but find others incredibly difficult to grasp and to integrate with our own experience. Therefore we have to expect that because everybody's mind is different, some students will find certain subjects difficult and others easy. But, given time, most students can learn most things and we shouldn't give up on or denigrate those who don't get something the first or second time.

So teachers should have the skill to treat students as individuals and not generalize that they're all the same. No two personalities are identical; each person's ability to learn is different. Also, some people have a tendency to judge others on superficialities without knowing what they're like inside, but others' inner abilities can be very difficult to comprehend; most of the time we don't even know our own abilities.

Check your own educational experiences. You probably found some subjects unbelievably easy to understand while others were still incomprehensible even after repeated study. Why was that? Your own experience should help you have patience when you teach.

Sometimes educational systems are fixed but standardized systems don't always work, so be careful when deciding which approach is best for your students. Methods and curricula have to change with the times.

It's also important to encourage your students and make them feel that they're capable of success. When you do so, they make progress and see their own development for themselves. That's very important. If, instead, you always emphasize your own ability and learning and tell students, "This is the way I teach and this is the way you learn," you disempower them, which is clearly the wrong thing to do. It's just your own power trip.

With education, students gain their own power, and with that you can teach them more. It's hard to teach people who are completely dull and foolish. Therefore, try to show your students how great their own abilities are. When they understand that, they're so happy and continuously progress. If you put them down—"You're stupid, hopeless"—they just get nervous and insecure and feel that they can never learn, and further education becomes impossible. When people believe it's impossible for them to learn, it becomes impossible for them to learn.

Confident students are the ones who make the best progress. When students think, "Yes, I can do this," they advance. Even when set complicated tasks they feel that in time they can gradually accomplish them.

And if students have special needs and can't be taught intellectually, you can teach them non-verbally through art or physical movement. Their IQ might be low but their sense perception allows them to easily understand what they see.

It's especially important to explain to children why they should get an education; as I mentioned before, you can't force them to learn. If they understand the reasons they'll take more of an interest in their studies and be much easier to teach. They don't necessarily have to understand all the logic for and benefits of learning, just some. Anyway, if you simply tell them they have to study "because it's the law" or "because I want you to," they'll just ask "Why?"

That's true. Kids today aren't easy. They always want to know why. It's not like it used to be in the old days. Think of the traditional English methods of education. Children had no choice; they had to do as they were told. Teachers didn't have to explain anything; they had all the power and used it. But that was in the past. These days children are more intelligent and skeptical, and teachers seem to have lost the power they used to have—it has moved a little more to the students' side. Perhaps they've unionized! Anyway, the conclusion is to give students logical reasons for why they should get educated.

It's not easy to be a teacher. Good teachers take responsibility for their students' lives. Perhaps this doesn't happen so much in the West but that's how it was in Tibet. Our teachers felt very responsible for the way their students thought and behaved, and in general tried to ensure that their lives were constructive and uncomplicated. But even though Western teachers today have less influence over students than they used to, they still have some.

Therefore, as much as you can, give off good vibrations and come from a place of sound philosophy rather than misconception. Many teachers' ideas are total misconceptions and when this is reflected in their unconscious behavior it adversely affects their students: they adopt their teachers' erroneous ideas and copy their bad behavior. I'm not just being negative; it happens. So be careful how you think and act.

A teachers' influence extends well beyond what you teach; your character is also very important. I don't mean that you should just be superficially diplomatic; I mean that you should feel deeply responsible to communicate well with your students and really understand them.

It can be quite difficult to choose the kind of life you want to lead. Before deciding upon the subjects that you want to study you have to look ahead and choose a career that will give you the money you'll need to live the way you want. For many people this means a life of luxury, so you have to see what kind of education will lead to that. That's not always easy.

For example, I've seen many people choose their education, get their degree, be successful but still finish up unhappy with their job. Therefore, if you're going to be a teacher, you need to be very wise and skillful in your approach so that the education you give others is beneficial for them and yourself as well. And as I said before, the way to give the best education to others is to approach them as individuals and make them interested in what you teach. You can't teach everybody the same subject. There's no one best thing.

I know that in some places the syllabus is fixed and that's what you're expected to teach rather than something that accords to your students' interests. But if you're wise you can still loosen it up rather than teach it in a concrete way; you can spice up the set topics with things that your students will find interesting. That's possible.

The bottom line is that if your students are happy with what you teach, they'll learn.

And now, if there are any questions, I'd be happy to try to answer them.

Q: Lama, here we're training to teach children aged five to thirteen. At the beginning you suggested teaching the basic necessities for life; could you tell us briefly what those basic necessities are?

Lama: What I meant was that you should have the sincere wish to help your students and when you teach you should do so peacefully, not aggressively. That will rub off on your students and they'll remember you for the rest of their lives as somebody who taught beautifully, with patience. Furthermore, your kindness will be reflected in the way they act; they will pass the warm feeling they got from you on to others. Children always copy their teachers so you have to impress them the right way.

Of course, you can explain the purpose of the actual education but you can also tell your students that that's not all there is; that there's something else. You can tell them that they should have warm feelings for and dedicate their lives to others; that selfishness brings only unhappiness. You can definitely explain that kind of thing.

The human mind is really beautiful. If you act positively your students will automatically absorb that. They may not have the conscious thought "He's good," but that's the effect you'll have on their subconscious. So you don't have to say, "Studying math is the only way to be happy." That's completely silly; they'll laugh at you. Instead, you can say something like, "Math isn't that important but you might need to know some when you go shopping." Explain the need in a simple way; then they won't be confused. Explain things in a very down-to-earth way. Some teachers exaggerate the importance of what they're teaching and that just confuses their students' minds. Of course, sometimes teachers themselves are confused and pass their confusion on to their students. Then the students go home and confuse their parents, their parents confuse the rest of the community and confusion is generated all round.

