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BY

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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Lecture 1

Please note: Because the tapes were undated and not broken into different teachings, the lecture numbers and dates are approximations.

December 2, 1993

THE NEED TO TRANSFORM THE MIND

[Chanting]

So first I would like to say, “Hello.” From my heart I would like to thank you very much, those of you who have just begun to seek—that’s seek, not to be sick—the unmistakable path, as well as all you people who have been following or attending the unbetrayable or unmistakable path for some time, the path leading to peace.

The first thing I want to explain is the reason we need to practice meditation, to practice Dharma. Of course, the basic reason is we want happiness and we do not want problems, we do not want suffering, but it’s not just that. The main reason is that happiness and suffering do not come from outside; happiness and suffering come from within our own mind. *Every* living being’s happiness or suffering comes from the mind, not from outside. That’s the main reason there is the need to practice Dharma, why there’s the need to practice meditation.

While our life’s so busy, why is there a need to add some additional thing on top of that? Why do we need to meditate, to practice the Dharma on top of our normal busy life? Another way of saying that is our daily life must become Dharma—meditating, working, eating, sleeping, sitting, talking and so forth—all our daily life activities must become Dharma. Whatever we are doing, even in our business, has to become our Dharma practice, it has to become a meditation. Why is that? The whole reason we have to practice meditation, Dharma, is because we have to change our life, we have to transform our daily life into the Dharma. We need to transform the same actions that we have been doing all our life into the Dharma, into meditation, so that they all become the cause of happiness. Because the happiness we want and the suffering we don’t want don’t come from outside but from our own mind, we have to put all our effort, all our attention into this.

The main cause of suffering is not outside, it is in the mind; the main cause of happiness is not outside, it is in the mind. You can say it is in the mind or on the mental continuum; it can be said both ways. Within the mind is the wrong concept that becomes the cause of suffering, that produces or creates all the suffering, all the problems of life. Then there is the causative attitude of the healthy mind, which is also a concept, but one that produces peace, happiness in life.

The happiness or suffering we experience is the ripening of an imprint on the mental continuum left on the mind by past actions, by the power of positive or negative attitudes of the past, like having planted a seed in the ground.

Like the body, the mind is flexible. With effort we can make the body very flexible, like the acrobats in a circus, able to jump about and do all those various things. I don't know how to label it, but anyway those that can do all those things in the circus. People who do physical yoga can bring their legs around the body, around the neck! [Rinpoche laughs] All that physical flexibility has come from physical effort; just imagining it is not enough. It has to come through physical effort.

Similarly, because happiness and suffering are inner factors, because they are feelings, they come from the mind, they are produced by the mind. Therefore to stop the mind creating suffering and to cause the result of all the happinesses and peace in the mind, this will only come through thought transformation or mind training, the development of a positive, healthy mental attitude.

There are no external factors that can eliminate the mind that produces unhappiness or suffering, that can transform it into the cause of happiness alone. There is no other means except the Dharma, meditation, to eliminate suffering and obtain happiness. This is because happiness and suffering come from within our mind. It can only come about by the transformation of our own mind, by positively developing our mind, which makes our life have a better quality.

The other thing is that the purpose of our life is not just to solve our own problems and obtain happiness for ourselves—not just for this one person, even if that person is ourselves. The purpose of living our life is to free every living being from every suffering and to obtain happiness for every living being. *That* is the purpose of our life.

Therefore we need to transform the mind from a mind of ego, of the self-cherishing thought, the thought seeking happiness only for ourselves, working only for ourselves, which is the source of all the problems of life, all the obstacles to achieve not just temporary happiness and success but also especially ultimate happiness, the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. This ego, the thought seeking happiness only for ourselves, is the source of all undesirable things; it is where all the harms come from, all the obstacles to practicing the Dharma. Even when we practice the Dharma, when we meditate, there are interferences or obstacles that don't allow us to practice Dharma, that interfere in us having success in our Dharma practice, even for the success of the work for this life. The ego, this attitude that is concerned only for ourselves is the root of all these undesirable things that we experience. It is where all the dissatisfaction in life comes from, all the pain in the heart.

Therefore we need to transform the mind from this thought seeking happiness only for ourselves into one of altruism, the thought of benefiting others, of helping all living beings to obtain happiness. This change is like the difference between the earth and the sky. This change of mind, this thought transformation, is the root of happiness of our life; it is the best way to find satisfaction, happiness and success—happiness and success for ourselves and happiness and success for others, for every living being.

As soon as the change starts, as soon as we start to change from the egoistic thought of working only for our own happiness and start to work for the happiness of others, that is when real peace and happiness start within our heart. With this healthy mind that seeks to work for others, wishing to obtain the happiness of other living beings, with this thought of benefiting others, life becomes enjoyable. Whichever lifestyle we might be living, with this new healthy mind our life becomes enjoyable because we see the meaning of our life. There is a purpose for living; we have the responsibility to obtain happiness for everyone, to free everyone from all the sufferings and to obtain their happiness.

OUR UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY

As I often say, if there is no compassion in our heart, then what is there is ego, the self-cherishing thought. Depending on that, anger arises as well as the other emotional minds, the dissatisfied minds such as attachment, jealousy and so forth. Then other living beings receive harm from us directly or indirectly from life to life. If there is compassion generated in our heart,

what comes out of this compassion is no harm, only benefit to others. Starting from the people or animals nearest to us, any living being who is around us, from there to all the other living beings, nobody receives harm from us; what they receive from us is peace. With compassion, we not only stop giving harm to others but we also benefit them, so all other living beings receive help, happiness, from us.

Whether all other living beings receive peace and happiness from us depends on whether we have compassion toward them or not. And that is up to us; that is up to what we do with our mind. Therefore every one of us here has the universal responsibility to free everyone from all the sufferings and obtain happiness for them.

Maybe we should do a short meditation at this point. Try to feel the universal responsibility that you have responsibility to obtain peace and happiness for everyone who is around you here now in this building, in this place, Kopan. Starting from here, think, “I have a responsibility to obtain happiness and peace for everyone, for all the living beings.” By using reasoning, try to feel the universal responsibility.

[Rinpoche and students meditate]

The next thing to consider is what is it that hurts you? That part might come in a dream. If you go to bed, it might come in a dream. I’m joking. [Rinpoche laughs]

Anyway, I’ll stop here. Thank you very much.

Lecture 2

December 3, 1993

LOOKING FOR A PROBLEM, WE CANNOT FIND IT

Last night I mentioned that the meaning of life, the purpose of living, is to cause others happiness and to eliminate their suffering, whether it is one living being, one person, or many. Whether we serve one or many, the purpose of living is to free everyone from all their sufferings and to bring them every happiness. Therefore whoever we serve, whether it's one person or many, we should live our life with this attitude of bringing them happiness and eliminating their problems. Then, even if it is for one day, our life has meaning. Even if the length of our life is just one hour, it has purpose. Even if the life we have is just for one minute, it has purpose. With this new way of living, with this healthy attitude to life, whatever length of life we have with this precious human body—whether we've got one day, one hour or even one minute—living the life with this thought to benefit others gives our life meaning. There is purpose for living even for one minute.

Therefore it is ridiculous to feel we are overwhelmed by some problem in life. We might have a situation that the mind has labeled “problem.” Our mind has changed in some way, and we have this concept that it is a problem; we have made up the concept of “problem.” Then, because we have made up this concept “problem” we find the problem. As long as we don't create the concept that this is a problem, then there is no problem.

Because some change has happened in our life that is the opposite to what we expected or wished for, simply because of that, we feel there is a problem. We hadn't expected this new situation, this change of circumstances. For example, if we feel something has changed in the relationship we have with somebody, a friend or companion, and we feel we are no longer together with that person, we did not expect this change to happen and we didn't want it to happen. Our mind can't handle the fact that this has happened—either the other person's change of attitude to us or physically separating—and because we believe this is a problem, because of that concept, we see it as a problem.

The problem that we see is something that has come from our own wrong concept. If we were to look for the actual problem, we wouldn't be able to find it. What is the problem? When we

look for problems in our life, we cannot find them! [Rinpoche laughs] Other than labeling them a problem. By analyzing what is a problem, it is not about whatever change might have happened—the change of our friend’s attitude to us or even the distance or closeness of their physical body—it comes down to our own mind, the concept we have created in our own mind, that this is a problem. Thinking this way is our own attitude but we believe this to be true.

However, when we search for the problem outside, we cannot find it. It comes down to our own thought, our own concept, and the fact that we believe that concept. That is what makes life difficult; that is what makes it suffocating.

I would not say that there is no suffering, because then there wouldn’t be any happiness either. [Rinpoche laughs] I would have to say we couldn’t receive any happiness, any peace, if suffering didn’t exist. Generally, we are not talking about the suffering or happiness of one particular being. We are not talking that way. We are not talking about one particular place or person, just generally. If suffering didn’t exist then happiness also wouldn’t exist, peace wouldn’t exist.

It is this concept, this particular way of thinking, that is unskillful. Why? Because the effect of this concept is to not have happiness or peace. The effect of this concept is to disturb our mind, making it unhappy. Therefore this concept which receives the label “problem,” when we analyze it, we cannot find the problem outside. It comes down to our own thought, this concept that affects our mind, robbing us of happiness and peace. That concept that labels the situation “problem” is unhealthy; it disturbs our own mind. Other than that, outside we can’t see a problem. Maybe *you* can see one! I am not aware of it. [General laughter]

So anyway, the point I am trying to make is that when we don’t make up the concept “bad” we then don’t believe the situation is bad, and without this fixed concept interpreting it as bad, we have freedom. When we see that the idea of “bad” comes from our own concept, we see the problem comes from the way we interpret it. Another way of putting it is that the problem doesn’t come from outside but from our own concept, from our own mind. When we recognize this, seeing how our mind has built up this concept, we have freedom in our life to have peace and happiness because we have the freedom to change the concept. We can change our attitude to life. When we change our concepts we stop seeing problems in our life.

WE SEE IMPERMANENT PHENOMENA AS PERMANENT AND BELIEVE IT

It depends on how we use our mind. One way is to use it unskillfully so that things become problems. That way is not reality. There is another word, maybe a clearer way of explaining it. Or maybe the clear way is becoming unclear now! [Rinpoche and students laugh] I thought it was clear but it's gone unclear. The way we use the mind, the way we make it function, is against reality. It is a hallucination that is the opposite of reality.

This hallucination includes our life, our relationships with our family, friends, enemies, material objects, the five sense objects. These are constantly changing within every second; they don't last. Even within a second they are changing because they are under the control of causes and conditions. Because of this subtle impermanence, these causative phenomena can perish or be stopped at any time.

Any samsara perfection, any samsara happiness—relationships, material possessions and so forth—can be stopped any time. A relationship changes from life to life but even within one life, it changes from year to year, month to month; it can even change within the same day. We begin a relationship, then in the same day it changes. We can begin a relationship in the morning, becoming friends with somebody, feeling we are inseparable, and in the evening we don't want to see them at all. [General laughter] We don't like the way they look; we don't want to hear what they say; we don't want them around.

This is because rather than using the mind to perceive things according to reality, we use it to think the opposite of reality, against the nature of things. Although all things are impermanent, we expect everything to be permanent, to never change. These things, these samsaric perfections, are causative phenomena and so their nature is impermanence, but we use our mind to think they are the opposite of their nature, totally contrary to reality.

The question arises, why does the mind apprehend an object in this way, seeing impermanent phenomena as permanent? How does the appearance of permanence happen? It doesn't come from outside; it comes from our own mind. How? The appearance of permanence, the projection of permanence, arises due to imprints left on our mental continuum by past hallucinated minds. The concept of impermanent phenomena as permanent is a projection. It's not saying that the concept that apprehends permanent [phenomena] is a hallucinated mind. It's not saying that the concept which apprehends that which is permanent as permanent is a

hallucinated mind. It's not saying that. The concept that is a hallucinated mind is the concept that apprehends an impermanent phenomenon as permanent.

These wrong concepts of permanence are on the mental continuum, left there from mistaken minds we have had in the past. It's like having taken a photo of people or mountains. The image is imprinted onto the negative, the roll of film in the camera. Then when all the conditions come together—the film is processed and it is put in a machine and projected out with electricity and all that—the image can be projected onto a TV screen or a movie screen. Not a screen, but maybe we can use a curtain on the wall to project what was imprinted onto the negative film of the camera due to all these conditions.

Like this, that past hallucinated mind, the wrong concept of permanence, has left an imprint on the mental continuum that it is then projected. This hallucination, this appearance of permanence on the impermanent phenomena, is projected and we let our mind believe that is true. Then, again, we create the wrong concept, the hallucinated mind, and having the appearance that these impermanent phenomena are permanent, we believe that it is true as it appears.

ALL PHENOMENA ARE MERELY LABELED

On top of that, all phenomena—I, action, object, friend, enemy, stranger—the whole of phenomena, in reality what they are is nothing except what merely labeled. All these phenomena are nothing other than what is merely labeled by the mind. Therefore all these things are empty.

The I is not empty of existing at all, but the I is empty of existing from its own side. It is not space, but it is like space. As well as that, action, object, problems, happiness, virtue, nonvirtue, enlightenment, hell, nirvana, samsara—the whole thing is empty of existing as real, real in sense of existing from its own side. Everything is empty, not space but like space.

This is the reality. This is the reality of exactly how things are, and this is what we have to realize. We have to realize things as they are in reality. So again, when another projection of permanence comes, we have to think what kind of projection is coming. If you are lining up [for a cup of tea] is there a projection of permanence coming, a projection of an independent, inherently existent appearance coming, a permanent tea coming? There are many things!

The other thing is this *huge* hallucination [of the projection of an inherently existing] I, action and object—all these things are merely labeled by the mind, are empty of existing from their own side. On all these phenomena that are merely labeled by the mind, there is not even the slightest reality, not even an atom that exists from its own side, not even the tiniest, tiniest thing. There is no inherent existence on any of these phenomena that exist in mere name. While there is no inherent existence on even the slightest atom, while all the phenomena are empty like this, empty of existing from their own side, our mind projects, it decorates the hallucination of inherent existence, of independence. And we let our mind believe that what we apprehend is true.

Although this is the fundamental reality of all phenomena, of life and so forth, the problem is when we let our mind think something that is the opposite of reality. We let our mind apprehend what is against its nature, against the reality of life, of phenomena. We believe the hallucination to be true. We mistakenly think that the hallucinated appearance is the reality, that this is the nature of phenomena, whereas it is the complete opposite. Our belief and reality are completely contradictory.

These hallucinated thoughts are the ones that produce problems in life; they don't allow us to have peace in our heart. Instead of that, the effect of these wrong concepts, thinking in this way makes our mental continuum unpeaceful, bringing us suffering. We are constantly torturing ourselves with these concepts, which are wrong, which are totally against reality.

LEARNING TO SEE PROBLEMS AS BENEFICIAL

This is becoming very long! But the point I was trying to make is that this all starts from not really having analyzed the problem, not having realized what the problem is. Thinking this way, we let our mind mistakenly think that this way is the problem and that there is no other problem than that. In other words, [we don't see there can be another perspective], that we can change how we view the situation and establish the thought of liking what has happened [rather than seeing it as inherently bad]. By thinking of the benefits of the problem, of this change that has happened—in other words, by viewing this change as positive—instead of only looking at the shortcoming, we stop seeing it as a problem. In this way, we achieve happiness, peace in our life from within our own mind.

On the same seat, on the same chair, on the same cushion where we sat before, believing we had a big problem in life, something as big as a mountain pressing down on us, suffocating us, *now* we realize there is no problem coming from outside, that it has been created by our own mind. The problem didn't come from that person or that situation but from our own mind, from the fact that we haven't changed our mind. We have held the fixed concept that this situation is "bad" and generated the thought that dislikes this situation.

This is the point I was trying to make but it took such a long time! There is no greater loss than this. There is no problem outside. It is simply our own mind making that concept of "problem." The problem is merely labeled by our mind. We believe it to be a real problem but it's just our way of thinking. Holding such a concept that has been merely labeled by the mind as real, we can even commit suicide.

I'll repeat it once more. Because of having met some problem that is simply to do with our own way of thinking or our own concept—the problem which is merely labeled by our own mind—we commit suicide. That is completely ridiculous; it's a great loss. This basically stems from not having the attitude in life that we are here to serve everyone, to free them from all suffering and to obtain every happiness for them. It comes from the lack of this attitude.

With this attitude, no matter how long or how short the rest of our life is—even if it is just an hour or a minute—our life has great purpose. There is great meaning in life, even if what is left is just an hour or even a minute. There is enjoyment in life with this attitude; there is happiness and peace. We can see the meaning and purpose of our life. The purpose of life is not narrow; it's not small thing. It is like the limitless sky because—whether we survive for a thousand years or even a day, an hour or a minute—the purpose is to free everyone from all suffering, to obtain happiness for all the numberless living beings. Therefore the purpose of life is like the limitless sky.

[Blessing the tea offering]

Maybe we can recite a mala of the Compassionate Buddha's mantra by generating compassion toward all samsaric suffering sentient beings whose minds are obscured. Then those who need to go for *pipi* can go and those who don't need to can recite some mantras.

I AM ONE, OTHERS ARE COUNTLESS

We are going to recite some mantras with the meditation. If we already had strong renunciation of our own samsara, feeling that it was so unbearable being caught in this samsara that is only suffering in nature, like we are caught in the very center of a fire—if we already had that sort of feeling, then we could use ourselves as an example and generate compassion by thinking like this. “Others are numberless whereas I am just one. I am one person experiencing the suffering of samsara, being caught in samsara, but there are numberless other beings who are similarly suffering in samsara.” Then we could generate compassion using that thought.

However, this way of generating compassion toward others—using our own suffering as an example—doesn’t happen because we are not aware of our own suffering. Because we are not aware we are suffering in samsara, we can’t generate compassion for others by reflecting that they are likewise suffering and they are countless. This way to generate compassion is not possible because we are not aware that our own samsara is in the nature of suffering. From the lamrim teachings, we have not realized the graduated path of the middle capable being.

However much we might believe we are the most important, the most precious person, we are just one living being, and no matter how many problems we might have, they are nothing, even if we believe they are the greatest problems ever. And even if we have liberated ourselves from the whole of samsara and achieved everlasting happiness for ourselves, being completely liberated from the whole of the suffering and its causes, karma and the delusions—the three poisonous minds of ignorance, anger and attachment and so forth—we have only achieved this liberation for one person, just for ourselves. That’s nothing. It’s nothing to be so excited about. It’s not a great achievement. It’s just one person—this I, myself—that’s all.

Lecture 3

December 4, 1993

THE SUFFERING OF SAMBARA

Think this way. Other sentient beings' minds are completely overwhelmed by ignorance, anger, attachment—the three poisonous minds—and so forth, by the many wrong concepts, the many hallucinations. Their minds are completely possessed or completely controlled by these delusions, by these disturbing thoughts. Due to ego, the self-cherishing thought, and karma, actions, motivated by ignorance, anger, attachment and so forth, they constantly experience the three types of suffering without a break. There is not a single second's break from the suffering; they are constantly attacked by it, constantly having to experience the suffering of pain and the suffering of change—the temporary samsaric pleasures that appear as pleasure but which do not last.

Why [are samsaric pleasures still suffering]? Because although their nature is still suffering, it is too small to be unnoticeable as such. The suffering has not developed to the stage where it is noticeable, so it is labeled “pleasure” and it appears as pleasure. Then, by clinging to that samsaric pleasure, being attached to it, as if it were real, pure happiness, again the attachment clings to this samsaric pleasure, these feelings which appear as pleasure, and that attachment becomes a chain, tying us to samsara, to the suffering realm. It's like chains that bind a big bundle of [branches from a] thorn bush to the naked back of a person. Or like having to carry a huge load of burning wood chained to the bare body.

With this hallucinated mind, we can't discover that this “pleasure,” the suffering of change, is suffering. We have not discovered it by hearing the teachings of the Buddha, the Omniscient One, and through analysis and meditations on the Buddha's scientific teachings. I don't think it's scientific in the Western sense, but it is still scientific. It's not necessary that something is only scientific if it is in a Western book by Western scientists. I don't think that is necessary. There is the Buddha's science, the Omniscient One's science, where he gives scientific explanations to so many things that have not yet been explained in Western culture, in Western scientific books. Even though Western science is developing every year, getting deeper and deeper, getting better and better, there are still so many things they haven't yet discovered or explained, things that people are learning through their own experiences, through analysis, through meditation, by studying and learning more and more.