Q: Lama, does the practice of meditation give you the peace and stability to remain calm in spite of confusion?

Lama: Yes, it does. Meditation shows you what's happening within your mind. It shows how your past experiences influence the present and how your present experiences will affect you in the future.

Q: Who controlled children's education in Tibet? Here, the government's in charge.

Lama: We had different kinds of school. Some children went to medical college; others were trained in monasteries. In general, most Tibetan children were educated in the monastery.

Q: Western children watch much TV and have many more distractions than Tibetan children, but can we still start teaching them meditation at such early ages as five or six?

Lama: It depends. If a child has a violent, uncontrolled mind and finds it impossible to keep still in class, even at the age of ten or twelve, perhaps you can teach him to relax his body, his physical nervous system, with some kind of simple meditation technique. It can be very natural. You don't have to believe something to meditate; it's more to do with mind and feeling. You can simply teach children to concentrate on some part of their body: their stomach, heart or head, for example. And you can make it a game; just let them see what they experience for an hour or so. You don't have to push them: "Meditate!" You can also teach such children to recite mantras. That can also help a lot.

But for students who don't have that kind of problem and are studying well, you don't need to teach meditation or mantra. It's only for those who are complicated and with whom it's hard to communicate.

Q: I've tried teaching children mantras but once they master it they seem to get bored very quickly, like in five or ten minutes.

Lama: Yes, that can happen, but don't make them do it all the time, just occasionally, and never for a long period. If children concentrate strongly for even a short time it can be very powerful because they don't intellectualize as much as we do.

Well, I think that's all. Thank you; thank you very much.

On Marriage



Lama Yeshe at Malvern Town Hall, Melbourne, Australia, 1979. Photo by Bonnie Rothenberg.

Lama Yeshe answers questions about marriage and relationships. Collated by Nicholas Ribush from talks in various locations from 1975 to 1981. The first two excerpts below are from a course on mind and mental factors at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Pomaia, Italy, in 1978.

‘These days, one of the main reasons that a man and a woman become friends is sexual. They get together for sexual pleasure. In earlier times, marriage had a divine quality—a couple came together out of respect, with the aim of creating a kind of totality. That gave meaning to getting married, and marriages made with such purpose became good ones.

Many of today’s marriages become disastrous because they lack purpose; there’s no worthwhile goal for coming together. A couple should not come together out of grasping at each other; there should be more meaning to it than that. But our craving desire and lack of wisdom work together to create an extreme situation that finishes up causing conflict: the woman agitates her man; the man agitates his woman—in either case, it ends in “goodbye.”

‘These days, I travel the entire world and many young people come to see me to discuss their relationship problems, but they all boil down to people’s coming together out of the wrong motivation. Whether you’re a man or a woman, it’s important that there’s not too much grasping in your relationship, that you don’t agitate your partner. Extreme grasping at sexual pleasure is a problem; sexual pleasure is an irritant. You can see.

However, many couples aren't together for the sex. Their relationship is deeper than that, so their attitude is different. They are very comfortable, free, somehow, with no tremendous expectations of each other. Therefore, they have a good relationship. I'm sure you've seen examples of such couples, where there's not much grasping.

In my limited experience of the Western world, many Christians, who believe in God, have very respectful marriages. They believe in something deeper than themselves and are not living for sense pleasure alone. I would say that such couples have been blessed by God or Jesus.

Of course, many people these days believe that Coca-Cola is better than God. "What's the point of religion?" they ask; "Coca-Cola is more refreshing than God or the Bible." This is their problem. What to do? I'm joking!

The next day:

Thousands of people the world over get married every day out of craving for sexual pleasure. Others get married principally for reputation: "He's world famous; he's great." Still others marry for wealth or power. Those are all wrong motivations for marriage. The purpose of marriage should be to avoid extremes and gain balance in your life. However, it often turns out the complete opposite.

These days, perhaps as many people get divorced as get married. Don't think divorce is easy. Psychologically, divorce can be hell. It's not as simple as "OK, bye-bye," and it's over. It's not like that. First there's a huge build-up of psychological pressure and when it releases it's like falling into hell. So, sentient beings are suffering like this.

We criticize modern society for such ills, but it's not society's fault. There's nothing wrong with society—it's our mental attitude that's mistaken. We create all kinds of fantasies, grasp at sense pleasure and everything finishes in disaster.

Buddhism explains that we circle from one life to another because of craving desire and that we can put an end to cyclic existence, to rebirth in samsara, by abandoning desire. Craving is what makes the wheel of life go round and it's our own clinging that binds us to it; nobody else makes us cycle from one suffering life to another.

The twentieth century example of this is those ladies and gentlemen who get married, experience problems, grasp at another person, then at another, and another ... maybe they cycle through four or five marriages in a single lifetime. Some people have hundreds of lovers in their life. Why can't they stop? Why do they keep on grasping? There's nobody driving them to do this; they drive themselves. They hang on continuously; non-stop. Desire is fickle in nature. Freud tried to explain sex as the basis of most human problems. Buddhism disagrees. The main human problem lies much deeper than that.

From an interview with a Catholic theologian, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1977:

Q: Lama, is it possible to teach married people on the spiritual path some form of modified tantric practice to help deepen their spiritual and sexual relationship?

Lama: Yes, it's possible. But as the texts explain, you have to approach these things gradually. Still, if married people study properly, they can learn the great significance of tantric practice, have a good relationship and, in a simple way, experience some kind of unity.

However, I can't be specific about this because it depends greatly on the level of development of the individuals involved. It's similar with people who want to be celibate: just because you're intellectually ready for a certain type of practice, the scientific reality—what Buddhists call the interdependent origination of it—may be against it; the physical nervous system, which comes from the mind, may not be ready. In such cases, the nervous system can crack under the strain.

Therefore, whatever practice you're trying to achieve, you need to go slowly, slowly and develop yourself organically. It's not something that depends only on ideas. If you take it gradually, any practice can become easy. You should not push or squeeze yourself. If you pump yourself too hard, you run out of space, freak out and go crazy.

Q: Some people take teachings and then decide to live in the world and practice Dharma without becoming a monk or nun. Is it easy to integrate worldly responsibilities with spiritual practice?

Lama: That, too, depends on the individual. For some people it's a beautiful experience. They get married, the marriage is good, they try to help and share with each other. I think that's beautiful; such couples are also a good example to others.

Many of my married students were experiencing unbelievable suffering and conflict when I met them. All I could do was try to help them be happy and have as good a relationship as possible. But, sometimes the circumstances are against it. Basically, both people are unhappy; they have much conflict and many problems within their marriage. I think this is common. It's not just confined to my students. Many Western people experience this. I think the grasping, sexual relationship is one of the greatest problems Western people face, whether they are religious practitioners or not.

However, some people understand each other and try to live with loving kindness, but that's really up to the individual. Some people can lead a beautiful married life; others can't. It really depends on the individual's needs at the time.

At a public talk in Los Angeles, 1975:

Q: Lama, many people have problems with their marriage. Do you have anything to say about this?

Lama: Do I have anything to say? Yes! They don't understand each other. They lack good communication. That creates many problems. Many people, especially young ones, marry for very superficial reasons: "I like him; let's get married; I like her, let's get married." There's not much thought given to how they're going to spend their life together or much analysis of each other's personality. People are too influenced by external appearance; true beauty lies within. People's faces and behavior are constantly changing; you can't rely on them.

Because we lack the knowledge-wisdom to understand each other's inner, human qualities, we easily disrespect our partner. When things don't work out as planned, when our partner no longer appears attractive, our marriage fails. That's because it was built one hundred percent on ego; it was totally an ego-based relationship. No wonder it didn't work.

A marriage built on mutual understanding, good communication and sincere efforts to help each other has a much better chance of lasting. Mental communication is much better than physical. That is very important. Superficial relationships, those based on mainly external factors, never last.

Let's say a couple buys a new piece of furniture. The husband says, "Put it here," the wife says, "No, put it there," and a huge fight ensues. Here, there, what difference does it make? It's foolish and narrow-minded, but that's how things go.

At a course on death and rebirth, London, 1981:

Q: Lama, what do you think about marriage?

Lama: Marriage is good; because of marriage, you and I exist on Earth. Without marriage most of us wouldn't exist. I have some Christian friends I like and respect very much. Many Christian couples have a good relationship because they keep love of God in their heart. I've also heard they have the attitude that sex is for reproduction, not for pleasure. I think that's a very good idea.

Q: What about contraception?

Lama: I'm not going to talk about the Buddhist point of view; I'm going to talk about this monk's point of view. I have to be careful. However, my observation of the Western world is that contraception is a very good thing because many young people are not ready to have children and when they do, instead of growing, they go crazy. I have students like this. They are young, super-intelligent and well educated, but as soon as they have babies they become unbelievably miserable. I've seen intelligent, worldly-wise girls suddenly become terrible, with no capability, no happiness, and no love for their man; they hate everything. It's incredible. If those girls hadn't had babies, over time, they could have become incredibly spiritually developed.

Parenthood brings with it many societal obligations; having a baby is a big responsibility. So, for those who cannot control their desire for sexual pleasure, contraception is essential. Also, if you can prevent an unwanted pregnancy from occurring, you eliminate the possibility of having to consider killing the fetus by abortion. Buddhism explains that for a sentient being to come from the intermediate state into a human rebirth the mother's womb should be healthy and unobstructed. In other words, the conditions should be perfect. If you interrupt the conditions through contraception, it's OK. It's certainly better than madness. This is my own observation; I hope it doesn't upset anybody.

Q: Well, Lama, what about abortion?

Lama: For Buddhists, abortion is difficult. It's a question of morality, or ethics. But still, it's a relative question. Let's say that you don't have an abortion and that the next twenty years of

your life are miserable. And even more misery comes from that. Yet you think nothing of killing fish and small animals. Relatively, which is worse? Good and bad are relative; good karma and bad karma are relative. I'm not making any statement here; it's just something for you to think about.

How We Started Teaching Dharma to Westerners



Lama Yeshe at the 11th Meditation Course, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1978. Photo by Adele Hulse.

Excerpted from an interview with Brian Beresford and Geoff Jukes on behalf of the Meridian Trust, the Buddhist film and video archive, at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Pomaia, Italy, in October 1982.

I began teaching Westerners in the late 1960s. At that time I was based at the Tibetan refugee camp of Buxa [Duar], West Bengal, India, where I'd lived since 1959, following the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Lama Zopa Rinpoche was one of my students there and from his time in Tibet had a connection with the monks of Samten Chöling Monastery at Ghoom, near Darjeeling. They invited us to come there for a holiday, which was the first one I'd had since arriving at the Buxa [Duar] "concentration camp."