THE THREE TYPES OF SUFFERING

The realizations of lamrim are science because they come about through a lot of checking analysis, and by doing this correctly when all the causes and conditions come together, it leads to realizations. Most of the meditation we do is analytical meditation, checking meditation, that leads to the discovery, the conclusion, the realization, such as realizing the ultimate nature of the I, realizing the ultimate nature of the body, the mind, phenomena and so forth. Doing extensive analytical meditation leads us to realizing our own samsara, how we always have to experience the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering, the three types of suffering.

Pervasive compounding suffering refers to these aggregates, this consciousness, the contaminated seed of disturbing thoughts that gives rise to all the delusions. The delusions in turn motivate actions, karma, that leave imprints on the mental continuum, then the imprint manifests, materializes. The imprint is like a seed that becomes a sprout and then a plant. The imprint manifests and the future samsara, the suffering realm, is actualized. So, the aggregates of this present life's samsara become the cause, the creator, of our future lives' samsara. They create our future lives' samsara. The aggregates have that function; that is their nature, compounding our future lives' samsara, which is why it is called pervasive compounding suffering.

Anyway, I forgot why I was talking about this. [*Student*: Generating bodhicitta.] That's a very good one to hear! [General laughter]

What I was trying to say was this: by listening and reflecting, by meditating on the instructions, the Dharma, we need to analyze whether this samsaric pleasure is pure happiness or not. Doing that, we can discover that it is not pure happiness, that it is hallucinated pleasure, and that the basic feeling on which we label "pleasure" is simply a suffering feeling compounded by the present action. Whatever we are doing—eating, sleeping, walking, working, whatever—compounds the feeling. At first the suffering is unnoticeable but when we continue the action this feeling becomes stronger, grosser, and when this feeling is developed its suffering nature becomes noticeable. After it becomes gross and is noticeable to the mind due to the continuation of the action, at that time it becomes the suffering of pain. From the three types of sufferings of samsara it becomes the suffering of pain.

It is the same feeling, which should be discomfort, but at first the discomfort is so small, so subtle that is unnoticeable. When the same continuation of feelings of discomfort become grosser, later we generate aversion for it. It is the same thing, but at the moment the discomfort is unnoticeable, and because we label it “pleasure” it appears as pleasure. Then, by clinging, by being attached to that feeling, it again becomes the cause of samsara.

THE CAUSE OF SAMARA

When we analyze the evolution of samara using the twelve links, there are three delusions and two actions. The original delusion is *ignorance*, not knowing the ultimate nature of the I, the hallucinatory mind. The other two are *craving* and *grasping*. This causes the two actions, *karma* and *becoming*.

Karma is the action that is motivated by ignorance, the hallucinated mind that apprehends that the I exists from its own side. This is completely contradictory to the wisdom realizing the ultimate nature of the I, the wisdom that realizes that the I does not exist at all from its own side. This is the truth, and the way the hallucinated mind of ignorance thinks of the I is false. [The ignorance that is the first of the twelve links is] that particular ignorance.

The reason I’m trying to explain this is because the action motivated by that particular ignorance—apprehending the I in a way that is completely contradictory to reality—this action, which is called karma, compounds our future life’s samsara.

The second action, *becoming*, comes from the imprint, the seed, left on the continuation of the consciousness by the karma motivated by ignorance. Through craving and grasping, it becomes ready to bring the future result, samsara, just as water, soil, minerals, heat and so forth make a seed ready to become a sprout and a plant.

So, these three delusions (ignorance, craving and grasping) and two actions (karma and becoming) are regarded as the cause of samsara, of being attached again to samsaric pleasure, to these temporary pleasures. This becomes the cause of again creating the cause of samsara, and so it becomes a chain, tying us again to samsara. Then we experience the same problems, the same sufferings that we have experienced numberless times in the past, from the beginningless rebirths.

Experiencing samsaric pleasures is not the problem; the problem is clinging onto them. When we cling onto them, that becomes the problem. If we could experience samsaric pleasures with a free mind, with a renounced mind, there would be no danger. But the minute when we cling onto them, it becomes a problem.

In the same way, having a friend is not the problem, but clinging onto that friend without loving kindness and compassion, that's the problem. When there's no loving kindness or compassion, only attachment, when the motivation is only ego-driven, only the self-cherishing thought, that becomes a problem. Many other things are the same as this.

When we meditate on the lamrim, it is not saying that we cannot [experience happiness]. It is not saying that. We try to realize, to discover, how [clinging to samsaric pleasure] is in the nature of suffering. In reality, it is in the nature of suffering, so we try to realize it as it is. It is not something that although it *is* pure happiness, we are trying to see it as suffering—it's not like that. It's not as if it were something that was pure happiness, but we try to look at it pessimistically, as if everything was bad.

First of all, it is a hallucination. It is not like that in reality. Second, if we don't realize the reality, then, with our hallucinated mind we get attached to it, thinking it is pure happiness. Then, this attachment becomes an obstacle to achieving greater happiness, everlasting happiness, liberation from attachment, ignorance, anger and so forth—from all the delusions and their causes, from the whole of suffering, including the cycle of death and rebirth, old age, sicknesses and all the many problems between death and rebirth that we have to experience one after another or at the same time, like a shower of rain or like a waterfall.

Being attached to small pleasures becomes an obstacle to achieving this everlasting freedom, this great freedom, the cessation of all suffering and its causes. Not only that, to achieve great liberation, we even need the cessation of the imprint left by the concept of the hallucinated mind, the concept of true existence, this ignorance. So attachment becomes an obstacle to great liberation, the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

If this is our aim—the everlasting happiness of liberation, then the peerless happiness of full enlightenment—we must free ourselves of obstacles caused by attachment clinging to samsara, to the temporary samsaric pleasures that are only in the nature of suffering. If this is the goal we

want to achieve, we need to practice this meditation and discover that this attachment is in the nature of suffering. By discovering this, our mind becomes liberated from the attachment that clings to samsara.

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THERE IS A GREATER HAPPINESS

That becomes the solution, the path that can free our mind from obstacles. Then, without obstacles, we are able to achieve greater happiness and peace, the pure happiness of liberation from samsara and the peerless happiness, full enlightenment, for the sake of sentient beings. This is the purpose we have to meditate in this way.

However, if we are not looking for this achievement, if pure happiness, liberation and full enlightenment are not what we are concerned about, if what we are looking for is just temporary samsaric pleasures that are in the nature of suffering, then in that case it's different.

Anyway, since we are all looking for happiness, it is just a question of not being aware that there is a greater happiness, a pure happiness we can achieve. It is just that we are not aware that there is a better life than this, there is a better achievement than this, there is better happiness than this. It's just a question of whether we know there is a greater happiness, a better quality of life than this, that we can achieve.

Basically it's like this. However, even if these things are explained, and a person is introduced to the details of how this greater happiness can be achieved—all the steps, all the process of the mental development to achieve this—that doesn't mean that everyone can understand it or have faith in it.

It's like the example of a fly caught in a container in the room. The fly wants to get out; it's trying very hard to get out, so we try to help it escape, to catch it without endangering it, without harming it. But somehow, no matter how much we try, the fly runs away. It cannot understand what we are trying to do, that we are trying to help, and it gets more scared. It is a fly, not a person, so it cannot understand we are trying to help and it has the complete hallucination that it is being harmed, so it gets scared and runs away from our help as much as it can.

What makes the fly run away from our help? We're trying to help the fly but it cannot understand at all. At same time, it has the completely wrong view that it is being harmed by us. It

sees what is happening as harm, that there is some terrible harm happening to it, so it runs in the wrong direction, to where there is no escape. Or if it is in a container with a big hole at the top where it could go through, and the hole is opened all the time, somehow it never flies up there but always go round and round and round. The hole is right there, so close, and it would only take one attempt to escape but somehow it takes ages! What is it that makes it unable to see this hole that is right there, that makes it just goes round and round in order to get out? The wish is the same—to be out, to be free—but the view is completely wrong and so the action, the method of escaping, is completely wrong, keeping it there, inside the container.

In the same way, even if we were to explain in detail how to transform the mind into happiness, not everybody could understand it. Even if they heard all the methods, we can't expect everyone to understand or have faith in them.

My conclusion is that even if somebody says they don't care about these things—liberation from samsara, peerless happiness, enlightenment and so forth—generally, since everybody is looking for happiness, it is natural from the heart, we all want *lasting* happiness, greater happiness. That is natural. Since the aim of life is looking for happiness, trying to achieve happiness, it is natural to look for greater happiness and lasting happiness.

Even if they are not aware, even if due to ignorance they don't know there is such a thing as liberation or enlightenment that they can achieve, in their everyday life they want the happiness that can last longest, that is the highest. If they *did* know about liberation and enlightenment, they would attempt to achieve this.

ONLY WHEN WE ARE ENLIGHTENED CAN WE BE THE PERFECT GUIDE

In order to offer this service of bringing all living beings to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, first we ourselves should be a perfectly qualified guide, having ceased all the mistakes of the mind, both the disturbing-thought obscurations and the subtle obscurations, the subtle imprints I explained before, the dualistic view, the hallucination that is projected by these subtle imprints. Not only should we have completely ceased all the mistakes of the mind, we should have completed all the realizations.

In this way, we will have perfect power and an omniscient mind that directly perceives all the past, present and future—all of existence—and is able to directly see every living being's karma,

the characteristics of their mind, their wishes, their level of intelligence, and so forth. We can perceive everything directly and know all the various methods that suit all the living beings who have different karma, different characteristics, different intelligence. Even to guide one sentient being from happiness to happiness, we need to reveal various methods as that sentient being's mind develops. Even for that we need an omniscient mind, otherwise there is the danger of making mistakes guiding other sentient beings. We also need perfect power to be able to reveal the best methods, with the holy body, holy speech and holy mind manifesting in innumerable forms, in billions and billions of forms, in order to reveal the various methods, and having completed the mind training in compassion toward all living beings.

All those qualities of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind are extensively explained in the philosophical text, the *Abhisamayalamkara*, [*Ornament of Clear Realizations* by Maitreya] that is an extensive explanation on how to proceed through the five paths and the ten bhumis in order to achieve full enlightenment. In the eighth chapter, there's an extensive commentary of the four kayas, the qualities of a fully enlightened being.

This is similar to a doctor who, in order to cure every patient from their disease, needs to have perfect qualifications. The doctor must have the understanding and be able to make the diagnosis without mistakes. They must be able to recognize all the diseases and their causes and conditions, and not only that, they must know how all those diseases can be treated. The doctor is then able to offer whatever treatment can cure the patient's disease. And, if somebody wants to become a perfect doctor, they need to be trained by somebody who is already a perfect doctor. The teacher must first of all have all the qualifications.

THE PATHS OF THE LOWER AND MIDDLE CAPABLE BEINGS

In order to perfectly do all these services for other sentient beings without any mistakes, first we ourselves need to achieve full enlightenment and that depends on actualizing the steps of the path to enlightenment. Achieving full enlightenment doesn't happen without cause. We need to practice and actualize the graduated path of the three capable beings: the graduated path of the lower capable being, the middle capable being and the higher capable being.

The lower capable being is the practitioner whose attitude is free from the attachment clinging to this life, which is the source of all the problems of this life and the problems that will come after this life. As such a practitioner, we are free from the attachment clinging to the comfort and

happiness of this life, power, reputation, the comfort of food and clothing. We seek the happiness of future lives, the body of the happy migratory being.

In order to achieve that, we not only have refuge, relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha from the heart, we also protect our karma by realizing the shortcomings of the ten nonvirtuous actions and the benefits of the ten virtuous actions. With that understanding, we live in morality by avoiding the ten nonvirtuous actions, the fundamental actions that harm ourselves and others, and we live in morality by practicing the ten virtuous actions. Living purely in this morality causes us to achieve the body of a happy migratory being in the next life, as a deva or a human being.

On the basis of the attitude of the lower capable being, we develop the mind that wishes to leave samsara behind, to become free from the attachment clinging onto samsara and samsaric pleasures, the temporary pleasures that I explained yesterday which are, by analyzing, only suffering. [This is the graduated path of the middle capable being.]

What we discover is only suffering. There is no pure happiness. With an attitude like this, we seek liberation from samsara for ourselves. In order to achieve that, we practice the path of the *three higher trainings*: the higher training of *morality*, the higher training of *concentration* and the higher training of *wisdom*. These trainings are called “higher” because we have refuge in our heart, relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. With the mind that has refuge, practicing morality becomes higher, concentration—calm abiding, *shamatha*—becomes higher and great insight, wisdom, becomes higher.

I would like to clarify this. With the attitude of the middle capable being, our mind is free from the attachment clinging to samsara. It is the mind that has renounced samsara, that has aversion to samsara, seeing the whole of samsara like being in a nest of poisonous snakes or like being in the center of a raging fire. Think of how dangerous it would be to be caught in the nest of a poisonous snake or the unbearable suffering of being caught in the very center of a raging fire. That is how it is. There is not one minute or even one second of rest or happiness. Being in samsara is exactly the same.

We are not aware of this, but this is how it is in reality. We don't feel this way now because of the great pile of hallucinations we live with. Because of not having done continual meditation on

how samsara is in the nature of suffering, we are unable to believe that what appears to us is this great pile of hallucinations. We believe all these false views are truth.

The suffering of samsara appears as pleasure. These aggregates, the association of this body and mind, that are causative phenomena, as well as the sense enjoyments, the samsaric perfections, surrounding people, material objects and so forth—everything that is by nature impermanent appears to us as permanent and we believe that they are true. While the I, the aggregates and all samsaric perfections are completely empty of existing from their own side, there is the hallucination, the appearance of inherent existence, and we believe this is true. And we see this body that is the container of so many dirty things as clean. Whatever comes out of this body is only dirty. If it goes onto the floor, we have to immediately wash the floor. It is something we are unable to touch. However, while the body has this dirty, impure nature, we have the hallucination that it is clean.

Like this, there are so many hallucinations. We live our life with all these hallucinations, believing that they are all true. On one hand, we believe all those false appearances are true, while on the other hand, we almost feel that which is true to be nonexistent. It as if the truth for our mind does not exist. As the *Guru Puja* says, we look at samsara as a beautiful park. Holding onto all these appearances that are hallucinations as the truth, as reality, we are blocked from seeing the reality, how the nature of samsara is suffering.

Because of that, delusions arise. Attachment clinging to samsaric perfections arises. Because it is a wrong view, that attachment not only cannot free us from the suffering of samsara, it always causes us to continuously get caught in samsara.

So, the attitude of a middle capable being is to renounce the whole of samsara, which means renouncing all samsaric perfections. Our aggregates in the desire realm depend on having desire for sense pleasure through having met external sense objects: form, sound, smell, taste and tangible objects. The mind of a middle capable being has not only renounced this samsara of the desire realm by realizing how it is totally in the nature of suffering, but has also completely renounced all four categories of the form realm, with the stabilized concentration that is developed through the six comprehensions.

The form realm beings see the desire realm sense pleasures as very gross and only suffering by nature. They see that life in the desire realm is short and has many diseases and many problems, whereas life in the form realm is much longer, with more peace. By looking at its many qualities, by training the mind in this way—seeing the form realm as having many qualities and the desire realm as only having shortcomings—they renounce the desire realm’s sense pleasures and seek peace only through meditation.

However, [they then come to see that] even the form realm is only in the nature of suffering, [so they seek] the formless realm, where there is no physical form, only consciousness. Beings seeking to become formless realm beings renounce even the form realm’s peace, even the pleasure developed through meditation, looking at it as a shortcoming. By looking at the quality of the formless realm with its four states—limitless sky, limitless consciousness, nothingness and the tip of the samsara—they aspire to achieve the formless realm through meditation.

After they have achieved the first level, limitless sky, they see that the second level, limitless consciousness, is better; it has more peace and better quality than limitless sky. In that way, their mind becomes detached from the first state and they achieve the state of limitless consciousness.

Then again, they get bored with that, seeing its shortcomings, and they look at the qualities of the next level, nothingness. By reflecting in this way, they achieve nothingness. Then again, when they compare nothingness to the tip of samsara, they see the shortcomings of nothingness and the qualities of the tip of samsara. By reflecting in this way, they achieve the tip of the samsara, the fourth level of the formless realm.

There is no higher level within samsara than the tip of the samsara. Therefore, there is nothing to compare it with, to realize how the tip of samsara is still in the nature of suffering. There is no higher level within samsara to aspire to, looking at its qualities and causing the mind to become detached from the tip of the samsara by realizing how that is still suffering.

These beings have detached minds; they have an attitude that has renounced any attachment to the desire realm’s sense pleasures and even the pleasure, the peace, derived from the meditation in the form realm. They have even renounced the previous three categories of the formless realm by looking at their shortcomings. There is renunciation. Their mind is detached from the whole of the desire realm, the form realm and the three lower categories of the formless realm, but

there is no higher state in samsara to compare to the tip of the samsara, so while there is renunciation of all the rest, there is no way to generate renunciation of the tip of samsara.

During this time, there is no visible delusion arising; there is no visible, strong attachment or anger and so forth. That makes them believe they have achieved liberation. But this is only for a period of time, it is not forever. They will not be able to stop visible delusions arising forever.

On the other hand, whether through the five paths of the Lesser Vehicle or the Mahayana, we can attain the renunciation of the *whole* of samsara, the mind that is detached from samsara's desire realm, form realm and formless realm, including the tip of the samsara, by realizing how the whole of samsara is only in the nature of suffering. Only when we have this renunciation to the whole of samsara have we entered the first of the five paths, the path of merit, [and then progress through] the path of preparation, the right-seeing path, the path of meditation and the path of no more learning, which is nirvana [when the five paths are part of an individual practitioner's practice.]

We not only need to have renunciation of samsara, we also have to realize emptiness, which we do on the third path, the right-seeing path. We achieve the concentration that is the unification of shamatha and great insight, emptiness. We are able to have the experience of rapturous ecstasy through this special concentration, the unification of shamatha and great insight, by doing analytical meditation on emptiness.

Before actualizing the right-seeing path, we remove the hundred and twelve disturbing-thought obscurations. Then, by achieving the path of meditation, we completely remove even the seed of the disturbing thoughts, which gives rise to the delusions. Only then do we achieve the sorrowless state, the path of no more learning. Only then do we achieve the nirvana of the sorrowless state, the cessation of the entire suffering and its causes. Because the seed of the disturbing thoughts is completely removed, it becomes impossible for delusions to arise again; it becomes impossible to experience suffering again.

The being who has achieved the tip of samsara cannot realize how the tip of samsara is in the nature of suffering, so there is no renunciation of the whole of samsara. Because of that, there is no way to enter the path to liberation. However, because there is no visible delusion arising, they believe that they have achieved liberation from samsara. Then, when the karma to be in that state

finishes, when they see they have to reincarnate again in the lower realms, heresy arises. Seeing what they thought of as liberation was flawed, they then believe that there is no such thing as liberation. This is a wrong concept.

THE PATH OF THE HIGHER CAPABLE BEING

The attitude of the middle capable being is renouncing the whole of samsara: the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm, by realizing that all of samsara is in the nature of suffering, like being in the center of a fire. With this attitude, as a middle capable being we seek liberation for ourselves alone. In order to achieve this, we practice the three higher trainings.

Now, the higher capable being completely abandons the thought of working for the self. Instead, our attitude is seeking enlightenment in order to benefit all other living beings. In order to achieve that, we practice the Mahayana path with the six paramitas and so forth.

Based on the attitude of the middle capable being, the mind which is detached from the whole of samsara, on top of that, there is bodhicitta, completely renouncing the thought of working for the self and only developing the thought of working for other sentient beings. Having bodhicitta, we practice the three higher trainings and the six paramitas and achieve the ten bhumis.

On the top of that, there are the various practices within tantra. For example, in highest tantra, there are two stages, the generation stage and the completion stage.

There is one thing I didn't mention. If we haven't realized emptiness, even before entering the Lesser Vehicle path to achieve liberation, the first path, the path of merit, has three levels: the small, middle and great path of merit. We need to realize emptiness during the second path, the path of accumulation, before entering the right-seeing path.