So there we were, and one morning a monk knocked at our door and said, "Lama Zopa's friend has come to see him." It was Zina Rachevsky, a Russian American woman, who was supposed to be a princess or something.

She said that she'd come to the East seeking peace and liberation, and asked me how they could be found. I was kind of shocked because I'd never expected Westerners to be interested in liberation or enlightenment. For me, that was a first. I thought, "This is something strange but very special." Of course, I did have some idea of what Westerners were, but obviously it was a Tibetan projection! So, despite my surprise I thought I should check to see if she was really sincere or not.

I started to answer her questions as best I could, according to my ability, but after an hour she said she had to go back to where she was staying in Darjeeling, about thirty minutes away by jeep. However, as she was leaving she asked, "Can I come back tomorrow?" I said, "All right."

So she came back at the same time the next day and again asked various questions, which I tried to answer. Somehow she got some kind of message from the teachings I gave her, became very enthusiastic, and again asked if she could come back the following day.

In this way she came for teachings every day for a week or more. Finally she said, "It's very expensive for me to come here every day by jeep. Could you please come to stay at my place and give teachings there?"

At first I was a little bit scared; I didn't quite know what to make of this Western lady. But her sincerity made me believe in her and encouraged me to go, so I said OK and Lama Zopa and I moved to her house. She lived in the main cottage and we stayed in a small hut outside, in the garden, quite separate from where she lived.

We gave her lessons every day, from about nine or ten o'clock until midday, which she liked very much, and finished up spending about nine months there; quite a long time. Then she had visa problems and got into trouble with the Indian police.

She was a very strong character, an unusually strong woman, and told the police that they were pigs and should stay away from her place. This rather annoyed them and they tried to hassle her but there wasn't much they could do until they decided to label her a Russian spy. Then they put a lot of pressure on her and kicked her out of Darjeeling.

She finished up having to leave India and went to Ceylon. She wanted Lama Zopa and me to go with her to continue teaching her Dharma and meditation, but in order to travel we needed His Holiness the Dalai Lama's permission and some kind of refugee document from the Indian government. It took about a year to organize all that, but we finally got His Holiness' permission and an Identity Certificate through the Tibetan Bureau in New Delhi and we were ready to go.

Zina came up from Ceylon to meet us in New Delhi but in the meantime had decided to become a nun. I thought that was a good idea but since according to the vinaya, novice ordination requires the participation of at least four monks in addition to the preceptor, Lama Zopa and I couldn't do it ourselves, so we went to Dharamsala to ask His Holiness

the Dalai Lama. He couldn't do it either but arranged for some other lamas to ordain her and in that way Zina became a nun.

For some reason I felt uneasy about going to Ceylon so I suggested to Zina that we go to Nepal instead. It was close to Tibet and beautiful, peaceful and quiet. Environment is very important and I thought that since Zina was now a nun she needed to be where she could lead a simple life. Taking ordination alone is not enough; after leaving life in the big samsara you need time to adjust to life as a monk or nun and your surroundings are very important in this.

Zina agreed, so the three of us went to Nepal. After a while her friends started coming to us for teachings and after we'd been in Nepal for a couple of years, we moved to Kopan. She kept requesting that we give a group meditation course, so in March 1971 Lama Zopa finally gave the first Kopan course and that was really the beginning of our involvement in the Western world.

So you can see that we started off slowly. We thought teaching Dharma to Westerners would be beneficial but we didn't hurriedly push; it was a gradual evolution. We took our time observing and checking intensively whether Buddhism worked for the Western mind or not. When we were confident that it did, we offered our first course. About twenty people attended the first couple of courses and then the numbers kept doubling until about two hundred and fifty people came to the sixth. After that it leveled out at around two hundred.

So that's how we started teaching Dharma to Westerners.

His Holiness is the Light to Purify All Negativities



His Holiness the Dalai Lama arriving at O Sel Ling, Bubion, Spain, 1982.

Excerpted from an interview with Brian Beresford and Geoff Jukes at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Italy, in October 1982.

Q: So, Lama, from the early beginnings that you just described, there are now thirty or thirty-two centers, (something like that) connected with you, or somehow which you inspired or your teachings inspired and at this time, it is a time that the Dalai Lama is coming to visit some of these centers. Does this have a special significance? (Yes, very true).

Lama: In the West there are many forms of Buddhism and many centers established by the students. I feel that we are having some success, that Buddhism is helpful for Western people. For that reason, I feel that Buddhism is not something for people who are only into meditation; I think Buddhism has something for society and the entire Western world.

... His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the figure, the top leader politically and spiritually. Tibetans believe he is a great leader in this world—which is very rare! For His Holiness to come to the Western world is the insurance that Buddhism has been established culturally in the various countries and centers, that Buddhism is not some kind of trip. It is insurance that Buddhism is something cultural, something truly and sincerely involved in serious work, and is becoming part of the future for the Western world. I really feel that His Holiness coming to Europe is like Guru Shakyamuni coming to this earth to make firm the Dharma, the wisdom-light that is the path to liberation for all European people. Now, with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's blessing, and all the European Dharma students and those teachers who

work dedicating their lives to Western people, Dharma quickly becomes more significant and successful.

To bring the Dharma to the Western world is not an easy job. There are a lot of misconceptions within the Western environment, and they have to be addressed and purified by coming to understand the true picture of Buddhism. I think His Holiness is the light to purify all kinds of negativities that are vibrating—objectifying Buddhism and, within Buddhist circles, holding on to sectarianism. I think His Holiness is the completely equanimous representative of not only the Tibetan tradition, but of the entire world's religions: he is the universal representative.

Therefore, especially at this critical time, I think His Holiness the Dalai Lama's coming is very important for all people, not only for religious people, but even non-religious people, to make the world community harmonious. His Holiness' message, from my understanding when listening to his lectures, is universal love, universal compassion, and for each of us to take universal responsibility to bring universal people to happiness. Somehow everybody understands that message.

I think the Dalai Lama's coming is an incredible, incredible blessing. I and the Western people really feel something very unusual now that His Holiness has come. There is some kind of incredible harmony and good understanding between everyone in our global community. I think this understanding brings better peace, liberation and harmony to the world. I think it is very important because His Holiness teaches the best way for harmonious development, individually and universally.

Why We Have Established FPMT: Lama Yeshe's Address to the FPMT Family



Lama Yeshe at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, 1982. Photo by Dan Laine.

Lama Yeshe gave this talk to FPMT center and project directors at the CPMT (Council for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition) meeting at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Pomaia, Italy, in January 1983.

Why have we established the FPMT? Why are we establishing these facilities all over the world? I think we are clean clear as to our aim—we want to lead all sentient beings to higher education. We are an organization that gives people the chance to receive higher education. We offer people what we have—the combined knowledge of Buddha's teachings and the modern way of life. Our purpose is to share our experience of this.

We know that people are dissatisfied with worldly life, with the education system and everything else. It is in the nature of our dualistic mind to be dissatisfied. So what we are trying to do is to help people discover their own totality and thus perfect satisfaction.

Now, the way we have evolved is not through you or me having said we want to do these things but through a natural process of development. Our organization has grown naturally, organically. It is not “Lama Yeshe wanted to do it.” I’ve never said that I want centers all over the world. Rather, I came into contact with students who then wanted to do something, who expressed the wish to share their experience with others, and put together groups in various countries to share and grow with others.

Personally, I think that’s fine. We should work for that. We are human beings; Buddhism helps us grow; therefore it is logical that we should work together to facilitate this kind of education. And it is not only we lamas who are working for this. The centers’ resident geshe and the students are working too. Actually, it is you students who are instrumental in creating the facilities for Dharma to exist in the Western world. True. Of course, teachers help, but the most important thing is for the students to be well-educated. That is why we exist.

When we started establishing centers there was no overall plan—they just popped up randomly all over the world like mushrooms, because of the evolutionary process I’ve just mentioned and the cooperative conditions. Now that all these centers do exist, we have to facilitate their development in a constructive, clean-clear way; otherwise everything will just get confused. We have to develop properly both internally and in accordance with our twentieth century environment. That’s why I’ve already put forward guidelines for how our centers should be—residential country communities, city centers, monasteries and so forth.

The foundation for a center’s existence is the five precepts—no killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies or intoxicants. We base our other activities—education, administration, accounting, kitchen, housekeeping, grounds and so forth—on those. All this unified energy also depends on the kindness of our benefactors, the devoted people who give us donations. Thus we are responsible to utilize their donations in the wisest possible way, the way that brings maximum benefit to others. For this reason, in a place where hundreds of people are involved, we have to organize—to ensure that we use their energy in the most worthwhile way and not waste their time. Therefore, each of our centers and activities needs a general director—to direct and manage all the human and material resources at our disposal.

What does it mean to be a director? Take, for example, the job of director of one of our country centers. He or she is responsible for everything that happens in the center: education, legal matters, finance, business, community, kitchen and so forth. Computer-like, the directors have to watch everything to make sure that it’s all going in the right direction. And if they see something wrong, it is their responsibility to correct it.

Of course, one person, the director, cannot do everything himself, but under his or her umbrella all center activities function. To control these we need a good management committee and a good place for the committee to meet and discuss things. The director alone should not decide how things should be done. In committee meetings we decide upon

projects for the forthcoming year and give various responsibilities to different people. It is then the director's job to make sure that these people follow the committee's instructions exactly. If they don't, the director has the power and authority to correct them. He can even ask people who are disrupting the center's harmony and proper functioning to leave.

Thus a center director takes incredible responsibility—for the center's educational success, for its financial success. He has to think like a computer. The directorship is one of the most important aspects of the center. This doesn't mean that other people do not have responsibility; that's not true. They are responsible for the areas they have been given; they have their individual responsibilities. And it is not only the people who have been given jobs who have responsibility. Even students who come to a ten-day course, for example, have a certain degree of responsibility. They are working; they are expending energy for Dharma; they are giving—to some extent they do have responsibility. As their hearts are touched they slowly, slowly take on more and more. We can see how we too have evolved in the same way.

Now, the way to bring Dharma to the Western world is to bring the nuclear, the essential aspect of Dharma. Of course, you cannot separate the essence from the Eastern cultural trappings immediately: "This is culture; that isn't." However, what you should do is take the practical points of Dharma and shape them according to your own culture. In my opinion, you should be making a new kind of Dharma dependent on each different place and its social customs. Since we are Mahayanists, we have a broad view and don't mind if Dharma takes different shapes. To bring Dharma to the West we should have a broad view.

Because we have so many centers, I can no longer direct them. Of course, at the beginning I had to direct the centers because the students were always asking, "Lama, what to do?" and we were small enough for me to always be in direct communication with them. But, eventually, we reached a point where I had to ask myself the question, "Am I a businessman, a Dharma teacher or what?" Hundreds of letters were coming in from all over the world; I had to say, "What is this? Should I spend my life answering letters and running centers?" I thought it was wrong for me to spend my life in business because this was not the best way to serve my students. I thought that the most realistic thing to do to benefit them and make my life worthwhile was to go the middle way instead.