I think we'd better have lunch.

Lecture 4

December 4, 1993

CONCENTRATION ALSO NEEDS ETHICS

[Mindfulness conjoined with ethics] become much richer, much more meaningful, than just concentrating on what we are doing, just doing the mindfulness of something like walking—“Now I am walking.” A person who is stealing money from a bank needs a *lot* of concentration! To get in at the right time, at the right place, they need a lot of concentration. That person also thinks, “I am stealing” but the problem is that they don’t think about anything else after that. After the thought “I am stealing,” there is no remedy, even though they are aware that they are stealing. If that person who knew they were stealing was able to remember renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness, it would help them stop stealing.

[Mindfulness meditations like] watching the breath or walking mindfully can help because during that time the mind is paying attention to the object—the breathing, the walking and so forth—so strong anger or attachment do not arise. But, generally speaking, when there is nothing but that mindfulness, there is no underlying moral thought. We can steal with a lot of mindfulness but there is no other mind that is a remedy to that nonvirtuous thought. Thinking “I am stealing” doesn’t stop us stealing.

TONGLEN: MAKING CHARITY TO ALL BEINGS

We’re going to recite some malas of Compassion Buddha’s mantra.

[Rinpoche and students chant OM MANI PADME HUM]

“Due to the past, present and future merits accumulated by us through having recited Compassion Buddha’s mantra and the merits accumulated by buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to all this ...” First we dedicate in this way.

All the past, present and future merits accumulated by us through having recited the Compassion Buddha’s mantra; all these merits we have accumulated and all the resulting happiness from temporary up to peerless happiness, full enlightenment, with our body, possessions, even family, surrounding people and friends—everything—we make charity of every good thing to every hell

being, and that includes giving ourselves to every hell being. From this, they receive everything they want, whatever they need, including highest enlightenment.

Then, we make charity of our three times' merits and all the resulting happiness including full enlightenment, our body, possessions, surrounding people, family, friends, everything, we give to every hungry ghost. By receiving all this, every hungry ghost receives everything that is good, all the happiness they want, what they need, including highest enlightenment.

Now, we make charity of our three times' merits and all the resulting happiness including enlightenment, everything, [our body, family, friends,] the surrounding people and material possessions, everything, we give to every animal being. They receive everything they need.

By giving all these things to the hell beings, their whole environment—the iron ground that is oneness with fire, the whole icy ground of the cold hell—the whole suffering place is transformed into the pure land of Amitabha or the pure land of Compassion Buddha. A pure land means pure in not having any problems; not having any sufferings such as rebirth, old age, sickness and death and so forth. It has all the enjoyments and it is extremely beautiful. The whole space is filled with the scented smell. We are able to get whatever we think of immediately; it instantly materializes.

All the trees [of the hell realm] are very sharp and they cut the body. The karmic appearance of all those trees suddenly transform into beautiful wish-granting trees, decorated with the jewels. All the trees in the pure land are wish-granting trees that are able to materialize whatever we wish for.

There are extremely beautiful birds whose singing makes Dharma. They are singing very sweet songs of Dharma. The ground is lapis lazuli. There are beautiful pools and paths filled with extremely beautiful flowers, lotuses with extremely beautiful huge petals. All the weapons in the hell realm are immediately transformed into flowers. Nothing is solid; everything is very soft, blissful in nature and so forth.

As it is mentioned in the dedication prayer in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, this also happens with the realm of the hungry ghosts. By giving all these things to them, their place is also transformed into the pure land of Compassion Buddha, the Potala, filled with so many

beautiful things, so many qualities. The hungry ghosts, whose main suffering is hunger and thirst, receive many hundreds of types of nectar, food and drinks.

Then, by giving all these things to every animal being, their environment is transformed into the pure land of Compassion Buddha, the Potala, or of Amitabha, where there is no suffering at all. They are immediately liberated from the danger of being killed, of being eaten by another one and they immediately achieve wisdom and receive protection and guidance from the deity Vajrapani, who is the essence, the embodiment, of all the buddhas' ability to protect. He immediately appears to those who are in danger of being eaten or tortured and they are immediately protected. In that way, they receive everything, whatever they want.

THE WISH-GRANTING JEWEL AND KARMA

In the meditation practice of taking and giving, where we take other sentient beings' sufferings on ourselves and give them all our happiness, as well as our body, possessions and merit, it is advised by the lineage lamas that when we visualize we should not visualize giving our gross body like this, with bones, flesh, blood and so forth, but we should visualize giving a body like a wish-granting jewel that fulfills all their wishes, bringing them whatever happiness they want. We give them all our three times' merits and the results of those merits, temporal happiness and ultimate happiness, up to and including the highest happiness, full enlightenment, by visualizing our body as a wish-granting jewel, the jewel that has eight sides. This was advised by His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, my root guru who gave me my first lamrim teachings.

It is mentioned in the teaching that in the past, bodhisattvas went into the ocean to get these wish-fulfilling jewels. Then, they cleaned them in three ways, the first time to completely clean the mud that covered the jewels and the last one is maybe to clean the smell. Then they put the jewel on a banner on the top of a house and when you prayed on one of the special days—I am not sure, maybe the full moon, the fifteenth—whatever material possession or enjoyment you needed would materialize. If you want an example, it may be a little bit like what Sai Baba does when he turns some powder in his hand into a watch or a radio which he gives away. Similar, the person who is able to find such a jewel, by praying they can get all the enjoyment they want. They also have to have merit or karma.

It is the same as how, with one dollar, we can buy a lottery ticket and get a million dollars. The ticket might not even cost a dollar, I am not sure. Anyway, buying a lottery ticket with one dollar

and winning a million dollars doesn't happen without cause and conditions. It looks like it happens without reason, without cause and conditions created from our side, but it is not like that. There is a cause created from our side and there are conditions and when that cause is ready there is success—the result ripens; it is materialized. Similarly, for those who have that karma, these things happen. It doesn't happen for those of us who haven't created the cause to find such a jewel that would give us all the material needs we pray for.

In the same way, we might have been buying lottery tickets for many years, but nothing has ever happened. No matter how much we desire to get many millions or billions of dollars, no matter how many tickets we buy for many, many years, nothing happens. But somebody just buys one lottery ticket once—some poor person, some worker or servant—and they win a million dollars. This happens. This is the same. The karma, the cause, the merit that has been created is powerful enough that it is ready to be ripened for that person. Then, success happens. Whereas for somebody who hasn't created the cause, the merit, nothing happens, even though they might have incredible desire to get millions or billions of dollars.

[With the meditation on taking and giving,] those who need a friend receive a friend. Those who need a guru revealing the path to liberation and full enlightenment meet a guru, a perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friend who can reveal the complete path without missing anything. Then those who need a doctor [receive one]; those who need medicine receive that, especially those who have diseases that have no treatment, such as AIDS, and those who are in a coma—who are not dead but their senses are unable to function, like becoming a vegetable—receive an immediate cure and immediately recover. Including those with AIDS, they get doctor and medicine; those who need wealth receive wealth; those who need a job find a job.

The main problem for human beings is the shortage of a means of living. By giving all the merit, the result of our own body and so forth, by having made the charity of giving everything, every human being is freed of their main problem, the shortage of a means of living, and each human being receives rainfalls of millions of dollars, like a shower of rain; all their houses are completely filled with millions or billions of dollars.

We then make charity by giving all these things to the gods and demigods. In the same way, their place is transformed into the extremely beautiful pure land of Compassionate Buddha, which has

no suffering at all. There is not even the sound of problems. You cannot even hear one word of complaint.

What demigods need is the protection of armor because they always fight with the gods, so whatever they need they receive. They don't have to experience the heaviest suffering [of the gods,] which are the signs of death. When the signs of death happen for a god, even though physically they are not in hell, mentally it is like being in hell; they have so much worry and fear, so much suffering. Due to karma, they hear a voice from space that they are going to die in seven days. After that, they experience all the five signs of death, the major ones and the minor ones. Anyway, the gods become free from these, which are their heaviest sufferings.

Receiving all these enjoyments only causes them to generate the paths of wisdom and method in their mind, and they become enlightened by ceasing all the mistakes of the mind and by completing all the qualities of the realizations.

Here, in the dedication, there happen to be more details of what we should visualize when we do the special bodhicitta practice, developing the mind in bodhicitta, the very powerful bodhicitta, renouncing ourselves and cherishing others by taking other sentient beings' suffering on ourselves and giving our happiness and merit to others.

By hearing this explanation, when we do the practice of *tonglen*, taking and giving, the special bodhicitta practice, we know how to visualize when we practice giving by generating great loving kindness. The ultimate thing is the method and wisdom. Experiencing all these enjoyments causes others to actualize the paths of method and wisdom, and then to achieve the two kayas, the dharmakaya and rupakaya.

TONGLLEN: GIVE ALL THE SUFFERING TO THE SELF-CHERISHING THOUGHT

A more elaborate way of doing *tonglen* is like this. For example, in the human realm that I mentioned, the more extensively we can visualize giving—such as visualizing those showers of millions and billions of dollars each human being receives, filling all their houses, so all these things become charity—the more we accumulate inconceivable, unbelievable merit.

I remember one time in Paris, when there was a big recession happening in France, during one lecture in the city there was a question about what could be done for the poor, for those with difficulties in life. I remember mentioning the other solution is to practice rejoicing for all those who are having success, all those who have wealth. We should rejoice instead of generating jealousy, not wishing others to have success but wishing to have it ourselves. Generally, if we are successful ourselves, we are not jealous of others, but otherwise, if something good happens to others, we become jealous of what they have that we don't: their friends, their wealth, their success.

If we feel jealous and generate the wish that they didn't have these things, that itself becomes an obstacle. By not wishing for others to have success, we are creating an obstacle to our own success, whether it's finding a job or having wealth or having a friend, whatever. Therefore, in everyday life we should practice rejoicing.

Even if we don't have things to give others, we should at least visualize making charity to other living beings. In this way, we create so many causes for success and then we will have success—success in having wealth, in having a means of living. In this way, by creating the karma or the cause in an extensive way, the recession can be stopped and the poverty can be ended.

When we do the practice of patience, we first generate great compassion for all suffering living beings, whose minds are obscured, then, with the thought of great compassion we take others' sufferings and its causes and we take all the undesirable places. When we do the practice of giving, the impure, ordinary places are transformed into a pure land.

So now, we take the undesirable place of the hell beings. The ground of the cold hell is unbelievably cold and the whole ground of the hot hell is red-hot iron, oneness with fire. We take in all these things, in the form of pollution, like smoke coming from the chimneys, or like when we are here on Kopan hill in the morning and all the pollution, the morning fog that covers the ground down in Boudhanath, the dirty, humid vapor that comes up from the ground and fills the space, which has very dirty, bad smell. When we are on a high mountain, the fog from down below comes up from all directions.

In the same way, all the sufferings of the hell beings and the cause of suffering, karma and delusion, everything—all the obscurations—in the form of pollution come and absorb into our

heart, into the ego, the self-cherishing thought, in our heart. It goes right inside the heart, to the ego, the self-cherishing thought that gives us all the problems, all the interferences, that brings all the health problems, that brings all the relationship problems, that brings all the unsuccess, that brings all the obstacles to Dharma practice, that has not let us achieve enlightenment so far or even liberation from samsara, that doesn't allow us to even practice pure morality, to definitely receive the body of a happy migratory being, a god or human body, in our next life. This is without talking about a perfect human rebirth; just being born as a human being, just receiving a human body we need to have lived in the pure morality. The ego, the self-cherishing thought, is the one that hasn't allowed us to even practice pure morality and to be confident that we will receive a human body right after this life. This is due to the shortcomings of the ego, the self-cherishing thought.

The main purpose of visualizing whatever is the most harmful—all the sufferings and the causes, all the undesirable places—in the form of pollution, is to be able to visualize giving it to the ego in order to destroy it. The whole point is to visualize what is most terrible, such as in the *chöd* practice, slaying the ego, the special tantric practice that is the quick way to realize emptiness and develop bodhicitta and the practice of the six paramitas, in particular the paramita of charity. That practice talks about visualizing the sufferings in the form of pollution and in the form of those terrifying creatures, such as scorpions, at the heart, eating the ego, the self-cherishing thought. Or visualizing a wheel that has five or six pointed swords, such as the one that Yamantaka, the extremely wrathful aspect of Buddha Manjushri, holds in one of his hands. There is a story that you can send this weapon of five or six swords away by putting your finger through its axle and turning it, sending it away to cut off the heads of the other beings.

Chöd practice explains that we visualize this weapon and, in this way, cut the ego. The main point is to destroy the ego, like in the world when the ordinary people destroy their enemy—when they harm their enemy by doing the worst thing they can think of; they find the most harmful way to kill them. Similarly, for those of us who are seeking enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, the ego is the greatest obstacle to our success. This is our main enemy, our principal enemy, therefore we must try to destroy the ego in the most harmful way we can think of. Cutting the ego, destroying the ego, is a much more effective way to subdue our mind, to develop bodhicitta. So like this, all the sufferings of the hell beings go into the heart, are absorbed into the ego and destroy it.

It's the same thing with animals' and human beings' suffering and its causes, and the impure places—places filled with thorn bushes, rocks, all these ugly, undesirable places of human beings—we take all these on ourselves in the form of pollution. We take them into our heart, onto the ego; we give everything to the ego and destroy it.

Arhats, who are free from samsara, free from disturbing-thought obscurations, still have subtle obscurations, and so do bodhisattvas. We even take on those. Then, the virtuous friends, who have the appearance of having life obstacles and so forth, the obstacles to fulfilling the holy wishes or to succeed in working for other sentient beings—the obstacles that are the appearance of sentient beings' karma—even those we take on. We visualize taking on them into our heart, where they absorb, and we give them to the ego, completely destroying it.

After we have given the ego all these sufferings of others and their causes, all the undesirable places and pollution, after we have taken all this into our heart and onto the ego, the ego, the self-cherishing thought, becomes nonexistent. We think like this.

WE CAN'T EVEN FIND THE MERELY LABELED I, LET ALONE THE HALLUCINATED I

First of all, there is no I on this association of body and mind, on these aggregates. There is not even the merely labeled I on this association of body and mind. Put it this way: on this association of body and mind, on this base, we cannot even find the merely labeled I, which is the I that exists and which appears to us as *not* merely labeled.

Even this merely labeled I that exists, that has the function of eating, drinking tea, extracting teeth—which performs all these functions, which exists, even this we cannot find on this base, on the association of body and mind. Even though it exists, if we are unable to find it on this base, how are we going to find the hallucinated I? How are we going to find the I that appears as the real one, the one *not* merely labeled by the mind, the one that appears to exist from its own side? How can we find it when it is a complete hallucination, it is completely nonexistent? There is no way.

This is the reality. There is no I there. This is the reality but what happens is that now, inside this chest, inside this body, our concept of the I does not correspond to reality; it is not according to reality. While on this base, the association of body and mind, there is no I at all—neither the

merely labeled I nor, in particular, the real I—there is an I appearing from its own side, not merely labeled by the mind.

Even though this I is completely nonexistent on this base, on this association of body and mind, on these aggregates, there is the appearance. We have this appearance, this projection, of a real I appearing from its own side, not merely labeled by mind, due to past ignorance, to the wrong concept of inherent existence. Then, we let our mind believe that this appearance is true; we believe the way the I appears as not merely labeled by the mind is true; we believe it is real, that it truly exists from its own side. Apprehending what is false, we believe that this is the truth, that it is reality.

This is how we create ignorance. When we let our mind believe in this, we are creating the ignorance that is the root of the samsara.

After this, when we explain about the selfish mind, it is clear. First of all, we try to understand the object of ignorance, this I that doesn't exist, that is a complete hallucination, this real I that appears to exist from its own side, not merely labeled by the mind, the I we believe to exist.

Through ignorance, we apprehend this real I to be true, but then, on top of that, there is another mind. We let our mind *believe* that this I exists and that it is so precious. We think that this I, *which is not there at all*, is the most important thing of all. We think, “Among all the numberless sentient beings—the numberless hell beings, animal beings, hungry ghosts, human beings, suras and asuras—among all these numberless sentient beings and numberless enlightened beings, *I am the most precious!*” We let our mind think that this I is the most precious, *but* this I is not there! There is nothing there! There is no I at all. This thing that is not there, we think is so precious—“I am so precious, I am so important, I am the most important one!” We let our mind cherish that I as the most important thing.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE SELF-CHERISHING THOUGHT

That is what the ego, the self-cherishing thought, is. Now you can see clearly how both those concepts are completely false. They don't make any sense at all; they are utterly illogical. Holding on to the ego is a nonsense mind, a nonsense concept. It doesn't make any sense thinking this way. It's a completely false view, a completely wrong concept, but the incredible thing is that

with this wrong concept we can destroy the whole world. By senselessly cherishing the I that doesn't exist at all, one person's ego can kill and torture millions of people, or destroy the whole world. The harm is far greater than billions of atomic bombs. The harm from billions of atomic bombs is nothing compared to the harm given to other sentient beings by this ego, this self-cherishing thought, this wrong concept, this nonsense mind.

By abiding in our heart, from beginningless rebirths this enemy has been giving us harm, torturing us, like the dictator of a country who is utterly without loving kindness or compassion for others, who only follows the ego, using everything to gain power, reputation and wealth, giving so much harm to the population, so much torture. Anybody who says a bad thing, anybody who criticizes that person, upsetting their ego, is immediately killed.

How do we feel about this dictator, the person who brings no happiness, no peace to others, but who causes so much harm, so much suffering? Thinking about the suffering they bring, we feel so bad, so terrible. We should feel exactly the same about this other dictator, our own ego. We complain about those external dictators, and we should feel exactly like that when there's the dictatorship of the ego, the self-cherishing thought that always tortures us, completely using our body, speech and mind as its slave, not giving us any rest, not giving us any peace.

The ego constantly tortures and harms us. It not only harms us now, but it harms all other living beings from life to life, directly or indirectly. This self-cherishing thought is a concept that doesn't make any sense, that has no logic, but if we are not careful to protect ourselves, it can do unbelievable harm to ourselves and to numberless sentient beings.

So, the conclusion is, after creating all the suffering and its causes, we visualize all the undesirable places in the form of pollution that goes into the heart and is absorbed, and we give everything to ego, to the self-cherishing thought, completely destroying it. The self-cherishing thought becomes nonexistent. The mind that cherishes the I as the most important thing is destroyed. Even the I, the object of ignorance, the I that appears real in the sense of existing from its own side, not merely labeled by mind, even that is not there, even that is empty.

The absence of this I that is a hallucination is the emptiness of the I. This is the ultimate nature of the I. Therefore, even this I that is the object of ignorance becomes empty as it is empty, in

reality. We see empty as it is empty, there in reality. Then, we can place the mind in that emptiness for a little while. Meditate, concentrate for a little while.

After that, by generating great loving kindness, we do the practice of giving to others. In this way, combining like this, the two important fundamental practices get done, the two fundamental practices of Secret Mantra, Vajrayana, bodhicitta and emptiness. So, it becomes an extremely powerful practice.

I wasn't going to explain this practice! I just meant to explain the dedication and the merit of having recited the mantra, but it became that way.

Anyway, from this, you can understand the meaning of the dedication prayer,

May all the suffering and causes of suffering of all sentient beings ripen upon me right now,
And may all sentient beings receive all my happiness and virtue.

This is according to His Holiness Serkong Tsenshab Rinpoche's advice. After each practice, after we have finished making the water bowl offerings or our practice has finished, this is one of the dedications. We dedicate all our merits and all our happiness up to enlightenment that we have achieved until now, and we make charity of that to all sentient beings. When we do that, we accumulate infinite merit. And when we take other sentient beings' suffering on ourselves, because sentient beings are numberless, again we accumulate infinite merit, infinite causes of happiness.

I think it's the real teatime.

[Offering prayers]

ATTACHED TO THIS LIFE'S HAPPINESS, WE ARE NO DIFFERENT FROM ANIMALS

I was talking about the three capable beings before. The actual capable beings are only these three. Other human beings whose attitude is seeking only the happiness of this life [are not counted in this.]