So I began to cut down on administrative work. I even wrote to all the centers telling them that they were responsible to make certain decisions; that I could not decide everything and that it is too complicated and far too slow to have all the correspondence coming through Nepal. Therefore, I said we should have a central office as the center's business point. Of course, I could still be consulted on important matters and could still make decisions on anything. I'm part of the Central Office; I can give my opinion. But it was not necessary to rely on me for everything. That's why I established the Central Office [now the FPMT International Office, based in Portland, Oregon, USA].

However, to some extent, I am still responsible for whatever happens in our centers. I have not let go of all responsibility, saying, "Let whatever happens happen." Therefore, I have to know something of what's going on in the centers: what problems have arisen, how serious they are, what benefits the centers are offering and so forth. The point is that I am not going to let the centers go completely so that they become totally nonsensical, non-beneficial to

others and just some kind of ego trip. I don't believe that should happen. So I don't want to close myself off. I like to look at and reflect upon what's happening, but at the same time I don't want to spend my whole life writing letters. Thus, taking the middle way meant setting up the Central Office, which has reduced my administrative workload and given me more time to spend teaching Dharma. I haven't done it because I am lazy ... well perhaps I am lazy, but at least I have to pretend that I am not!

Quite apart from the fact that I do not have time to do all this administrative work, there are many things to do with running a center that you can do far better than I. You can communicate with people from your own cultural background much better than can a simple Himalayan monk. All the legal and financial work—I can't do that either. Also, there are many positions to be filled in a center; the right people have to be selected for the right job. You students should do these things yourselves.

So, because all this administrative work was taking me so long, I passed many things on to the Central Office. There is a huge amount of this kind of work to do, that's why the Central Office is important. It facilitates communication both between the centers and me and among the centers themselves. You see, we do have the human tendency to shut off from each other: "I don't want you looking at me; I can see my own point of view, I don't want to share it with you." Each center has its own egocentric orientation: "We're good enough; we don't need to take the best of other cultures." This is wrong. We have reached our present state of existence through a process of evolution. Some older centers have had good experiences and have learned how to do things well. Doing things well is not simply an intellectual exercise but something that comes from acting every day and learning how to do things until you can do them automatically. Thus it is good that the Central Office has a pool of collective experience so that all our centers can share in it and help reinforce each other.

We have to be able to focus and integrate our energy and store information in a clean-clear way so that it can be readily accessed. We should make a structure so that we all know what information is there and how to get it. Without a proper structure, we'd go bananas! Even a couple living together needs to be organized so that their house is clean, there is the food they need and so on. In the centers, we are involved in hundreds of people's lives; for some reason Dharma has brought all these people together. We are responsible to ensure that we do not waste people's energy; therefore we have to get ourselves together. This is why organization is very important.

Let's say, for example, that one of the older students and I have started a center. We are impermanent; we are going to die. What happens when we are dead? We established the center; it has never been organized properly; should it die too? No, of course not. Even though our very bones have disappeared, the center should continue to function. But for people to be able to carry on in its work there should be clean-clear directions as to what it was established for. If things are set up right, religious philosophies can carry on for generations and generations. We know this to be an historical fact.

If you think about it, from the point of view of culture, Buddhism is completely culture oriented; it is a complete culture, or way of life, from birth to death. Therefore we are dealing with a very serious thing; we are giving people something that they should take very seriously in their lives. It is not just a one-week or one-month trip. We are offering

something that utilizes Buddha's method and wisdom in the achievement of everlasting satisfaction. That everlasting peace and happiness is what we are working for.

So we have a very important job; it is not just one person's thing. For that reason I have to say openly to all our center directors that they should not feel they are working for Lama Yeshe—that's too small. I am just a simple monk; you are working for me? One atom? No—you are working for something much bigger than just one man. You are working for all mother sentient beings. That is important. You should think, "Even if I die, I am doing all of these things for the sake and benefit of all other mother sentient beings." That is why it is so important to us to have a clean-clear structure and direction.

For me, this is very important. I don't believe I am the principal worker and doing everything. No. I believe what Lama Je Tsongkhapa says in his lamrim: All your success comes from other sentient beings. Thus, other sentient beings are capable of continuing our work, and what will enable them to do so will be having a clean-clear direction—not a temporary, Mickey Mouse direction, but a clean-clear one. Our aim then is to have a perfectly delineated structure so that even when we are all dead, still, as we wished, our Dharma centers will be able to carry on their work. I believe that human beings are very special. They are intelligent. If we write an intelligent constitution, record an intelligent system of direction, other human beings will be able to keep it going. That is why we have to have a structure.

Now, as far as our structure is concerned, it is simple and natural; a structure that could have been thought out by primitive people, not sophisticated twentieth century ones. I am not sophisticated; I have never been educated in organizational structure or learned about it. I am very simple. Our thing has grown naturally. Because we have been giving continuous teachings, the number of students has grown. Then, from Nepal, those interested students have returned to their homes all over the world and started centers in various places. Some of those have become directors and given different job responsibilities to others interested in helping them.

How is the Central Office constituted? Each of our centers is a part of the foundation of the main office; the office manifests from that base. Do you see the evolution? We give teachings; all the original directors manifest from there; from the directors, energy for new centers builds up; more and more new centers come. Like that, there has been a logical evolution, development from an existing foundation. The directors have built up the entity of the foundation and the Central Office, we communicate, and this is the way the structure develops. To my mind, it is not a sophisticated, egotistical structure but one that has occurred and grown naturally. Now all these directors—administrative, spiritual, business—are the principal nuclear resource, and they make up the Central Office; they are the directorate. They meet; they put forward ideas. But who keeps the Central Office going? These twenty or more people remain in the one location, meeting and working together all the time, all their lives. They have to go back to their own places; they have their own business to attend to. So who does all these things? The director of the Central Office.