No matter how much success someone has in obtaining the happiness of this life, with an attitude seeking just their own happiness of this life, even if they have achieved the greatest reputation in this world, so much so that everybody—young and old, East and West, even babies (anyway, I'm joking)—knows them. Even if they become the world's richest person, a billionaire or zillionaire, whatever great success they achieve in this life, whatever comfort they obtain, with this attitude, they are not counted within these three capable beings. No matter how intelligent that person is, no matter how much education that person has, as long as their attitude is just attachment to this life, just seeking the happiness of this life, even if they can perform miracles, if they can fly—I don't mean with the hands fastened to wings and then jumping from a mountain, not that one—even if they are able to actually fly, they are not counted as an actual capable being. They aren't in the category of these three capable beings, because the least attitude, the attitude of the lower capable being, is that of a practitioner whose mind is free from attachment clinging to this life.

Therefore, this human being, no matter how much success they have in this life, or how much education or power or whatever, their attitude is nothing special. The attitude seeking only the happiness this life is nothing special. It's an ordinary mind. Even the tiniest insect, an ant or even much smaller, like those you can only see through a microscope, have this attitude of seeking only the happiness of this life for themselves. Even they are able to obtain happiness for this life. A tiger is able to obtain some means of living and some degree of comfort, the happiness of this life. When somebody attacks them, they attack back. They can harm the enemy back and even kill them.

I've told this story many times about my mouse. There are so many stories about mice, but this is just my own experience of how smart mice are, how they can obtain the happiness of this life. Many years ago, because there was a plan to go to Japan, Mummy Max, an American nun who was a schoolteacher in Kathmandu—she became our first nun with Anila Ann—bought a very thin upper robe, called a *zen*, because she said that Japan would be very hot. This was the only precious, new thing that I had in my room, this one thin zen folded in the drawer. This wasn't here but in the small room upstairs in the old gumpa, in a drawer. There were mice who had made a nest under my bed. I don't know how Lama found out they were living under the bed; maybe he saw one running across the floor. At that time, the cook there had been the guide of my class at Buxa, where I was not actually studying, I was just playing. If I had really studied Dharma at that time, by now I would be living in a cave. He was asked by Lama to get the mice

out of the room, so he came with sticks to chase them from under the bed. One mouse got away at that time, going straight out through the door to the other side. I followed and saw the mouse jump from the roof and run away.

Then somehow, I don't know when, one day I pulled open the drawer and saw the zen, this one new thing in the room, this precious thing, this very thin zen that was neither too long nor too short. It had been neatly folded many times and put in the drawer and it was amazing what this mouse had done. I think it must have come back all the way from outside. When I took out this zen that was folded many times, the mouse had bitten a hole right through the center, all the way down! It had not even eaten at the corners but right in the middle! With this zen folded, there was a hole right in the middle, but when I unfolded it and stretched it out, there were many holes. I think this was a *very* smart mouse, who knew exactly how to give harm. Something that you think of as so precious, that you keep like a treasure, something so special for you, they especially come to take it away.

It's very interesting. There are many stories like this. You keep ornaments, jewels and things like that, things that you think are very precious, and mice somehow make holes and take the jewels, carrying them and hiding them in the ceiling. They don't have a human body—their body is just tiny with little hands and a tail—but they have this incredibly smart mind that can do this.

So now, any human being whose attitude is nothing other than just seeking the happiness of this life, as I mentioned before, even if that person is able to fly and can perform miracles every day, whatever power or extensive education they have, it is nothing special. It doesn't come into the three categories of the actual capable beings. Even if that person has become the most famous one, even if they have achieved the greatest reputation, influence and power, whatever, it is nothing. That person is an ordinary being, not an actual capable being. They are just capable of doing worldly activities. The actual translation, actual means “potential” or “capable,” and the three types of capable being are the lower capable being, the middle capable being and the higher capable being. This “capable” is to do with the development of the mind, the transformation of the mind, which is the most important development. I'll stop there.

Lecture 5

December 5, 1993

KNOWING WHAT IS DHARMA AND WHAT IS NOT

In case somebody doesn't have a clear idea, I normally mention that this [explanation of how to meditate] is the fundamental understanding of Dharma, the extremely important fundamental understanding of Dharma. If somebody doesn't have a clear idea, it might help. We are talking about how to meditate, but it is not just for meditation. If we know how to meditate, then we know how to do everything—how to eat, how to sleep, how to walk, how to work, everything. It's not just how to meditate. The explanation on how to meditate covers how to live our life, twenty-four hours a day. It's something that covers how to do every action. Whether we lead a life of celibacy or a householder's life, being married, how to do everything is there.

From this we can also understand what is Dharma and what is not Dharma; what is the cause of happiness and what is the cause of suffering. It defines the border between what is holy Dharma and what is not holy Dharma.

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo was a great enlightened being who completed the path. Starting from the root of the path to enlightenment, guru devotion and the three principal aspects of the path, he actualized everything up to the highest tantra path, both the generation and completion stages. He gave the example of four people reciting the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*. The first person recites the Tara prayer with the attitude to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings; the second person recites the Tara prayer with the attitude to achieve liberation from samsara for themselves; the third person recites the Tara prayer in order to achieve the happiness of future lives for themselves and the fourth person recites the Tara prayer for the sake of the happiness of this life.

For the first person who recites the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, that person's action becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment. The second person's action of reciting the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* to achieve liberation for themselves does not become the cause of enlightenment; it only becomes the cause to achieve liberation for themselves. The third person's action of reciting *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* with the attitude of seeking the happiness of future lives does not become the cause to achieve either liberation or enlightenment; it only becomes the cause of the happiness of future lives. Then, the fourth

person who recites *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* with the attitude of being attached to this life, seeking only the happiness of this life, that person's action does not become Dharma. For the other three people, their actions of reciting *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* becomes Dharma, the cause of happiness.

One way of explaining the meaning of Dharma is [the literal translation] "holding up." It holds us up from falling into suffering, into the lower realms of the hell beings, hungry ghosts or animals.

Another explanation of the term is "protecting." Dharma means "protecting the mind." When our actions protect our mind, they protect us from suffering. That meaning, "protecting the mind" from suffering, contains the whole path to enlightenment. What we need to be protected from and how we can be protected covers the whole path from beginning to end. Our unhealthy mind is transformed into a healthy mind; our disturbed mind is transformed into a subdued, peaceful mind; our angry mind is transformed into a patient mind or one of loving kindness; our self-cherishing, egoistic mind, the mind that brings all the problems, is transformed into the mind that cherishes others, which is the source of all the happiness and peace for us and for every other living being.

Without going into much detail about each path, each realization, the Dharma is that which transforms the mind from the cause of suffering into the cause of happiness. All these aspects are Dharma. When our mind is transformed from the cause of suffering into the cause of happiness, when it becomes the cause of happiness and peace, at that time our mind becomes Dharma. That is how we are protected from suffering. The mind is transformed from one of dissatisfaction into one of satisfaction. It is transformed from one of attachment and dissatisfaction into the happy, free mind that is renounced. The mind is transformed from the ignorant mind, which has a hallucinated [view of] the nature of phenomena, into one of wisdom, one that realizes emptiness.

So, this fourth person who recites the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* with the attitude seeking only the happiness of this life, that person's action does not become Dharma. They might be reciting the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* to help have a long life or to heal a disease or to stop the problems of life, but that still does not mean the action becomes Dharma. For example, taking medicine with the attitude seeking only the happiness of this life might cure the disease, but that

doesn't mean the action of taking medicine becomes Dharma, even though it can solve the problem.

In the *Precious Garland* Nagarjuna explained,

Desire, hatred, ignorance, and
The actions they generate are non-virtues.
Non-attachment, non-hatred, non-ignorance,
And the actions they generate are virtues.

From nonvirtues come all sufferings
And likewise all bad transmigrations,
From virtues, all happy transmigrations
And the pleasures of all lives.¹

Dharma is the action motivated by a pure attitude, unstained by ignorance, anger or attachment. Here, this attachment means attachment clinging to this life, not attachment clinging to future samsara. There is a difference. Any action motivated by this pure attitude unstained by ignorance, anger or attachment is virtue and is the cause of [rebirth as] a happy transmigratory being—a god or a human being. We can see that clearly from the quote by Nagarjuna. And conversely, any action motivated by ignorance, anger or attachment—the attachment clinging to this life—becomes nonvirtue and therefore the result is only suffering, particularly rebirth in the suffering lower realms.

Lama Atisha gave a similar explanation when asked by his translator, Dromtönpa. Lama Atisha re-established Buddhadharma in Tibet, making it pure after it had degenerated. He was invited by the Dharma king of Tibet, Yeshe Ö, who sacrificed his life when he was put in prison by an irreligious king. He gave up his life in the prison in order to invite Lama Atisha to Tibet and to establish and spread pure Buddhadharma there. Because of that, we can now receive pure teachings from many qualified teachers, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the many qualified Mahayana virtuous friends, geshe or Tibetan lamas who can reveal the whole path to enlightenment without anything missing. That we have this incredible opportunity to receive the pure teachings and to be able to practice the pure path is by the kindness of the Dharma king, Yeshe Ö who sacrificed his life in the prison under the hand of the irreligious king in order to invite Lama Atisha to re-establish pure Dharma in Tibet.

¹ Vv. 20–21.

That's how this lamrim, *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, happened. The teaching that has the title "lamrim" started from there. That's why we now have this incredible opportunity. Even for us Western people, who have been in the dark for so long, now there is the light of Dharma, and especially the lamrim teaching, which is the integration of the entire Buddhadharma without confusion. Everything is set up to show one person how to achieve enlightenment, all by kindness of the Tibetan Dharma king, Yeshe Ö.

Dromtönpa asked Lama Atisha to explain the results of actions done with ignorance, anger and attachment. Atisha replied,

Actions done with ignorance, anger and attachment bring rebirth in the lower realms as a suffering transmigratory being. Greed causes rebirth in the hungry ghost realm, hatred causes rebirth in the hell realm, ignorance causes rebirth in the animal realm and so forth. Actions done with an attitude not possessed by the three poisonous minds bring the result of rebirth as a happy transmigratory being.

For example, there are people who spend their whole life doing breathing meditation or walking meditation with attachment clinging to this life, seeking to gain power, to have a reputation and be famous, to gather disciples or to earn wealth and so forth. None of these actions become Dharma; they only become nonvirtue. A whole lifetime spent in doing breathing meditations or walking meditations, whatever, when it is done with this attitude, only becomes nonvirtue, the cause of the lower realms. Therefore that person's whole life is wasted, even though they might have so much pride, believing that they have done many years' retreat. In reality, if it is analyzed, because they don't know how to practice Dharma, how to meditate, because they don't know the definition of what is Dharma and what is not Dharma, their whole life is wasted. Their whole life is used only to create the cause of the lower realms.

Therefore, it is not sufficient to just be able to undistractedly concentrate on one object such as the breath. That person may believe that they are meditating, but actually the motivation does not become virtue, the motivation does not even become the cause of happiness if it is just to gain reputation, power, wealth or collecting disciples or whatever, just for the comfort and happiness of this life. They might call it meditating but they don't know how to meditate, because, first of all, the motivation that starts the action has to be virtuous, Dharma, the cause of happiness, then the action itself can become virtuous, Dharma, the cause of happiness.

This applies not just to meditating but to whatever we do, from morning until night, twenty-four hours a day, walking, sitting, sleeping, working, talking and so forth. For example, somebody who gives a lecture might be able to lecture very professionally with outwardly perfect speech, but it still doesn't mean they know how to talk [with a pure motivation]. Talking is just being able to externally arrange words. That is not enough. We need a pure motivation. Knowing how to talk is not enough, the outside thing is not enough; the most important thing that decides whether our talk becomes the cause of suffering or happiness, holy Dharma or worldly dharma, is the motivation. For the motivation to be Dharma, the very least is an attitude that is detached from this life, free from the attachment clinging to this life. It must be at least that pure attitude, unstained by attachment clinging this life. If this attitude is missing, in reality it doesn't mean the person knows how to talk.

It's the same thing with somebody who is doing business. Even if they are very smart, unless there is a pure motivation, they don't know [how to do business.] The best way of doing business is out of compassion, out of loving kindness, with bodhicitta. That is the best way, and at least it should be done with a pure motivation. Even if they don't have the thought of cherishing and benefiting others, they should at least have the thought that doesn't wish to harm themselves or others. As Nagarjuna said, it should be a mind of non-ignorance, non-hatred and non-attachment. If that is the motivation, then that person knows how to do business.

It's the same thing with whatever we do—how we eat, how we sleep, how we wash, everything. There is more to doing any action than what ordinary people think. The most important aspect of doing the action is the attitude and this is commonly missing. It is missing in schools, in colleges, in general education. Because of that, no matter how much education people get, no matter how many other skills they acquire, the real way to apply those skills, the way that produces happiness and peace, that brings satisfaction and gives meaning to life, is not there. That attitude is missing. We should at least have the attitude of not harming ourselves and doing what is beneficial. So, this understanding covers everything we do, our whole life, everything to do with our body, speech and mind. It's not only how to meditate.

EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS MOTIVATION

So, we will take, restore or revive the Mahayana ordination. This is the main cause of receiving the body of the happy migratory being, a god or a human body, after this life.

It is mentioned that living nowadays in such a time of degeneration, a time when it is so difficult to practice, with so many obstacles, that even taking this ordination and living purely in it—of course, there is no question keeping all eight precepts but even just keeping one—taking it and living purely in it for even one day, for even one hour, for even one minute, has unbelievable benefits. Even taking one precept for just a short time, one day, makes it definite to receive the body of a happy migratory being in the next life.

Here, because we are taking not one but eight precepts we are extremely, unbelievably fortunate. Living in the precepts, the ordination, is the very source of the fundamental path to achieve liberation from samsara, and not only that, we are taking this ordination with the motivation of bodhicitta, to benefit each and every living being, not just for our own happiness.

There are a few special things [that differentiate] the eight pratimoksha precepts taken to achieve liberation for ourselves [and the eight Mahayana precepts]. The pratimoksha vows are not taken with a bodhicitta motivation, to achieve enlightenment for sake of all sentient beings. And there's no need to visualize all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. That practice not there.

Here, we are taking the eight Mahayana precepts, which can also be taken daily by anybody, even fully ordained monks and nuns. These Mahayana precepts are done with a bodhicitta motivation and they are taken in the presence of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas and can even be taken by fully ordained people.

The branches of the precepts also include other additional things such as avoiding black food: onion, garlic, meat and these things. According to Kriya Tantra, there are more than these, however these are the basic things. The reason why keeping the eight Mahayana precepts involves taking white food and avoiding black food is because the precepts come from lower tantras, from Kriya and Charya Tantra and this is fundamental in the lower tantras because of the outer yoga and inner yoga. Their main emphasis, their main practice, is the outer yoga of keeping the body clean, unpolluted. In this way we are able to keep the mind unpolluted, and that helps the meditation. That might be a reason.

An additional thing is this. Because the teachings on the eight Mahayana precepts come from the lower tantras, the eight pratimoksha lay precepts which are taken—the eight types of ordination

for the liberation for the self—involve avoiding black food. Where there is a strong emphasis on being vegetarian and also avoiding garlic, onion and those things, my guess is that this might originally be because of reciting a lot of Amitabha mantras, Compassion Buddha mantras and Medicine Buddha mantras, which are lower tantra.

Of course, there can be both the highest and lower tantra aspects of these buddhas. There's Amitabha Buddha in the aspect of highest tantra and of lower tantra and there is also Compassion Buddha in the aspect of highest tantra and of lower tantra. The aspect of practice that has been commonly spread has been the lower tantra aspect. Because of that, the practice of vegetarianism is very strong, which also involves avoiding onion, garlic and so forth. That is my guess; that it is connected with those practices that are lower tantra. In those countries, the vegetarian restaurants that don't have onion and garlic have become very common and very popular.

While there is no self, which means while there is no inherently existent I, we apprehend there is an inherently existent I. While causative phenomena are impermanent in nature, we apprehend that they are permanent. While temporary samsaric pleasures are in the nature of suffering, we apprehend that they are pure happiness. While the body is impure in nature, the container of so many dirty things, we apprehend that it is clean. Due to such wrong views, we and all sentient beings have been experiencing the general sufferings of samsara: the six types of suffering of samsara, the four types of suffering of samsara, the particular sufferings of humans that are condensed in eight types, and the sufferings of the god realms that are condensed into four or five.

In particular, we and all sentient beings have experienced the sufferings of the lower realms—the hells, the hungry ghost realm and the animal realm—numberless times from beginningless rebirths. If we think well about the beginningless sufferings of samsara, it is something that cracks the heart. If we continue to follow these wrong concepts, we will have to experience all these sufferings, and particularly the sufferings of the lower realms, numberless times, without end. If we reflect well on how we will have to experience this again and again and again in the future, numberless times without end, by following this wrong concept, by living our life with this wrong concept, it is something that makes us unable to sleep.

PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: NOTHING HARMS LIKE THE SELF-CHERISHING THOUGHT

However, at this time, we have received the perfect human rebirth, we have met the Buddhadharma and we have met many virtuous friends. We have gathered these three rare conditions, so at this time, after this life, after death, to be reborn in the lower realms again or to receive a god or human body is not sufficient. Even to be able to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves is not sufficient. This attitude of seeking happiness for ourselves is nothing special, whether we are seeking temporal happiness or ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara. It does not make having this human body anything special. It is not the special quality of the human mind, because even the worms, the tiniest creatures, have this thought of seeking happiness for themselves. Therefore, we must achieve full enlightenment, the cessation of all the mistakes of the mind and the completion of all the realizations, for the sake of all the kind mother sentient beings.

Why we should attempt to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings is because the work of cherishing ourselves is the door that opens all our problems. It is the root of all the undesirable things. Anything that we do not like, that we do not wish to happen, comes from this self-cherishing thought.

This self-cherishing thought is much more harmful than any disease such as cancer or AIDS. If we compare how harmful having AIDS is with the harm caused by the ego, we see that the harm AIDS can do is nothing compared to the harm the ego gives us. The ego is far more harmful, more dangerous, without question, and it is more dangerous for all the numberless sentient beings. Having AIDS alone doesn't make us reincarnate in the realms of the hell beings, the hungry ghosts or the animals. Even if we die with AIDS or cancer, it doesn't cause us to reincarnate in the unfortunate suffering realms.

None of the 424 diseases alone cause us to be reborn in the lower realms or cause harm to numberless sentient beings. AIDS doesn't continuously harm other numberless sentient beings from life to life, whereas from beginningless rebirths our ego has been harming sentient beings. The inner enemy, the ego, does this. Even if we don't have AIDS, cancer or any of those other diseases, the ego makes us create negative karma and that makes us reincarnate in the lower realms, to experience the longest, heaviest suffering of samsara.

Therefore, all the 424 diseases, including cancer and AIDS, are nothing compared to how harmful, how dangerous, the ego is. Why in the world are people so scared of cancer and AIDS but not at all scared of the ego? They have no fear of the ego! People even feel proud of having an ego, and they even regard it as a good quality.

No matter how many atomic bombs there are in the world, they cannot cause us to reincarnate in the lower realms and they cannot harm all the numberless sentient beings of the six realms, but this ego gives all sentient beings harm from life to life. Besides that, it obliges us to create negative karma and causes us to reincarnate in the lower realms, so this ego is much more harmful than all the atomic bombs. No matter how harmful all those atomic bombs are to ourselves and others, that is nothing compared to the harm of this ego.

How much poison and pollution there is in the world compared to the harm caused by the ego, all the dangers and harm it does to us and the numberless other sentient beings, again, for the same reason, there is no comparison. The idea is that the amount of harm our ego, our self-cherishing thought, does to us and to the numberless sentient beings is unimaginable.

In the same way, even if all sentient beings become our enemy, even if they all harm us, badly treat us or kill us, that alone could not cause us to be born in hell, and so forth. But, even if no living being becomes our enemy or harms us, our ego, our self-cherishing thought, makes us create negative karma and be reborn in the lower realms and then continuously experience suffering. Even when we are born in the human realm, we will have to experience so many problems in the future lives. And it goes on and on—again we create negative karma and suffer, and then again we create negative karma—the same thing repeated again and again. And so we experience the problems again and again, over and over and over, going on and on without end.

Therefore, even if all sentient beings become our enemy and they all harm us or kill us, that is nothing compared to the harm done by this one person's ego, our own self-cherishing thought. We should therefore be aware of how extremely dangerous this ego is, how terrifying, how much harm it gives us and all other sentient beings.