Say that a CPMT meeting has decided that all centers should undertake a certain project because of its obvious benefit to the centers, the FPMT, or whatever. It is then the Central Office's responsibility to ensure that all the centers have all the information and everything

else they need to carry out the project. On the other hand, some good idea may not be practical. If I have to go to each center to explain why something should not be done it's an incredible hassle. I can save time, life and energy simply by telling the Central Office my ideas, which can then be circulated to all the relevant places. This is simple and useful, and it's the Central Office director's job to see that all this gets done. We need a clean-clear system with which everybody is comfortable.

Therefore when you, the FPMT directors, come to a final decision that is solid, to be implemented, or actualized, in our centers, the Central Office has the authority to make sure it happens. The Office Director cannot direct a center to do something that was not generally agreed, "Because I say so." "I say so" is not authority enough. The thing is, we get an idea, a meeting of the FPMT directors (CPMT) agrees, and the Central Office ensures that it can be and is implemented. I think that this is the correct way to go about things.

Anyway our aim is clear; it is to educate people. Each center should have strong emphasis on education. The education system and program are essential for us to be successful. Why are we building communities? Because we have no home? No! We are not refugees; we have not started centers to house refugees. Thus it is important for each center to have a strong educational program and a spiritual director to conduct it. This is an essential part of our structure and must be there.

But I am not going to keep telling you things that you know already. Still, it is important that I clarify the reason for our existence and what we are doing. It is important work; we are not joking. We are real. Also, we are confident. I have great confidence in my involvement with Western people; I believe in it. I think that there are things that we can understand in common. We understand each other; therefore we can work together.

Also, it is important for directors to have a great vision; they should not neglect their center's growth. They should have a very broad view in order to be open to people. In many of our centers we find that already the facilities are too small. Of course, to build adequate facilities takes time and energy; but we should have a broad open view: "We would like to have things this way, without limitations" Having a broad view is not forcing any issue but simply saying that if we have the opportunity to do various things, we'll do them. You never know when somebody might come up to you and say, "I'd like to do something beneficial with my money." At that time you can reply, "Well we have this project ready to develop," and show that person your plans. If, however, you feel suffocated with what you already have and don't have any vision of how to expand, you can't show potential benefactors anything. Therefore you should plan ahead with great vision and have everything ready to show people how you want to expand and improve your facilities.

For example, we have always said that our centers should be living communities. But through experience we have discovered that we cannot yet be self-sufficient. To be a self-sufficient community in the Western sense requires an immense input of energy. Let's say that the twenty of us here are a community. Can you imagine what we need in order to live according to this society's standards? We have to live in reasonable comfort. That means we have to have cars, a certain amount of regular income for living expenses and so forth. So how do we do it? From the realistic point of view, it is an incredible job to make each center

into a self-sufficient community. You know how much energy you have to take from the outside world.

My observation is that our centers are not run really professionally as self-sufficient communities. Even though we call ourselves communities, from the Western standard of living point of view, other communities are much more comfortable than our Buddhist ones. One of the problems that we are beginning to experience is that of overcrowding. This is not right—we must create the right conditions for people who live in or visit our centers, be they monks or nuns, single laypeople or parents and their children. We are in trouble because we are not doing things according to the Western way of life. Therefore we should take a look at where we are and where we should go from here.

Community life should be normal. Parents and children should be accommodated in our centers so that they can live as normally as possible. Our experience is that they are not; we should learn from that. Of course, our students have big hearts and try their best. It is all a part of our evolution, not something that we have done wrong. But now we have reached a certain point and learned something. Our Dharma family has grown and we need to improve the living conditions at our centers to accommodate everybody. There should be a section where families can live normal family lives; there should be part of the center where strict retreat-type courses can be conducted; there should be monastic conditions for the monks and nuns. Everybody should be normal and comfortable in his or her way of life and everybody should have something constructive to do.

So, not only do we need a clear structure for our international organization; there should be one within each center too. As I said before, each center needs a director and a management committee. The committee consists of heads of the important sections of the center: the resident geshe, the spiritual program director, the business manager etc. and, of course, the director. Thus the committee is not elected, but made up of those who hold responsible positions in the center. These people meet regularly and discuss how things should be done on a day-to-day basis. When they have agreed, they call the residents together and inform them of what they have decided. If the residents agree, well and good, but the committee does have to check with them. Thus all the center's members are consulted and have a say in decisions that affect them.

In general, this is the way we do it, but sometimes it might be hard for everyone to understand which way a director is going. If they don't understand, perhaps he can just let go. But most of the time this is the way we work: there is a committee, it makes decisions, we see how the residents feel about them, and if they don't like the decisions, we can change them. If they agree, then whatever it is, it can be done. In this case, it is the director's responsibility to see that it happens; he has to make sure that the committee's decisions are implemented, in much the same way that the Central Office director has to see that the CPMT's decisions are carried out.

However, with respect to major decisions within a center, even the director and committee cannot decide alone. For example, say all the center's buildings should be torn down and rebuilt. I don't think they should make a decision of that magnitude without consulting the other FPMT directors. It is too risky to have just a few people deciding whether or not to demolish an entire center. Similarly, say a center receives a donation of a million dollars. We

should definitely call a meeting of all the other directors to decide on how that money should be spent. The director and the committee alone cannot make their own immediate decision, even though they know the local situation much better than all the other directors. The director of that center should put forward his proposals for the others to comment on.