PRECEPTS MOTIVATION: ALL HAPPINESS COMES FROM OTHERS

Therefore, we should think, “There is no way I can stand having this ego in my heart for even one second. I must split from it! I must divorce my ego! I must eliminate this ego without delay of even a second. All my problems come from cherishing the I. That means all my problems come from this I, from me.

“Therefore, what is called ‘I’ must be renounced forever and what is called ‘others’ must be cherished forever. Why? Because every happiness, every success, every good thing, every desirable thing that I have ever received has depended on the kindness of other sentient beings. Even the enjoyments of everyday life have been received by the kindness of sentient beings.”

As I often mention, one grain of rice on our plate comes from the field. For that one grain of rice, so many human beings, so many ants, so many worms in the ground—sometimes even mice—so many sentient beings suffered or died when the land was fertilized. However, that is not all. This grain of rice came from another grain, and again so many sentient beings suffered, died and created negative karma for that grain, and again that grain of rice came from *another* grain, and again so many sentient beings suffered, died and created negative karma. Like this, if we think back on how many sentient beings suffered for the evolution of this one grain of rice, the continuation is endless. Therefore, for that one plate of rice, an unbelievable number of sentient beings have suffered and died and created negative karma by harming others just so this rice can be on our plate.

That we are able to survive by eating food and that we have comfort and enjoyment is dependent on numberless sentient beings. Thinking like that, we can see that our survival every day as a human being, to be able to be alive, is completely by the kindness of sentient beings. It is completely dependent on other sentient beings.

In the same way, for one bowl of vegetables numberless sentient beings have suffered and created negative karma by harming others. And for even a cup of tea, in the water there are so many sentient beings. Without disturbing them, without their suffering, without depending on their kindness, there is no way we can have a cup of tea. Just having the water in the first place depends on the kindness of sentient beings.

It is similar with our clothes, with every item, from the hat on our head down to the socks on our feet. Many of our clothes come from an animal's body, such as all those woolen or silk things. Numberless sentient beings have suffered or died, numberless sentient beings have been harmed and have created negative karma by harming other sentient beings, in order for us to receive one item of clothing to protect our body and give us comfort. All this comfort and enjoyment is dependent on the kindness of numberless sentient beings.

And it's the same thing with the place we live in, with the protection, the comfort and the enjoyment that we have by having a house. Every house we have lived in, that has protected our life and given us comfort and enjoyment, has happened due to numberless sentient beings suffering and dying and creating negative karma. This is what happens. Therefore, our enjoyment, our survival, from day to day—even just to be alive—is completely dependent on the kindness of sentient beings.

By reflecting on how much numberless sentient beings have suffered, died and created negative karma by harming others for all this enjoyment, there is no way to have all this enjoyment just for ourselves, to work only for ourselves. That is so unbearable. Only doing work for ourselves, only thinking of ourselves when using all these enjoyments, when eating even this one grain of rice, this piece of vegetable—there is no way we can eat it for only our own happiness. If we look at it from the side of all those numberless sentient beings who have suffered, died and created negative karma for these things, how unbelievably selfish it is. To use all these things that came from them through so much suffering only for our own ends, that is so selfish. Therefore, we *have* to do something to benefit them. We have to do something meaningful, something beneficial for them.

Sentient beings are so precious and kind. As I mentioned yesterday, the best service for them, the best benefit for them, is to achieve enlightenment in order to free them from all their sufferings and to lead them to the peerless happiness, full enlightenment. This is the highest, the best benefit we can offer sentient beings. To be able to do that, first we ourselves must achieve full enlightenment. In order to achieve full enlightenment, we must practice the fundamental path, protecting our karma, living in morality. Therefore think, “I am going to take the eight Mahayana precepts and keep them from now until tomorrow sunrise.”

TAKING THE EIGHT MAHAYANA PRECEPTS

Those who can kneel down, kneel down on one knee and put your palms together at your heart.

I don't think people without an understanding of the Dharma can see how the ordained Sangha living in the monasteries and nunneries away from the city, not mixing with outside people, can benefit the world, how they can benefit other sentient beings. People think they are of no benefit to the outside world just because they live by themselves, isolated. Many people think like this, maybe not so much in the East but in the West. Even in some of our centers there are people who think like this because they haven't really thoroughly thought of the benefits of keeping the precepts. They think that people can only benefit others by mixing with people, by doing service in the community, such as doing work in a hospital or something practical like that.

On the other hand, no matter however much a person develops their mind in the path, gaining realizations by retreating, by living in the vows, somehow many people think what they are doing is not service for other sentient beings. Even though it is in fact the very best service, due to a lack of understanding of karma, people think this is not real Dharma.

There is no way we can do perfect service for other sentient beings without the renunciation of samsara. Without it there is always danger. Without bodhicitta, how can we do perfect service for other sentient beings? There are always ego problems that stop us from doing perfect work for others. And how can we liberate others from samsara when we ourselves have not realized emptiness? Not having had the experience, without becoming liberated ourselves we cannot help others become liberated. And it's the same thing with actualizing the tantric path for quick enlightenment. Without that, how can we do perfect work for other sentient beings quickly?

So, the whole lamrim path from beginning to the end is needed so urgently. Actualizing the three principal aspects of the path is especially urgent. It's crucial in order to do perfect work for other sentient beings without any danger for ourselves and for others.

Therefore, we are taking these precepts in order to eliminate famine and sickness, thinking of all the people who are having heart attacks, who are having breathing problems, in hospital now with their family around, their brothers, sisters, father and mother, as well as the doctors around them. They are suffering so much but they don't know what to do. There could be many patients right now on the point of dying, so many who are having operations right now, not sure whether

they will survive or die. Remembering all this, we take the eight Mahayana precepts in order to benefit all of them.

[Rinpoche gives the eight Mahayana precepts]

[Taking the precepts in this way] we are engaging in perfect virtue, which means engaging in that which is most beneficial for other sentient beings. Because of that, it also becomes beneficial for us. Benefiting others is the best way to benefit ourselves. As His Holiness often says, if you want to be selfish, the best way to be selfish is by cherishing other sentient beings. The best way, the most intelligent way, the most skillful way to be selfish is by cherishing other sentient beings.

By cherishing other sentient beings, we don't harm others and we benefit them instead. Then, by the way, it becomes the best cause of success for us, the best way for us to obtain happiness for ourselves, temporary and ultimate happiness, including the peerless happiness, full enlightenment.

In the *Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha*, there is a quote from a sutra where the Buddha says,

Do not commit any nonvirtuous actions,
Perform only perfect virtuous actions,
Subdue your mind thoroughly—
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

After not harming others and helping others, the third line tells us how to do this—by subduing our mind thoroughly. “Subdue your mind thoroughly, this is the teaching of the Buddha” tells us that to stop committing the nonvirtuous, harmful actions and to be able to perform only perfect virtuous, beneficial actions, this is what we must do. It shows that the way to do this is by subduing our mind. Subduing our mind means watching it every day, taking care of it, protecting it from delusions, from disturbing thoughts, by applying the remedy, the meditations, starting from the root of the path to enlightenment, guru devotion, through to the renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and the right view, and then, if we can, on top of that using the skillful means of the Secret Mantra, the Vajrayana—and in that way, transforming the mind into the path to happiness, to liberation, to enlightenment. This is the teaching of the Buddha.

Then the next verse says,

A star, a visual aberration, a flame of a lamp,
An illusion, a drop of dew, or a bubble,
A dream, a flash of lightning, a cloud—
See conditioned things as such!

All causative phenomena, including our own life, those around us, friends, enemies, our material possessions, wealth—all these things are changing within every second due to causes and conditions. But they can be stopped at any time. This life can be stopped any time; this appearance that we have now, this appearance of this life, can be stopped at any time. This appearance that we have with this present human mind that is associated with this human body can be stopped at any time, today, in any minute, it can be stopped. Like this, all causative phenomena can be stopped at any time. This is the reality.

Therefore having anger, discrimination, dissatisfaction, attachment—none of these emotional, unhealthy minds make any sense. There is no reason for them. It doesn't make any sense to follow these emotional minds. There is no reason to become angry, to have the thought to hurt others. There is no reason for ignorance to arise, this belief in the concept of permanence.

Not only that, what all these phenomena are, what the I, the action, the object, all these phenomena are in reality is merely labeled by the mind. In reality the I, the action, the object, all the sense objects—form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects—all these things are merely labeled by the mind. Therefore, they are all empty of existing from their side.

We'll just concentrate a little bit on this.

EMPTINESS AND THE PHENOMENA THAT ARE EMPTY

What is I? What is me? What is this I, the self? Not the general self, not the word, not the I that is merely labeled by the mind and therefore is completely empty. *This* I is not empty of the I but is empty of existing from its own side. This I that has the aspect of not appearing as merely labeled but appearing from its own side, what is this I?

Another way of expressing this is that this I that seems to be self-appearing, as having the aspect of appearing from its own side, this I is completely empty, that aspect doesn't exist. That aspect of the self is a hallucination, a complete absence. It's empty, which means it's empty of [being

other than] the merely labeled I. That is the reality; that emptiness is the reality, the reality that is on the I, which means on the merely labeled I.

In the philosophical texts, in the scriptures, where it talks about the emptiness on the phenomena, the emptiness on the I, the emptiness on the vase, the emptiness on the table, the emptiness on the pillar, they use two terms. One term in Tibetan is *chö nyi*, emptiness, and the other is *chö chen*, the I that is empty. *Chö nyi* is the emptiness that is on the *chö chen*, which is the merely labeled phenomenon. This is just to give you an idea; *chö chen* is not an exact literal translation. *Chö* refers to the emptiness, *chen* means that which has emptiness.

Chö is a general term, with different meanings depending on the words that follow it. In general it means existence and it can be used as Dharma, the positive attitude that produces peace and happiness. Anything that becomes the remedy to the delusions, that heals or stops the sicknesses, that is Dharma. So one meaning of *chö*, depending on the context, how it is presented, is “Dharma.”

But here in *chö nyi* there is this word *nyi*, which means “only” so in this context it means “emptiness.” *Chö nyi* and *chö pa nyi* have the same meaning. The literal translation of *tong pa* is emptiness. The literal translation of *chö nyi* would be “only existence” if you did a literal, word by word translation, but in this context it means the same as *tong pa nyi*. *Tong pa* means “emptiness” and *nyi* means “only” so *tong pa nyi* means “only emptiness” or “emptiness only.”

THE EMPTINESS OF THE TEA

The reason the word *nyi* is used after *tong pa* is because it makes it precise. It becomes a very important term to give the right understanding of emptiness. It’s not just any type of emptiness. “Emptiness only” cuts off any other types of empty; it cuts off the ordinary emptiness. This *nyi* isn’t in the English translation but it is there in the Tibetan, making it that specific emptiness.

For example, it cuts off the ordinary emptiness such as the mug being empty of having tea in it. The emptiness of the tea that is in the mug is not the lack of tea [after we have drunk it] but the emptiness of inherent tea. It’s not the ordinary emptiness of having no real tea in the real mug. In Tibetan tea is *chai* so we say *chai tong nyi* or *chai tong pa nyi* meaning the “emptiness only of tea.” We can also say *chai ten ‘gi nyi* where *ten ‘gi* means “above” or “on.” This means this emptiness is

not the absence of tea, the absence of the substance that has form and space. The *nyi* stops that wrong understanding, seeing it as an ordinary emptiness, which is not the reality of the tea.

So by negating the ordinary emptiness—the absence of tea, not having tea in the mug—while the tea is in the mug, the tea is empty. This is emptiness of the tea that exists there in the mug. While the tea exists in the mug, it's empty. So then what we have to know is empty of *what*? It is not empty of tea, but it has to be empty of something specific about the tea.

The tea that exists in the mug is empty of the aspect how the tea appears to us. How does the aspect of the tea appear to us? While we are thinking about the tea, looking at the tea, in what aspect does the tea appear? In reality, the tea that exists is merely labeled by the mind by relating the liquid—the boiled water—mixed with the flavor of the tea leaves. By relating to this phenomenon, the [combination of] the liquid and the flavor of the leaves, that's all the tea is, but how the tea exists does not appear to us in that way—as merely labeled by the mind relating to that phenomenon.

For us sentient beings who haven't ceased the subtle imprints left by the concept of true existence, ignorance, that projects inherent existence, dualistic view, onto objects, when there's the appearance of the tea, it doesn't appear to us as merely labeled by mind. It appears to us as *not* merely labeled by the mind. It seems to exist from its own side, as inherently existent or independent. The tea that appears to us seems undifferentiable from the base—the liquid and the flavor of the leaf. The appearance and the base are mixed or undifferentiable.

Because those two, which are different, appear undifferentiable, that appearance is a hallucination. All phenomena appear to us in that way and therefore they are all hallucinations. The appearance is that the tea in the mug does not appear merely labeled by the mind; it exists from its own side as independent tea in the mug, *real* tea in the mug. This is the object of refutation, in this case, the object of refutation on the merely labeled tea.

PRASANGIKA'S OBJECT OF REFUTATION

It can normally be said that for us ordinary sentient beings who haven't realized the emptiness of the tea and so forth—the emptiness of all phenomena—that we are unable to see things as illusory, as a dream. In our everyday life, we see a real this and a real that—that's what appears to

us and what we talk about, how we think. We believe the appearance. We apprehend the object as being real and we believe it. If we avoid using philosophical terms, normally things appear real. We say, “That is a real this; that is a real that.” However, that is the object of refutation; that is the hallucination.

If we can recognize that [what we apprehend] is the hallucination, the object of refutation, it takes just a minute or a second to realize the emptiness of that phenomenon. Without using other terms to explain the hallucination, the term we normally use in our ordinary, everyday life for the object of refutation is what we call “real.” Without using the philosophical terms such as inherently existent, truly existent, existing by nature, independent and so forth, for ordinary people like us, those who haven’t studied the scriptures, when we talk about “real this” or “real that,” if we were to then analyze what that “real” is, we would see it relates to the subtle object of refutation within the Prasangika school’s view.

There are four doctrines or four schools of Buddhist philosophy, differentiated by the level of subtlety of analysis of what reality is. Each school defines what emptiness is through their own analysis and they have their own object of refutation as well as their own different point of view about what is the root of samsara, ignorance.

Since this subject has come up at this time, maybe I should leave this and talk about it when we get to the explanation of the twelve links [of dependent origination.]

Normally in our daily life, without analyzing, without examination, things appear to our mind as real. We think there is something real there and we believe there is something real there. All these “real” appearing things are the subtle object of refutation according to Prasangika Madhyamaka, the fourth and most subtle of the four schools of Buddhist philosophy. The Madhyamaka school has two [subschoools], Svatantrika and Prasangika, and the Prasangika school’s view of this subtle refuting object, this subtle hallucination is extremely subtle.

So, this is what we are talking about when we talk about something being “real.” The tea, the I, action, object, the noise we hear of the kettle, the handle being dropped—that which appears as real. We hear the real sound of the handle dropping. According to our mind, there is a real sound from its own side. Somebody coughs and we think there is real cough, a real sound of nose blowing, a real airplane noise. None of these things appears as merely labeled but rather as

something from its own side. All these are Prasangika's subtle refuting object, which means the subtle hallucination.

When we don't analyze the objects, there are all these appearances, all these hallucinations, all these things appearing as real—real this and real that—which are the object of refutation of all the four schools, something they all think is the ignorance that is the root of samsara.

This appearance of a real object is the hallucination that is the object of refutation of the Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Madhyamaka schools, both the Svatantrika and the Prasangika.

The most subtle object of refutation is that the appearing thing is not merely labeled by mind, but there has to be something existing from its own side. [According to the other schools,] the I, action, object and so forth, these phenomena exist by being labeled by the mind but not *merely* labeled by the mind. There must be something from its own side, otherwise how could it exist? This is the right view according to the Svatantrika school. If things were merely labeled by mind, that would mean that things did not exist from their own side and therefore how could they exist?

They cannot distinguish between the object that exists—the I, the tea or whatever—with being merely labeled by the mind, being empty of existing from its own side. While the tea exists, it is empty of existing from its own side and is merely labeled by the mind—they cannot put together the emptiness of the tea existing from its own side and the tea being a dependent arising. Even with this subtle hallucination, they think there should be something that exists from its own side, not merely labeled by the mind.

However, even this subtle thing that is left there in the appearance, even this is totally empty, so this one is the hallucination, the object of refutation according to the view of the Prasangika Madhyamika school. The absence of this subtle true existence is a hallucination, the refuting object. This thing appearing from its own side that is left, even this is a hallucination; even this doesn't exist at all; even this is completely empty.

This is the ultimate view, the emptiness, the reality of all phenomena. So, even though there are so many different presentations of emptiness by the four schools of Buddhist philosophy, in reality, there is only one emptiness and only one type of ignorance that is the root of samsara.

WHERE IS THE TEA?

So anyway, going back to the tea! Now we can see when we look at our mug filled with tea what the “emptiness of the tea” means. It is the emptiness *only, tong pa nyi*. To repeat, there is the liquid mixed with the flavor of the tea leaves and maybe some milk, all put into a mug. That, which we call “tea,” is merely labeled by the mind, because it depends on the reason of the mug, the liquid and the leaves in the mug. This is exactly what the tea is. What is the tea is this, that which is merely labeled by the mind because there is liquid flavored by the tea leaves inside the mug.

From this analysis you can see now where the tea is. The tea is not there on this liquid. There is no tea on this liquid. This liquid is not tea; this liquid is the basis to be labeled “tea.” This is the base upon which our mind makes up the label “tea.” So where is tea in there?

As there is no tea on the liquid and that liquid is not tea, it is the base to be labeled, where is the tea? There is the base to be labeled—the liquid—and tea that is the label, two different things. The liquid is not the tea because it is the base. The tea is the label. First, we see the label, the liquid in the mug, and then seeing the liquid in the mug becomes the reason for the mind to make up the label “tea.” Therefore, it is clear that what we see first, the liquid in the mug, is not tea. It is not tea and there is no tea on that liquid.

If we were to analyze it, we would see that this is the reality of how the tea exists, but it doesn’t appear to us that way. Unless we are analyzing in this way, we are unaware of the reality of the tea and in our mind there is no differentiation between the liquid that is the base to be labeled and the label itself, “tea.” That is the object of refutation.

The real tea in the mug means the tea that is merely labeled by the mind that appears to our mind in this aspect, as inherently existent, as independent, as appearing from its own side. When we say “real” it refers to all this, how, when we are not analyzing it, all these hallucinations appear to us as real, as true. The tea that doesn’t exist—the “real” tea—doesn’t exist at all. We can’t drink that “real” tea. There’s nothing to drink because it doesn’t exist. However, the tea

that does exist—the tea that is merely labeled by the mind—looks to our mind as if it doesn't exist at all.

Have you got any idea about what I am saying? *Any* idea? Anyway, when we drink tea, when we are enjoying tea, we don't think we are enjoying the merely labeled tea! This is just one simple example. We don't think that way; we think we are enjoying the tea that is *not* merely labeled by mind, that is *not* empty [of existing from its own side].

Because we have seen the liquid in the mug, the boiled water flavored by the tea leaves and mixed with milk, our mind merely labels it “tea.” After that, there is the appearance, the projection onto this merely labeled tea, the hallucination that there is an independent tea, something that appears from its own side. It appears to us this way and we believe it. This appearance is what we point to and call tea, thinking it is “real” tea. We believe it to be real; this is how we refer to it when we point to it. This is the meaning of “real.” But it is a hallucination, completely empty, completely empty right there of tea.

This is emptiness of the tea, called *chö nyi*. This emptiness is not just any emptiness. This particular emptiness is the emptiness of true existence, of existing from its own side, therefore it is emptiness *only*, *tong pa nyi*, because it cuts off ordinary emptiness, the absence of tea.

In this way, we can understand that while the tea exists, it is empty; and while the tea is empty, it exists. It exists, merely labeled by the mind. Those two are unified; those two become supports for each other. The wisdom realizing that the tea is empty helps to lead us to the realization of the conventional truth of the tea, that the tea definitely exists and how it exists, by being merely labeled by the mind. And understanding that subtle dependent arising helps us understand that the tea is empty.

Anyway, we can enjoy the tea whether it is empty or truly existent!