In the same way, there is a limit to the decisions that the Central Office director can make. Above a certain level the other directors should be consulted. Then the Central Office makes sure that what has been agreed to gets done. Also, the Central Office helps me get information about the centers and passes my messages through to the centers. My mail comes through the Central Office, too. The Office is a tool that helps me implement ideas I might have for ways to improve the centers. In this way and the ways already mentioned, the centers benefit from the Central Office. Thus it is important for them to support the Office through annual contributions.

Because we are doing constructive things with long-term plans, we should not expect to be able to judge the benefits of the contributions made to the Central Office on any short-term effects: “This year we gave x dollars to the Central Office but received only y amount of benefit.” The benefit you receive may not necessarily become apparent in this material life. We are planting seeds and it takes time for them to grow. Therefore, as long as you can understand why your center puts money into the Central Office, you can analyze what is going on in the present situation and what are the short- and long-term benefits for the entire FPMT mandala, and check all that against the needs of our growing organization. Only then can you judge whether or not your contribution has been worthwhile. Remember—to bring Dharma to the West we have to have a broad view.



Lama Zopa Rinpoche

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May whoever sees, touches, reads, remembers, or talks or thinks about these books never be reborn in unfortunate circumstances, receive only rebirths in situations conducive to the perfect practice of Dharma, meet only perfectly qualified spiritual guides, quickly develop bodhicitta and immediately attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

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The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, its spiritual director, who founded the Archive in 1996. The Lamas began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970 and since 1972 their teachings have been recorded and transcribed.

The work of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive falls into two categories: *archiving* and *dissemination*.

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The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is an international organization of Buddhist meditation study and retreat centers, monasteries, publishing houses, healing centers and other related activities founded in 1975 by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. At present, there are more than 160 FPMT centers, projects and services in over forty countries worldwide.

The FPMT website offers details about the FPMT's many educational programs, a complete listing of FPMT centers located all over the world and a link to the FPMT Store. Please visit www.fpmt.org

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Wisdom Publications was founded by Lama Yeshe and publishes many books by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Explore their catalog at www.wisdompubs.org/catalog

What to do with Dharma teachings

The Buddhadharma is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like this show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings, the names of your teachers or holy images is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect. To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly chairs or tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

Should you need to get rid of Dharma materials, they should not be thrown in the rubbish but burned in a special way. Briefly: do not incinerate such materials with other trash, but alone, and as they burn, recite the mantra om ah hum. As the smoke rises, visualize that it pervades all of space, carrying the essence of the Dharma to all sentient beings in the six saṃsāric realms, purifying their minds, alleviating their suffering, and bringing them all happiness, up to and including enlightenment. Some people might find this practice a bit unusual, but it is given according to tradition. Thank you very much.

Dedication

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma live long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space, and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained, and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

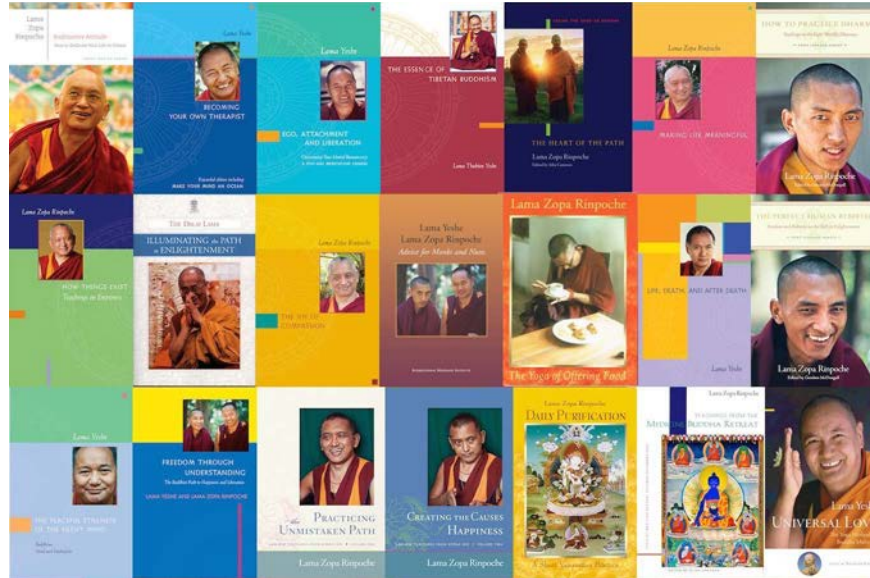
Lama Yeshe

Lama Thubten Yeshe was born in Tibet in 1935. At the age of six, he entered the great Sera Monastic University, Lhasa, where he studied until 1959, when the Chinese invasion of Tibet forced him into exile in India. Lama Yeshe continued to study and meditate in India until 1967, when, with his chief disciple, Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, he went to Nepal. Two years later he established Kopan Monastery, near Kathmandu, in order to teach Buddhism to Westerners. In 1974, the Lamas began making annual teaching tours to the West, and as a result of these travels a worldwide network of Buddhist teaching and meditation centers—the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT)—began to develop. In 1984, after an intense decade of imparting a wide variety of incredible teachings and establishing one FPMT activity after another, at the age of forty-nine, Lama Yeshe passed away. He was reborn as Ösel Hita Torres in Spain in 1985 and recognized as the incarnation of Lama Yeshe by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1986. Lama's remarkable story is told in Vicki Mackenzie's book, *Reincarnation: The Boy Lama* (Wisdom Publications, 1996) and Adele Hulse's official biography, *Big Love*, (forthcoming from LYWA).

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