Lecture 6

December 6, 1993

MORE TONGLEN

[Refuge and bodhicitta prayers]

As I mentioned the other day, with the strong thought of bodhicitta, think, “I will take all the hell beings’ suffering on myself and experience it for them. And I will give all my happiness and all my merit to everyone, all the temporary happiness up to and including peerless happiness, full enlightenment, I will give it to everyone, to every hell being, so they receive and experience it.”

Then do the same thing with the other realms, thinking, “I will take all the hungry ghosts’ suffering and experience it for them.” And the same thing for the animals, humans, suras and asuras, thinking something like, “How wonderful it would be, how fantastic if I could experience every human being’s problems. If I could take every human being’s problems on myself and experience those problems for them and let them have all my happiness and merits, including peerless happiness, full enlightenment, how wonderful that they could receive it and experience it.”

Think like this, “How wonderful it would be if I could experience every hell being’s suffering. If I could take all their sufferings, all the unbearable, heaviest suffering in samsara, if I could take it on myself and experience it for them and let them to have all my happiness, how wonderful that would be. That is the best thing to do in my life, the most enjoyable thing, to take other sentient beings’ problems and sufferings on myself and let them have all my happiness.”

Thinking strongly in this way, recite the Compassion Buddha’s mantra. Starting from the hell beings, generate the wish to take their sufferings.

[Rinpoche and students recite OM MANI PADME HUM]

MAKE EVERY ACTION DHARMA

As I mentioned yesterday, there are two factors with the things we do in our daily life: the external action and the attitude. We need to know how to live our life, how to do every single external action with the correct attitude. Since what we like is happiness and what we don't want is suffering and problems, that depends on the attitude we have for every single action we do.

If every activity is done with an attitude that is Dharma, with non-anger, non-ignorance, and in particular, with non-attachment, we are living our life or doing these activities with a positive attitude, with a mind that becomes Dharma. Then, all the actions become Dharma and the unmistakable cause of happiness. Knowing how to live our life, knowing how to do everything, of the external action and the internal attitude, the main thing, the most important thing, is the attitude.

If our attitude is one of nonvirtue, of ignorance, anger or attachment, then all the activities become nonvirtue, no matter how expert we might be in the external performance of the action, no matter how qualified we are or how much education we have in how to do external activities. In reality, all the activities become the cause of suffering because our attitude did not become Dharma.

No matter how much education we have, how expert we are at doing things externally, that alone doesn't make the action become the cause of happiness; that alone cannot transform the action into virtue, into Dharma, the cause of future lives' happiness, the cause of ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, the cause of peerless happiness, full enlightenment.

The action does not bring us happiness, only suffering. The result of the action is exactly what we don't want to experience. Therefore, the main thing, the most important thing we must do in our life is to understand that all happiness, peace and success come from making our attitude positive so it becomes Dharma. As I mentioned before, this good heart becomes the most important education, the very first thing to be known, to learn, to practice, otherwise whatever we do becomes an obstacle to happiness and a cause of suffering.

AVERT DELUSIONS AS SOON AS THEY ARISE

In our day-to-day life, any experience of happiness or success is due to past good karma. It has come from past good karma, which is positive intention, one of the five omnipresent mental factors that always accompany the principal consciousness. What is karma, action? It is intention, this mental factor from among the fifty-one mental factors, one of the omnipresent mental factors: intention, feeling, contact, discrimination and attention. In Tibetan, intention is *sem pa*.

The fifty-one mental factors are divided into: the eleven virtuous mental factors, such as devotion, shyness, shame and so forth; the six root delusions; the twenty secondary delusions and the four changeable mental factors. Then there are the five omnipresent mental factors and the five object-determining mental factors. Of the five mental factors that always accompany the principal consciousness, one is intention, *sem pa*. That's what karma is, action. Karma is a Sanskrit word, which translates into English as "action," but it refers to this mental factor, intention. Of the two divisions of body and mind, it is mind.

Suffering and happiness; enlightenment and hell; samsara and nirvana, the lower suffering realms and the upper happy realms; the body of a suffering transmigratory being and the body of a happy migratory being—all these come from our own mind, from the action, karma, the intention on our mindstream. Suffering results from negative, nonvirtuous intention and happiness results from positive, virtuous intention, so both suffering and happiness come from this.

In Buddhist psychology, there are said to be six principal consciousnesses, although the Mind Only school asserts a seventh principal consciousness or even an eighth, last one called the "mind basis of all." Generally speaking, however, of body and mind, within mind there are six principal consciousnesses and fifty-one mental factors.

All happiness and suffering is dependent on the attitude, the intention, which is karma. It all depends on what kind of intention we generate. As the great bodhisattva Shantideva mentioned in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

Even those who wish to find happiness and overcome misery
Will wander with no aim nor meaning
If they do not comprehend the secret of the mind—

The paramount significance of Dharma.²

Those who do not know the secret of the mind means those who don't know how all happiness and suffering and all those things I mentioned, enlightenment, hell and so forth, everything is rooted on, everything depends on our own mind, on what kind of attitude we have. Everything depends on the motivation, the attitude, the intention.

If we don't know the secret of the mind, how it is the motivation that produces suffering or happiness, no matter how much we wish to achieve happiness, no matter how much we wish to avoid problems, sufferings, we will continue to wander in samsara, in the six realms, without any purpose. Being under control of this ignorance, sentient beings wander in samsara, having to continuously experience all those sufferings again and again and again.

In the next verse, Shantideva said,

This being so,
I shall hold and guard my mind well.
Without the discipline of guarding the mind,
What use are many other disciplines?³

This is the same as what is explained in the third verse of *Eight Verses of Mind Training*,

Vigilant, the moment a delusion appears in my mind,
Endangering myself and others,
I shall confront and avert it
Without delay.

In the Tibetan there is the word *tsän thab*, which literally means diligently, although there may be different translations. It has the sense of doing something immediately, without delay, maybe also with effort. Then it says to dispel or avert the delusions. How? By practice, by applying the path, by developing both method and wisdom as is explained in the teachings of the *Steps of the Path to Enlightenment*. For example, attaining the renunciation of samsara and bodhicitta and so forth are the method side of the Dharma, whereas the meditation on emptiness is the wisdom side. By realizing emptiness, with that wisdom, we immediately dispel and destroy the delusions.

² Ch. 5, v. 17.

³ Ch. 5, v. 18.

For example, if we see a thief about to enter our house to steal things, even before they get inside, we hit them! Before they have a chance to crush us, to smash us, to blow us up with a bomb or hit us over the head with a hammer—before the thief, the enemy can destroy us—without delay we crush them or destroy them. In the same way, if we allow a delusion to arise, such as anger, it destroys all our merit, the most precious wealth we can have, the cause of all happiness. Therefore as soon as we see a delusion arising, we must avert it without delay. As Shantideva said in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

Doing virtuous actions
Such as charity or making offerings
Accumulated for a thousand eons
Is destroyed by one second of anger arising.⁴

If we delay for even a second trying to destroy the inner enemy, the delusion, anger, there is danger the anger will destroy our merit, destroy our liberation, destroy our enlightenment, destroy our happiness for a thousand eons.

So, this is the most basic and most important way of practicing Dharma—continuously watching our mind and protect it from the delusions that are the cause of all the sufferings.

PRACTICING DHARMA IS THE MOST IMPORTANT EDUCATION

The way we can protect ourselves from suffering and be able to always keep the mind in Dharma is by watching our mind like this. Then, all our actions become Dharma; they become only the cause of happiness—the happiness of future lives, of liberation and of full enlightenment. When we practice Dharma like this, we become a guide for ourselves; we guide ourselves all the way to enlightenment.

If we didn't have ignorance, anger, attachment, and all the delusions, if we were free from all the hallucinations, from all the mistakes of the mind, then we could say, "I want to be myself, I don't want to become any other thing," because we would have already achieved liberation, freedom from the whole cause of suffering, delusions and karma, and there would be no way to ever

⁴ Ch. 6, v. 1.

experience suffering again. And after having become enlightened, having ceased even the subtle obscurations, there would be no cause to ever become a deluded samsaric being again.

However, until we have ceased all the mistakes of the mind, all the gross and subtle obscurations, to say that we want to be ourselves means we don't want to develop our mind, we don't want it to become better. Maybe somebody who doesn't want a better quality of life doesn't know what they are talking about. That is basically due to ignorance. What does "I want to be myself" mean? It means to live with delusions.

So, if we let ourselves live our life without watching the mind, there is no protection for the mind, and we must live our life with delusions, which constantly create the cause of suffering. Then, we will continuously be a samsaric being, continuously creating the causes of suffering and continuously experiencing the results of suffering. This is what happens when we just "be ourselves."

Without Dharma practice, because our mind is always under the control of delusion, it becomes the creator of our own suffering. Because of this, our mind becomes our enemy, the one who creates all our problems.

Therefore, watching the mind, transforming the mind into the three principal aspects of the path, becomes the most important education. It teaches us how to live our life, how to do everything. The best motivation for everything we do is bodhicitta. Living our life with that attitude brings the greatest benefit; it makes life most beneficial for ourselves and for all living beings. With a bodhicitta attitude, every activity we do during twenty-four hours becomes the cause of enlightenment: eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, working, talking, washing and so forth.

If that motivation is not possible, then the next best one is to live with the mind transformed into Dharma, with the renunciation of samsara, with a mind that is free from the attachment clinging to samsara. Then, all our actions become the cause to achieve liberation. For example, doing a breathing meditation with that motivation becomes the cause to achieve liberation for ourselves.

If even that is not possible, we can transform the mind into Dharma with the renunciation of this life, with the mind that is free from attachment clinging to this life, so at least the action of doing breathing meditation becomes the cause for the happiness of future lives.

How we live our life depends on the capacity of our mind, which level of positive motivation we can have that makes our life meaningful, not empty, which it is when our attitude is attachment clinging to this life, the attitude that creates the cause of suffering, particular the suffering of the lower realms. That nonvirtuous worldly mind not only makes our life empty, it is just creating the cause of suffering. Therefore, understanding [the difference between what is Dharma and what is non-Dharma] becomes the most important education on how to live our life, how to do everything.

This year, when I was flying between Hong Kong and London, I was listening to a young Indian man behind me talking to his friend. They talked for the whole flight. I remember when the plane landed and stopped, just before we got off, he told his friend that nobody knows how to do anything. I don't think he was talking about any complicated things. Then I thought, it is not that nobody knows anything, but in another sense what he said was very true, although he possibly wasn't sure of the point he was trying to make. I think he showed he was quite intelligent and that he was not talking about external things but something more than that.

EMPTINESS OF THE E

Everything comes from the mind. Before being taught something, before something is introduced to us by a teacher, we don't know anything. For instance, when we were a child learning the alphabet, before somebody introduced a letter to us, such as the letter E, they were just four lines on a page. There were the lines but they didn't have the appearance of an E. The top line didn't appear as an E, the middle line didn't, the bottom line didn't, the line at the side didn't appear as an E and all the lines together didn't appear as an E. At first, we just saw the design as lines, not as an E.

Why didn't we see that this is an E? Because we didn't have the appearance of this as an E, and this was because our mind hadn't labeled that design as an E and believed it to be that. Later, when somebody told us that this is an E, then, by accepting that, we made up the label "E" and believed in that. Because of that, there is the appearance of an E—that this is E—and we see it

as an E. So there is this whole evolution, starting from our mind making up the label and believing in that. We made up the label because we followed somebody's introduction, and then we believed in that.

We see the lines first and then we make up the label "E." Therefore, on these lines—on this base, on this design—there is no E. Before we label "E" we have to see something first. We have to see something and then to reason in our mind before we choose this particular label "E." The base, the design, is the reason, and we see the base first before seeing the E, which is the label in the evolution.

This proves these lines are not an E. There is no E. We cannot find an E anywhere on these lines because there is no E existing on them. This is similar to what we talked about before with the tea.

The main thing to understand is that the E is not there until our mind makes up the label and believes in it. We have to have a reason, and the reason is seeing something first—the base, the design, the lines—and then, after that, we label it "E." So, the first time we see the base, before deciding to label it "E" there is no E. If there was an E on the design we should be able to find it from the very beginning, at the very same time we see the base. However, this doesn't happen.

And also, if what we saw from the very beginning was an E rather than just the base, there would be no reason to label it "E." It doesn't make sense; there is no reason to label it "E" afterwards, meaning we add the label "E" to what is already an E. Then, what about that label? We would have to label that and then we would have to label the label of the label, so it becomes meaningless.

The design is not the E; we cannot find the E there at all. So, the base—the design—and the label—the E—are different. So now, what is E? The E is what is merely labeled by mind. The reason [we label the E] is because we see the design, these lines. That's what the E is, merely labeled by mind.

One conclusion here is that the E comes from our mind, and the other conclusion to understand is that the E is completely empty of existing from its own side. This is not the way the E normally appears to us. It appears as existing from its own side, but that is a complete

hallucination. That is the false view. The E that is there on the design, the E that appears from its own side, this is the refuting object, this is the hallucination.

With this example we see that there is no E on this base, we cannot find the E anywhere on this design. The other thing is the E came from our own mind; it is a creation of our mind. The third thing is that the E doesn't exist from its own side at all. This emptiness is the ultimate nature of the E, the E that is empty of existing from its own side. So this example leads us to understand these three points.

WE SUFFER WHEN OUR EGO DOESN'T GET WHAT IT WANTS

The other night I put the question the wrong way. I didn't think about my words well, which is often the case! The other night I think I said something like who hurts us, but that was wrong. I should have said who causes others to hurt us. That was the question.

Of course, normally we say it's karma. Those of us who have heard the teachings, whether we really understand karma or not, we say it's karma. But the question is what makes others hurt us. The usual explanation of karma is that what makes others hurt us comes from our own mind. It's our own concept that makes others hurt us.

The essence is that while we follow ego and attachment, clinging to this life, anything the ego doesn't expect or like, anything of the person's actions of body, speech and mind that the ego doesn't expect or want, it labels as bad. Let's say a friend does something that the ego doesn't like. Usually they praise us and the ego, attached to happiness, is pleased. This is what the ego expects. But if that friend does the opposite—criticizing us, disrespecting us, treating us badly physically or verbally—then the ego labels this as “anger” and the friend as not loving us. Because this is not what the ego wants, what our attachment wants, it hurts us. What that friend is doing is hurting our ego, our attachment that clings to the happiness of this life. It hurts the worldly mind. The ego thinks this shouldn't happen.

If we didn't follow the ego, if we didn't follow attachment, if we weren't a friend to ego and attachment, then these things wouldn't hurt us. Because we are a friend to our ego, however, we see the things our friend has done, such as criticizing us, not as harming our ego but as harming us.

So, now we can see that not only does the harm others do to us come from our own mind, but also the big mistake we make is by following the ego and attachment. If we didn't follow the ego, even if these things hurt our ego and attachment, they wouldn't hurt us. When somebody does something contrary to what the ego expects and wants, it becomes a problem because it's something the ego has interpreted as "harmful" and therefore we make up the label "bad" for the person doing it. The ego creates these labels—"harmful situation" and "bad person"—and we have these appearances. And it's similar with our attachment.

Just as a physical action can be interpreted as harmful, what somebody says to us can be seen as harmful. It's just an arrangement of words, just things said in a different way, but one way the ego interprets as good and the other way it interprets as bad or harmful and then sees the person as bad. And mentally, the ego interprets the person's attitude as good or bad. It's just another concept. It sees the person in one way and labels "loving" or "attractive", but something changes and it then labels them as "bad" and "harmful" and they appear to us as bad and harmful.

When we don't analyze what is happening, seeing how all these things are concepts of the ego, of the attachment, just projections, it looks like somebody disrespects us and there is real harm coming from a bad person. It comes purely from outside and has nothing to do with our mind, with our concept. The person's physical action seems to come purely from outside; what they say seems to come purely from outside; their attitude seems to come purely from outside.

This is totally wrong. It is a total hallucination. We are totally mistaken because what appears to us as happening and what we believe to be happening is the complete opposite to what is actually happening. The harm we perceive as coming from outside only comes from our own mind, from our ego and attachment. It's our own concepts that harm us. That is the real essence, without talking about past karma, without talking about long-term causes from this or previous lives, just what's happening right now with our mind, what our mind is creating.

The other proof is that these things—the disrespect, abuse, criticism, how the other person doesn't love us—don't bother us when our mind is free from attachment to this life. What they do to us doesn't hurt us, doesn't hurt this other mind, the one detached from this life. And it doesn't hurt the mind of bodhicitta, the mind cherishing other sentient beings. It doesn't hurt

the mind of compassion, because compassion wishes all sentient beings to be free from suffering and wants to help others, no matter how they treat us.

WE CAN ONLY PRACTICE PATIENCE WITH THOSE WHO HARM US

Especially when we are practicing patience, from the point of view of the patience, this person who treats us badly with their body, speech and mind is the kindest, most precious person we have even found in our life.

No matter how much wealth we have, how much reputation or power we have, how many friends we have, if we do not practice patience there is no peace or happiness in our life. But by practicing patience there is so much peace and happiness in the heart, whether we have a reputation or not, whether we have power or not. Even if we don't have one single friend, when we practice patience there is very deep peace, happiness and joy in our heart. We can't get this deep peace and joy from wealth, power, reputation—even friends—that we get from practicing patience.

But here, we only get to practice patience with this person, the one who doesn't love us. There is no opportunity to practice patience with the buddhas because they never have the slightest anger toward us. Likewise, with our friends, those people who like us, and even strangers—those who don't have anger toward us—we have no opportunity to practice patience with. The only person who gives us the opportunity to practice patience is the person who is angry with us, who doesn't love us.

Without practicing patience there is no way to complete the path to enlightenment, to complete the cessation of all the mistakes of the mind and attain all the realizations. There is no way to free every living being from all the sufferings and lead them to peerless happiness, enlightenment. All these infinite qualities of a buddha to benefit all sentient beings only come from completing the whole path, which means attaining the paramita, the perfection of patience. Patience is an essential aspect of the path to enlightenment, so without completing it, it is impossible for all these things to happen. Therefore, by being angry with us, this person gives us the opportunity to practice and enables us to complete the whole path, to become a buddha and be able to benefit all sentient beings. So this person is giving us all these infinite benefits that come from practicing patience, benefits like the limitless sky.

Because they are extremely kind in this way, we must thank them, we must repay them for what they are giving us, but many universes, many galaxies filled with mountains of gold, diamonds and all sorts of jewels cannot start to repay that kindness. Even if we make offerings to this person of all this, it is nothing compared to the infinite benefit we are receiving from them. They are so kind, so precious. We couldn't get the deep peace and joy we would have from practicing patience even if they were to give us millions of dollars or even if we were to give them millions of dollars. This is nothing compared to the peace and joy that patience brings. We can't get the deep peace we receive from this person from anything else, no matter how many friends or how much wealth or power we have. So this person is very precious.

[All our suffering comes from] following the ego, the self-cherishing thought, the delusions, and by being angry with us, this person is helping us destroy the ego, the delusions. So, how kind they are, how precious. From the point of view of patience, they are the kindest, the most precious. We currently see what they are doing to us, criticizing us or whatever, as bad and we see them as not loving us. We can change how we see that, by seeing how it in no way hurts our patience and in fact helps us develop it, so in that way the person is benefiting us, supporting us in developing our mind toward enlightenment. This person is actually giving us enlightenment. Their actions can never harm us, in the view of patience.

If we follow patience, if we follow loving kindness, compassion, bodhicitta, if we follow the renounced mind, we don't see this person as harming us; we don't see them as bad. We have a completely different view of them when we follow these other positive minds, these peaceful, healthy minds.

Now, it becomes very clear that the harm comes from our own concepts. We believe those concepts and think that the other person is harming us. The harm is a creation of our own mind and so it's the concepts within our own mind that are harming us.

So, I think one aim of this talk has already happened. I'll stop here.

Lecture 7

December 7, 1993

THE BASE IS NOT THE LABEL

There was an interest in reciting the words of the *Essence of Wisdom*, so we will meditate a little bit on its meaning. I used the example yesterday of how one phenomenon, the E, comes from the mind. I explained the gradual evolution of how the E comes into existence, first by seeing the lines, the design, which is the base, and then designating the label “E.” We don’t see the base and the E at the same time. That doesn’t happen, seeing them both together. The design—the lines that are the base—and the E that is the label; those two are different phenomena.

In the same way, the association of body and mind is the base, and the name, “George” or something like that, is the label that is imputed by the mind. Those two are different phenomena. The association of body and mind is not the name “George.” It is not oneness with the name, George.

Maybe I’ll mention this. If the association of body and mind, if that base were the label “George,” then whenever you see the aggregates, the association of body and mind, you would see George at the same time. In that case, the association of body and mind *is* George, the base *is* the label.

However, normally the evolution that makes us decide on that particular label, “George,” is by seeing the particular aggregates, the association of body and mind, that particular shape of body, the face and so forth, and the particular behavior, the person’s way of acting. From that, we decide on the particular label “George,” the particular name “George” comes. Otherwise, there is no reason to give the label “George.” There’s no reason to label “George” because it doesn’t depend on having seen some particular phenomenon first, the particular aggregates, the association of body and mind, which is the base of what is to be labeled “George” but which is not George.

Having seen the base first, we then label it “George.” This is normally how it is—first the base comes in existence and after that the label, such as “George,” comes into existence by depending on the base. That is the reality. That is the evolution of how things come into existence.

If that were not the case, we could call anybody “George.” We could be labeling “George” on any aggregates we see. To call any aggregates, any association of body and mind that we see, “George,” is that OK? Is that OK or not? Is it wrong? Why is wrong? What happens if we call anybody, any aggregates we see, “George”?

Student: Different behavior. People look different and they behave differently.

Rinpoche: Yeah, anyway I’m not going to confuse the point.

Student: Because the base is different, the base that is labeled is different.

Rinpoche: Do you think there is one George or many Georges? What do you say, one George or many Georges?

Student: I think one George.

Rinpoche: You don’t think there are many Georges? Just one George, huh?

Student: There are many parts and every part is George, then everything is George.

Rinpoche: Yeah, that’s right. Even the name is George, even the blood that comes from the body is George. Becomes like that, if the base is George, the aggregates are George, then every single part becomes George, every single part of the body becomes George.

It’s true. When we think like this, that shortcoming, that mistake arises. When George sheds some hair and there are many thousands of hairs on the floor, [if every part were George] there would be many thousands of Georges on the floor. And as I often say, when George buys an air ticket, he would have to buy as many billions of air tickets as there are parts of the association of body and mind that are George.

In the Madhyamaka philosophical teaching on emptiness, there is the analysis of the four points. The very first point is recognizing the refuting object. For example, recognizing the I that does not exist, the false I, is the refuting object. In other words, the I that exists inherently, that is appearing to us as not merely labeled by the mind, that is the refuting object.

So, first we try to recognize the inherently existent I, the I that appears to exist from above the merely labeled I. It is the hallucination we place over the merely labeled I, the brocade that covers the table [that we see as the actual table], or the carpet that covers the floor [that we see as the actual floor]. This inherently existent I is the hallucination on the I that does exist. What is that? It is the merely labeled I. This hallucination, this inherently existence I has been decorated or projected by past wrong concepts, by the ignorance of inherently existence, onto the merely labeled I that does exist.

We must try to recognize this I that appears to be independent. We can use the common term used in the West and call it the “emotional I.” This is the refuting object that is placed over the I that exists—the merely labeled I—that we must see doesn’t exist at all. We must see that it is empty of this inherent existence we think it has.

The absence of this emotional I is the ultimate nature of the I; that is the reality of the I. The term that is used in common language in the West is the “emotional I.” Another one that is used in both the East and the West is the “real I.” As I mentioned yesterday, when we have the appearance of the real I or when we think of the real I, when we talk about the real I, at that time, *exactly* what we are thinking about when common people use the term “real,” what they are exactly pointing to is this emotional I, the I that appears from its own side, the independent I, the inherently existent I.

THERE IS NO E ON THE DESIGN, NO TEA IN THE LIQUID

As I mentioned yesterday, the tea is merely labeled by the mind and the E is merely labeled by the mind. When we think about tea, when we talk about tea, it is the tea that is merely labeled by the mind; there is no other reason. Just because have seen the liquid of the leaves in the container, the tea that is merely labeled by mind, we believe in this; there is no other reason. There is no other reason than that [for us to believe] that there is tea there.

On this liquid there is no tea. This liquid is not tea; this liquid is the *base* to be labeled “tea.” Because the liquid [flavored by] the leaves is the base to labeled “tea” that liquid cannot be the label itself, “tea.” If the liquid were the tea, there would be no need to put the label on it, no reason to label “tea” on the tea. We cannot find tea on this liquid.

It's the same thing with the E. The E is merely labeled by the mind and we believe in that. There is no other reason at all except having seen this design, the lines like this. Because of having seen this design, the mind simply makes up the label "E" and we believe in that. Therefore, these lines, this design, is the base and not the label "E." Base and label are two different phenomena. We cannot find E on this design, on any part of it, on any line or even on the whole design. The E does not exist on the design. There is an E in a book; there is an E in the world, but there is no E on that design, on those lines, either on any of the separate lines or on the group as a whole. But that does not mean that the E doesn't exist. The E exists. There is an E on the blackboard where this design has been drawn but there's no E *on* these lines, this design.

The E and the tea are the same in this. On the leaf-flavored liquid there is no tea. That is the base; it's not the label "tea" and you cannot find tea on there. But the mug contains this liquid. The mug that contains this liquid has tea in it; it has the leaf-flavored liquid in it, but that is the base. It's not the tea, it's the based to be labeled "tea." Therefore, we cannot find tea anywhere on this liquid. The tea doesn't exist; the tea is not there. And when I say "there" I don't mean there, in the mug, but there on the liquid.

That might be hard to understand. You might find it a little extreme saying "on the liquid there's no tea," or that the tea-flavored liquid is the base to be labeled "tea." Anyway, I think maybe I should first introduce this, then it might help.

First, [when the water is boiled with tea leaves], the liquid that is flavored by the tea leaves is what we come to call "tea." This is the base, that which we then label. From this we can understand that the base is not the label, the liquid is not the "tea." Just from that first explanation, we can get the idea that there is no tea also *on* the base. I'll introduce this first and then you can get the idea.

I'll repeat. What makes us decide on the particular label "tea"? The reason is that we have seen a particular phenomenon first, the leaf-flavored liquid. You see, there's a definite reason for this that makes our mind decide on the label "tea." Before we label it, there's a reason, and that is the base. Reason and base are the same.

Now, concentrate. If this base is already the tea, then the very first thing we see is the tea, not the base. It's not the base of the tea, it's the tea. Is this labeled or not? Put it this way. What is called "tea"—this is a name, and the name has to come from the mind. So, the tea that we first see, without depending on seeing the base first, what is called "tea" is the name; it had to come from the mind. It's logical. If we see the tea first without seeing the base, what makes us decide on the particular label "tea"? There is no reason for it.

Now you can analyze this point. Without seeing the base first, there is no reason that makes us decide on this particular label "tea." According to the view that this liquid base *is* tea, that would mean that we have to see the tea from the very beginning without depending on having seen the base first. When we check this logic we'll see there is no reason to make us decide on this particular label "tea." This is the shortcoming of thinking that the label is the base. It becomes strange, because if we don't rely on a particular base to place the label, then we can place it on any base. We can label "tea" on any object at all, because it does not depend on having seen a particular object first. When we believe we see the tea from the very beginning, this mistake arises. Do you get the idea?

OK, now I'll give you another example. What happens if you call everybody "husband"?
[Rinpoche and students laugh]

Student: [inaudible]

Rinpoche: Why can't you? What makes you decide on that particular label "husband" or "wife"? What makes the mind decide on that particular label?

Student: The presence of the object.

Rinpoche: The presence of the object? Any presence of any object? Any object that is present? This one or that one?

Student: I wouldn't call them all "husband" but I would give them all a name, a label.

Rinpoche: You would give them all a label, but you wouldn't call them all "husband." Why not?
[Rinpoche and students laugh]

Student: Because of a convention, a concept. I am conditioned to believe a certain object is a husband and another object is a clock.

Rinpoche: Let's say there's a statue of a husband and there's a husband. Now, you don't call the statue of the husband "husband," do you?

Student: Well, I was just thinking. I would probably say, "That's my husband," but then I would have to remember, "Oh no, it's not. It's a statue."

Rinpoche: That's a good explanation! OK, I'll put this one slightly differently. There's a statue of the husband. This statue of the husband is therefore not the husband, right? So, in the same way, the husband's body is not the husband. The husband's mind is not the husband. The association of the body and mind of the husband is not the husband. The liquid of the tea is not tea. Just as the aggregates of the husband are not husband, so the liquid of the tea is not tea, right? You understand?

Is there any phenomenon that is not in your mind? Do you get angry with anybody?

Student: Do I get angry with anybody? Yes. I get angry with Peter. [Rinpoche and students laugh]

Rinpoche: Do you get angry with somebody who is outside your mind or somebody who is inside your mind?

Student: Inside my mind.

Rinpoche: You get angry with somebody who is in your mind! Why do you keep that person in your mind? [Rinpoche and students laugh]

Student: Stupidity! [Rinpoche laughs]

Rinpoche: Where did you fly from this time?

Student: Where did I come from? I'm Australian.

Rinpoche: Australia. How was the journey in your mind?

Student: How was the journey in my mind from Australia to here?

Rinpoche: How many hours did you fly in your mind?

Student: Fourteen hours, I think.

Rinpoche: You flew fourteen hours in your mind?

Student: Yeah. I think I did fly fourteen hours in my mind.

Rinpoche: Are there many airports in your mind?

Student: My *idea* of an airport is in my mind.

Rinpoche: Your idea of an airport? You have the idea; you have the visualization of the airport in your mind, but you don't have the airports in your mind.

Student: The physical places?

Rinpoche: Yeah, the physical places.

Student: No.

Rinpoche: You don't have them in your mind. Thank you very much. Why?

Student: Why what?

Rinpoche: The physical airports that are not in your mind, why? Why aren't they in your mind?

Student: Because they exist outside of me.

Rinpoche: But they should be inside you because the person you got angry with was inside you, was inside your mind. That person you got angry with is in your mind but only the airports are outside. Only the airports?

OK, now the main question is this. The main point we are trying to understand is that when we see the husband, do we see the aggregates, the association of body and mind, first? Or to make it simpler, we'll just say "body." Do we see the body first or do we see the husband first?

Student: Probably the husband.

Rinpoche: You see the husband first before seeing the body of the husband?

Student: I know logically it's the body and the mind that's first and then the label on top, but I think my mind would see the label first.

Rinpoche: OK now, logically you see the aggregates first and then you see the husband later, right?

Student: I think that's what the problem with my mind is, that I actually see the label first. I see what I believe first. I think that's the problem.

Rinpoche: OK. So what you're saying is that seeing what appears to the mind, seeing the husband first, that's the problem, that's the mistake?

Student: Yeah.

Rinpoche: So logically, we don't see the body, the aggregates first, and then husband after?

Student: Yes, exactly. It's like ...

Rinpoche: Logically, which way do we see it? Seeing the husband first or the aggregates first and then after that the husband?

Student: The aggregates first, logically.

Rinpoche: Logically, yeah. So we see it that way?

Student: Uh, huh. If we are being logical! [Rinpoche laughs]

Rinpoche: Anyway, what you are saying is correct in regards the evolution. As I explained, the whole evolution is: before seeing that this is an E, it depends on having the appearance of this E, and that depends on the mind labeling that this is an “E” and believing it, and *that* depends on having seen this design. So, there’s a whole scientific or logical process. But it’s so subtle.

[Because it’s so subtle,] when we do not analyze, when we are not aware, it appears to our perception as if we are seeing the E first. It looks like we are seeing the husband first; it looks like we are seeing the father or the mother first, and then, after that, seeing the body. It looks like we are seeing the tea first, and then later the base. It looks like that. But it only looks like that in the view of the hallucinated mind, in the view of the mind when it is not analyzing, when we are not aware of the reality of the phenomena. It looks like seeing the E first, seeing the husband first. It looks like that but it’s not.

How we see it in reality is: *first* we see the aggregates of body and mind—this particular body and mind that has this particular shape and this particular behavior—*then*, by seeing this first, that particular body shape and behavior reminds us of the label “husband,” of the connection there is between us and that person. *Then*, that becomes the reason to choose the particular label “husband.” *Then*, after we see it and after we put the label on it, we have faith in the label. If we put the label on the base but there was no faith in the label, there wouldn’t be the appearance of husband. So, not only do we need to have the label, we also have to have faith in the label. *Then*, there’s appearance. Then we see the appearance as the husband.

This is how the evolution actually happens but this process is so subtle, so fast or so subtle, that we are not aware of it. It appears that we are seeing the husband first.

It got kind of elaborate, but the point I was trying to make was that if the aggregates of the husband *were* the husband, the label “husband,” that would mean that what we see initially has to be the husband—the label “husband”—not the base, the aggregates. In that case, we have no reason to label “husband” because it does not depend on seeing the aggregates first. It doesn’t

depend on seeing that particular shape and collection to be labeled first. If that were so, anybody, any object we see we could label “husband.” Labeling would not rely on having a reason based on a particular object. If you can understand this point well, that the base is not the label, then that is the last point I was trying to say.

I think it may be better to have some empty tea. [Rinpoche and students laugh]

SEARCHING FOR THE TABLE

I often use the example of the table, so this might help a little bit. We have to understand subtle dependent arising and to recognize what is the refuting object—that which is empty, that which is the ultimate nature of the table. Every single atom is like this, so I’ll start with the table. The table that exists is what is merely labeled by the mind. What *is* the table? The table that exists is what is merely labeled by the mind, relating to this phenomenon here that does the function of holding things up, of allowing things to be placed on top of. That is the table that *exists*. That is reality, the truth.

The table that *doesn’t* exist is the table in our perception, in our appearance, appearing from its own side or not merely labeled by the mind. That is the false view, the false table, the table that does not exist. That table is completely empty there, from where it is appearing. There is not one single atom of that table which is table. Every single atom of that table is not table, which means even the merely labeled table.

The table that *exists* is what is merely labeled by the mind, and the table that *doesn’t* exist is that which appears to us as not merely labeled by the mind, as existing from its own side. First, we should know the explanation of how the table exists and how it doesn’t exist, what is the truth and what is the falsity of the table.

Next, on this phenomenon that functions to put things on the top of, which is the base to be labeled “table,” we cannot find *either* a merely labeled table *or* a real table, a table that appears from its own side, one that is not merely labeled by the mind. Besides not being able to find a real table, we can’t even find even a merely labeled table on this base.

So, now we analyze. Every atom of the table is not table, which means the merely labeled table. Even the parts of the table are not table. Each part of the table is not table: this leg is not table, this leg is not table, the top is not table. Not even the whole collection together is table.

First, let's make this clear. Even the whole group is not table but still it's a merely labeled table. "General table" means the merely labeled table. Even the whole group of the table—all the parts of the table together—is not table because that is the base to be labeled "table." It's clear even from the term we use, "parts *of* the table" that the parts are not table, otherwise we would be saying "table of the table." Even the language we use—"parts *of* the table"—shows these are two different things, not separate but different.

An example I often use is the car. If the parts of the table were the table, then the parts of the car should be the car. If that were so, if we had just one wheel, we would have the car and we should be able to transport people in it. We should be able to enjoy sightseeing or going to the beach in our car by just having one piece, just a wheel or another piece of the car. That one part could carry our surfbird to the beach. Surfbird? [*Students: Surfboard.*] Surfboard. Among the students, the Australians especially should be able to carry the surfboard on that wheel and drive to beach.

Anyway, it's clear that the parts of the car are not car. In the same way, the parts of the table are not table, and even the *group* of the parts of the table all together is not table. Why? Because that is the base to be labeled "table." The group of the parts of the table is the base of the table. When we say "the base *of* the table" it clearly shows from the language that we are talking about two different phenomena, not separate phenomena but two different phenomena. Otherwise, as I mentioned before, if that base were the table, then it would become the "table of the table," which doesn't make any sense. It shows these are two different phenomena. So first, make that clear.

Just from this explanation, it should be clear that there is no table on this base. When we reach this point, in our mind, there should always be some idea there is no table on this base. Then, the second analysis can be done again. If we do the second analysis, asking "Where is table?" we are talking about the merely labeled table, we're not talking about the inherently existent table. We're not asking, "Where is the inherently existent table? Where is the independent table?" We're not checking that way at this moment, just about a table that is a merely labeled table, without

specifying the appearance of the table that we have, just a merely labeled table. So, if we do the second analysis, asking “Where is the table?”, wherever we point we cannot find it, either within the parts or as a whole.

That doesn’t mean that there is no table. Because we cannot find the table on this phenomenon, the base of the table, that does not mean the table does not exist in this hall. There is a table in this hall. We can see a table in this hall. How many tables are there in this hall? [*Student*: Only one big one.] One big one, and many small ones? [*Rinpoche* laughs] So, there is no table on this base of the table, but there is a table in this hall. There is no other reason why we should say there is a table in this hall and believe it, *except* that there is this base that you can put things on top of.

So now, after doing this analysis clearly showing there is no table on this base—that none of the parts or the collection of parts is the table—but there is a table in this hall, after that analysis, do you still find the table in your perception, kind of stuck there? Do you still find there’s something stuck on this base or not? Does it appear to you like that? [*Student*: inaudible] After having done this analysis, when you look at the perception, is there is still a table stuck on the base? [*Student*: Yes.] [*Rinpoche* and students laugh]

Are you are actually saying “Yes” or did I force you to say “Yes”? [*Rinpoche* and students laugh] [*Student*: It’s definitely stuck.] Did you try blowing it? Anyway, I’m joking.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING THE OBJECT OF REFUTATION

It depends on the individual person; it’s not the same for everybody. It depends on a person’s state of mind. Some you have just the appearance of the base because of the analysis we have done, and for some, when you look at the appearance of the table, how it appears to you, there is still a table stuck on the base. The table that is stuck on the base, indifferentiable from the base, is the refuting object, the object of refutation. That is the false view of the table. The object to be refuted, the inherently existent table, the independent table, is the hallucination. That means this appearance—the table stuck on the base—is empty right there. This is the refuting object, the hallucination.

This emptiness is what we have to realize. When we realize the emptiness of the table that

appears to us stuck on the base, appearing from its own side, at that time we are realizing the ultimate nature of the table, the emptiness of the table.

This way of analyzing is helpful. First, I'll mention this. The reason why, even after this analysis, that the appearance is still there of the table stuck on the base, why nothing has touched this false view, this hallucination, is because we have not done the analysis correctly. Because of that, nothing has been touched. We have not started the analysis by recognizing the very first important point, the refuting object, the inherently existing table which is the object of ignorance. We haven't overcome the concept of true existence, the ignorance, which is the hallucination, which doesn't exist. We didn't make the analysis *on* that, searching whether this table really exists in the way it appears to us or not. Where is this? Where is this? We didn't search each piece, each atom, each part, even the whole group of parts to see whether the table exists as it appears, from its own side, independent or from above the base.

Not even the whole group of the parts is this. The way it appears to us exists nowhere. Another way of saying this is that it doesn't exist separately from this base. Having discovered that this table that we see on the base is completely empty, that it doesn't exist either way, we realize this table appearing from above the base is completely empty. Not even a single atom of it exists at all. When we realize this, we have realized the emptiness of the table, the ultimate nature of the table.

After realizing that the table we see on the base, appearing from its own side—the hallucination—is completely empty, completely nonexistent, as a result we realize that it is not that the table doesn't exist. What we discover as a result is that the table *definitely* exists. How does it exist? By being merely labeled by the mind. It is merely labeled by the mind, relating to this base that functions as something that can be used to put things on.

With that understanding we realize the conventional truth of the table. First, we realize the absolute truth, and second, we realize how the table exists, being merely labeled by the mind, relating to the base that is able to do the function of having things out on top. This is realizing the subtle dependent arising of the table.

The Tibetan term for conventional truth is *kun dzob den pa*. It actually translates as the “truth for the all-obscuring mind.” This all-obscuring mind is ignorance, the concept of true existence. The

function of this mind is to obscure us from seeing the ultimate nature of the object, therefore this ignorance is labeled “all-obscuring mind.”

It is true for that mind because that mind sees the object. Even from this explanation, we can get some idea that the table is not on the base, that first we see the base of the table which does the function of allowing things to be put on top. Because of the reason of having seen this, our mind makes up the label “table.” Even from this explanation, we can get some idea that there is no table there.

THE MIDDLE WAY BETWEEN THE TWO EXTREMES

In reality, when we analyze what the table is, it becomes extremely subtle. It is not that there is no table there, that the table doesn't exist, but it is *like* it doesn't exist. This is the Middle Way view, the view of the Madhyamaka, and in particular of the Prasangika Madhyamaka. This is their view of how the table exists, the subtle dependent arising.

Of the four schools of Buddhist philosophy, the Madhyamaka, [which is the most subtle] has two subschools: Prasangika and Svatantrika. With the Prasangika's view of how a thing exists by being a subtle dependent arising, we see how the table exists, how what the table is, is extremely subtle. It is not that it doesn't exist but it's *like* it doesn't exist.

This is an extremely delicate point, and it is so easy to fall into either extreme: the extreme of eternalism, thinking that the thing exists from its own side, or the extreme of nihilism, thinking that it doesn't exist at all. Now you can get some idea of how subtle it is. We can so easily slip from believing it exists from its own side to believing it doesn't exist at all, slipping from eternalism to nihilism.

Now here, it's not that it doesn't exist. It exists but it is empty. It exists being merely labeled by the mind. Because of that, it's empty from its own side. In that way, the way the table exists is the unification of emptiness and subtle dependent arising. This level of dependent arising is the most subtle, existing in mere name [depending on the base.]

This is what the *Heart of Wisdom Sutra* says, “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” So, while the

table is empty of existing from its own side, it exists by being merely labeled by the mind. Being merely labeled by the mind, it is therefore completely empty of existing from its own side.

Analyzing like this, it makes sense that there can be no form other than emptiness and no emptiness other than form. Applying that to the table, there is no table other than emptiness and there is no emptiness other than the table. The two truths of the table are unified. This line from the *Heart Sutra* shows the middle way, which is devoid of the two extremes, the extremes of nihilism and eternalism. So, you can now see the huge difference between how the table exists and how it normally appears to us and how we believe it to exist when we don't analyze the object, when our mind is not aware of the reality of the table. There is the completely false view of the table appearing like this, from its own side, and this is what we believe. The reality of the table is never like that.

When we analyze how the table exists by being merely labeled by mind, that gives us the idea that there is no table on this base. If we could find the table on this base *as* it appears to us, if that were true, that would mean that the table existed from its own side. That would mean it was an independent, truly existent table, and when we search, we should be able to find the independent or inherently existing table on the base. But when we search the table that appears as an independent, inherently existent table, analyzing whether it really exists or not, we cannot find it. We cannot even find the merely labeled table. What exists is the merely labeled table. That merely labeled table is the table that we can use to put things on, but even that we cannot find on the base.

How can we find it? How can we find the table that is real, that exists inherently on the base? There is no way we can find a table that doesn't exist. There's no way to find this on the base. Therefore, we cannot find this table either on the base or separate from the base. We cannot find this table, the table that appears this way to us either on the base or separately from the base. It is nowhere; it is completely nonexistent. We cannot find the merely labeled table on this base, but we can find it in this room, in this hall, in this place where there is this base of the table. We can find the merely labeled table in the world where there is the base of the table. The conclusion is that we cannot find the table on the base, *but* we can find the table in this room, in this hall.

PHENOMENA, HARM—EVERYTHING COMES FROM THE MIND

One way to meditate on this is to see how everything comes from the mind. This table comes from the mind; it is a creation of mind. Because this table is merely labeled by the mind it comes from the mind. Because the tea is merely labeled by the mind, it comes from the mind. When somebody harms us with their body, speech and mind, the harm they give us comes from our mind because it is merely labeled by the mind.

So, one meditation is like that, by doing the analysis as I have explained with those examples, the husband, the E, and so forth, how they come from the mind. We can use the same process using similar objects, seeing how they have all come from the mind because they have been merely labeled by the mind. The I is merely labeled by the mind. There is the appearance of the I and we believe that appearance, but that appearance comes from the mind. In the same way, the appearance of the aggregates comes from the mind; the appearance of the body comes from the mind; the appearance of the mind comes from the mind.

Everything comes from the mind, the whole thing, down to the atoms and the split seconds of consciousness, all these appearances come from the mind. Form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects—every object of our senses that we are now experiencing comes from the mind. If the mind didn't label those sense objects, we wouldn't experience them. For example, if the mind doesn't label "Kathmandu" or "Kopan," if there were no mind labeling "Kathmandu" or "Kopan," then would be no appearance of Kopan or Kathmandu. Then we wouldn't see Kathmandu or Kopan. If no mind labeled "Kathmandu" or "Kopan," there would be no appearance. Nobody would see Kathmandu; nobody would see Kopan. Like this, the whole thing comes from the mind.

There's a general way to think about this and there's a way to relate it to ourselves, to our own mind. If our own mind didn't label "Kathmandu" or "Kopan," there would no appearance to us that this is Kathmandu, that this is Kopan. We wouldn't see that this is Kathmandu or Kopan. All appearances come from our mind.

We can practice mindfulness like this. During our meditation session or while working or walking, all the time our senses are contacting forms, sounds, smells and tastes. So, we meditate on how these things come from our own mind. How? We can analyze and see that whatever object of the senses we are experiencing has come from our mind by labeling. This includes

friend, enemy and stranger, the objects of our attachment, anger and ignorance. All these things that appear to our senses have come from our mind by labeling. This is a very effective way, a very scientific, logical way to do this meditation. This is the reality. We are practicing mindfulness according to how things really exist.

The conclusion is this. Normally, in our daily life, we believe that problems come from the outside, and we put the blame on the outside, we put the blame on somebody else. As long as we *believe* the problem is coming from the outside, it really becomes a problem for us, it makes the problem bigger. That concept of believing any problem or any happiness comes from the outside becomes the fundamental problem in our life.

Because of that, in order to try to stop suffering and to achieve happiness, we put our effort into the outside, rather than trying to stop the suffering and achieve the happiness that arises from within our own mind, the actual evolution. When we believe that [our suffering and happiness] has nothing to do with our mind, with our karma, our positive or negative intention, which is also our mind; when we believe that everything comes from the outside, then all our efforts become futile. Wherever we put our effort also becomes wrong.

This question might arise. If most people put all their effort into achieving happiness and avoiding suffering in external things, which is futile, why do some people have success? This question may arise. Anyway, *I've* made the question! The success does not come from our present effort. I'll give the example of the person who, with attachment and anger, becomes rich by stealing other people's wealth. You can understand from this example that person has to put effort externally into stopping suffering and achieving happiness, and by stealing has become wealthy and gained a degree of comfort. However, the main cause of this is not because they have stolen. This is what common people in the world would see as the main cause, just that, but although it might be a condition, it's not the cause of their wealth and comfort, something which is desirable for them. The main cause is a positive action done in the past. The cause is completely something else, not the negative action of stealing, done with attachment, anger or ignorance. They now have wealth, comfort, and many desirable things because in the past they have done a positive action of making charity to others or making offerings to holy objects, or having practiced rejoicing and so forth. The main cause of this person's comfort and wealth comes from their good karma, their previous positive actions, their intention.

All this comfort and wealth comes from that person's mind, from past positive intentions, good karma. But people who do not understand Dharma, people who do not understand karma—what is the cause of happiness and suffering—whose minds are completely dark, are unable to see there is some other cause created in the past; they cannot see how the main cause has come from within the mind. Ordinary people who do not understand Dharma always mistake the condition for the main cause. They always believe the condition that comes from outside is the main cause.

They don't attempt [to see any further]. They just live on with that belief, believing that the conditions are the main cause, that happiness and problems come from outside. They live their life with that wrong view. That's why, even though at the beginning a business might have some success, sooner or later it collapses. Yesterday, the businessperson was a millionaire; today they have become a beggar, not even knowing how to pay the rent or buy food. Even day-to-day living becomes a concern.

Although they start to experience more and more problems, they have no idea that those problems come from the mind. Because they can't see that happiness and suffering—everything—come from the mind, they don't do anything to purify the cause of suffering, which is the mind. They don't do anything to purify the negativities already created that are there as seeds on their mindstream or try to abstain from creating further causes of suffering, failure, sickness, relationship problems, and so forth.

When we live with a Dharma mind, we try to purify the negative karma that has already been created and we try to stop experiencing the problem from within our mind by abstaining from having nonvirtuous intentions. Instead we live our life with a positive attitude, with a Dharma mind, keeping our attitude one of Dharma, transforming our mind into the cause of happiness. One way of saying this is that we stop the problems of life and obtain happiness and peace by transforming our attitude, our mind, through meditation.

The common people with no understanding of Dharma at all—those who really don't know karma, what is the cause of happiness or suffering—don't know how to live their life, how to do business. They just live their life by living on their past good karma. All the comfort, success, wealth, reputation, power and so forth that they experience comes from past good karma. [They aren't creating the causes now.] It's like they have done some work in the past and earned some

money and now they are just living on that money. Each time they spend some money, their bank balance diminishes; it never increases. They are enjoying the results of their past work, but that will get less and less and then run out.

So, those who do not understand Dharma, who do not understand karma, who do not practice meditation or do not practice Dharma, are just living on some past merit that they have accumulated. They are not creating any more merit by developing the mind, by doing positive actions for other sentient beings or making holy objects. Having some success is just because of some past life's good karma, not from this present life's negative action, like stealing. That can be a condition, but it is not the main cause.

This is a very important meditation. How everything comes from the mind itself becomes a meditation on patience. This mindfulness helps calm the mind; it stops anger arising for the enemy, for somebody who doesn't love us or who harms us. This mindfulness itself becomes a practice of patience, a meditation we can do in daily life, while we are working, walking or eating. Doing this meditation becomes like watching television twenty-four hours a day, because we can understand that what we see, what we hear, what we smell, what we taste, what we touch, all these things come from our mind. Even when we see how people react, what they think of us, how they speak to us, how they behave, the whole thing becomes exactly like watching a movie, a story printed on film that is projected through a projector onto a screen. Here, everything is a projection or creation of our mind.

This is one way of understanding how everything comes from the mind. This movie we are watching becomes very interesting. Whatever we see, whatever we hear, whatever we touch, whatever we smell, whatever we taste, everything that our senses contact, comes from the mind. We are not looking at something that comes from the outside; we were looking at something that comes from our own mind. This is the reality. Then, it goes even deeper than that!

RECOGNIZING THE HALLUCINATIONS AS A HALLUCINATION

The reason why I brought all this up is because this becomes kind of like a spider web, but the main thing is to practice mindfulness in this way. That is one thing. Then, along with this, as I mentioned before, with these many examples, we can check what is false and what is truth in a different way.

All the sense objects, including I, action, object, just as we see the table on the base, everything that appears from its own side, we first look at our own perception of how things appear to us—how form appears to us, how sound appears to us, how smell, taste, and tangible objects appear to us—we analyze that appearance, that perception, how things appear to us. Do they appear as merely labeled or not merely labeled? This is the question we ask ourselves.

Then, anything that does not appear as merely labeled by the mind, such as the table on the base, that is a hallucination. All these things that are merely labeled by mind are completely covered by the hallucination. So, then we practice mindfulness. While we are eating, walking, working, during meditation, and especially at break time, we practice mindfulness by recognizing the hallucinations as hallucinations.

By practice mindfulness, the way that this I, the subject, appears—appearing to exist from its own side—is the hallucination. When we look at other people, they also appear to exist from their own side, not merely labeled by mind, but that is also a hallucination. So, the way that form, sound, smell, taste—everything—appear is a hallucination. Just constantly practicing mindfulness on how all these are hallucinations is a very powerful meditation.

When we practice mindfulness like this, seeing everything as a hallucination, as a result, the understanding that can naturally come in our heart is that everything is empty. We are putting effort into seeing everything as a hallucination but the understanding that comes is emptiness, how the I is empty, the action is empty, everything is empty, only emptiness.

This way of practicing mindfulness becomes an extremely powerful meditation on emptiness, while at the same time calming our mind, making it very peaceful and tranquil because it cuts off all the superstitions. It cuts off all the busy thoughts, the expectations, the worries, the fear, the anxiety, all these things.

That is one way to do it. The other mindfulness meditation we can do in our daily life is to be mindful of dependent arising. When we are walking on the road, we should be aware that this I that appears as something real, something we can find, is a hallucination. When we are walking, the action of walking appears as not merely labeled by the mind, as something real. And the road, the ground, we are walking on, which is hard, appears as not merely labeled by mind, as

appearing to exist from its own side. While we are walking, as we step on the road, especially if it's hard like a concrete road, it seems very real, not merely labeled by the mind. We should be aware that all these are hallucinations.

The way the ground appears to us, as something solid from its own side, not merely labeled, is completely contradictory to reality. When we practice this mindfulness of seeing everything as a hallucination, the idea of emptiness comes, the idea that all this is empty. It becomes a very enjoyable practice, a very wonderful practice.

ONLY EMPTINESS CAN CUT THE ROOT OF SAMBARA

Even just with the thought, even just generating faith in emptiness, purifies heavy negative karmas like committing the ten nonvirtuous actions or the five uninterrupted negativities of having killed our father, mother or an arhat, having caused a buddha to bleed and having caused disunity among the Sangha. It is said in the sutra teachings that even those five uninterrupted negativities are purified by having faith in emptiness. So here, we not only have faith in emptiness, but also by meditating on it we are actually experiencing emptiness. Each second of meditation on emptiness becomes like an atomic bomb to purify all that unbelievable negative karma.

There are so many benefits mentioned that show us what a powerful purification practice meditating on emptiness is, because the wisdom realizing emptiness is the only way to cut ignorance, the root of samsara, the root of the whole of suffering and its causes, delusion and karma. It is the only way to directly eliminate all this; there is no way other than the wisdom realizing emptiness. Even if we don't know what it is talking about! [Rinpoche and students laugh]

The more we recite the teachings on emptiness, such as the *Heart of Wisdom Sutra*, even if we don't understand what it's talking about, just to read and recite the teachings over and over becomes an unbelievably powerful purification. It plants the seed, the imprint, on the mind and that leads to a realization of emptiness.

Because everything the Buddha talked about is unmistakable, generally any of the Buddha's teaching we study, even if we don't understand them, just by studying them or reading them over

and over, that leaves an imprint on the mind again and again and that becomes the preparation to sooner or later realize emptiness. In this way, we are able to cut the root of the whole of suffering.

This is the only way we can achieve liberation from samsara; otherwise, there is no other way. And similarly, to remove all the obscurations of the mind and attain enlightenment so we can liberate other sentient beings. We need this to directly remove all the delusions, all the obscurations. Then, in the Mahayana, not only do we need emptiness to directly eliminate all the obscurations, the mistakes of the mind, we also need renunciation and bodhicitta. They help but they cannot purify all the gross and subtle delusions. That only comes from the wisdom realizing emptiness.

I'll stop here.

Lecture 8

December 8, 1993

BEFORE WE LABEL A SOUND, WE MUST HEAR IT

[When we hear a sound, we give it] a particular label: good sound, bad sound, interesting sound, uninteresting sound, boring sound and so forth. There is a reason why we decide on a particular label. First of all, there is the sound, and then there is what kind of quality of sound. The reason has to come before the label is made. The reason is what the ear sense hears; it is the object of the ear sense. So, in order to label “sound” and whatever kind of quality sound, we have to hear something first. Do you understand? Unless we hear something first, how are we going to judge? There is no reason.

I mentioned about labels last night—over and over, a hundred times, until you got annoyed, until it became a pain in your heart or in your ear. [Rinpoche and students laugh] I repeated over and over, a thousand times, that before the mind puts the label “sound” and what quality of sound, we have to hear something. The ear sense has to contact the object, the sound. Because of that contact, which comes first, we say we heard the sound. Then we add the thought that it is an interesting or uninteresting sound and so forth.

If the ear sense hearing the object and us labeling the object “sound” occurred at the same time, there would be no reason to label “sound” on the sound. We have to hear the sound in order to label it. If our ear sense didn’t make contact with the object, the sound, there is no way we could label it as “sound.” We couldn’t say we heard a sound because there would be nothing to make the mind decide on the label “sound” and to call it a sound. Do you understand? The base is what the ear sense hears and that is what makes our mind decide on the label “sound” and whatever quality of sound it is.

So now we can see that although sound looks like it comes from the outside, it is actually merely labeled by the mind. Sound comes from our own mind. OK? That is very interesting. Now we can see how even sound is empty of existing from its own side. Why? Because it is merely labeled by the mind.

There is the merely labeled I, the merely labeled action of hearing and the merely labeled sound. Then, it’s the same thing with smell and the rest of the senses. This comes back to the

mindfulness meditation on how everything is merely labeled by the mind, how subject, action and object are merely labeled by the mind.

When we say things such as subject, action and object exist by being merely labeled by the mind, this is a way of meditating on subtle dependent arising, the extremely subtle way that things exist. As I mentioned last night, there is nothing other than this extremely subtle way things exist, being merely labeled by mind; there is nothing even slightly more than that.

IN AND OUT OF MEDITATION RECOGNIZE THE HALLUCINATION AS A HALLUCINATION

Today, we can think like that. During our meditation as well as at other times such as when we do a walking meditation, we can look at everything with the mindfulness that everything we see is the refuting object, the mindfulness that everything is the hallucination that our mind places over the merely labeled I, the hallucination that it places over the merely labeled action and the hallucination it places over the merely labeled object. All the phenomena that we see are covered by this hallucination. We can practice that awareness.

We are not pretending that something which is a truth is a hallucination; we are looking at something that is false in order to realize that it is false and we see that which is truth as the truth. This is the biggest problem, not having realized the truth as truth, not having realized the false as false and *then* believing the false as truth and believing truth as nonexistent. Because of this ignorance, this wrong belief, we get reborn and we die. Our mind is completely overwhelmed, completely intoxicated by this ignorance.

Another way of putting it is that as long as we believe what appears to this ignorance is true, it is like from beginningless lifetimes we have been taking drugs, nonstop, every second, always living in a hallucination and never touching reality, never grounded. We are completely trapped in the hallucination, believing all the false appearances to be true, and from that come all the unbearable sufferings of the six realms. Out of this hallucinated state come all our human problems, all this world's problems.

Therefore, if we wish for peace and happiness for ourselves, to end all the problems and achieve ultimate peace, liberation, we must do something with the hallucinated mind, we must overcome it by realizing emptiness. If we want more, if we want to benefit other sentient beings, to liberate

them from all their sufferings, all their hallucinations, all the wrong concepts that come from ignorance and bring them to everlasting happiness, liberation, then we ourselves must have the wisdom that realizes the ultimate nature. To realize the truth, we first need to recognize what is false; we need to recognize the false view. Only through that can we see what is the truth.

So, either while we are doing a sitting or walking meditation or at any other time, during these days it is very good, especially at break time, to practice the mindfulness of these things. One thing is practicing mindfulness of the hallucination we place over the merely labeled I, the merely labeled action, the merely labeled object and so on. Then, when we think of the hallucination as a hallucination, as I mentioned last night, the result that comes is the reality, the truth that all phenomena are empty. As I mentioned last night, each time we do this, it is like an atomic bomb. It purifies an unbelievable amount of obscurations, of past lives' negative karmas, making us closer to liberation and to full enlightenment.

USING CRITICISM TO REALIZE EMPTINESS

While we are walking, it is good to keep silence. That allows us to be able to do the meditation. But if we could watch the mind, if we could really concentrate, it wouldn't matter if we talked or not. Even if we talked all day long, it wouldn't matter because the talking itself would be a meditation. We would be talking but at the same time constantly watching what we are doing and labeling it. Whether we talk for one minute or for twenty-four hours, our mind is checking, "I am now talking," or "I have been talking so many hours!" Until we finish, until the mind melts and the body melts! [Rinpoche and students laugh] Anyway, I'm joking.

When we are aware of the labeling as we are talking, the whole thing becomes a meditation, a very beautiful, very profound meditation. While we are talking with another person, if we are practicing mindfulness like this, it becomes very interesting. During that time, the other person, if they have clairvoyance, can say many bad things about us, criticizing us in the worst way, but because we are meditating on emptiness, it becomes very helpful. It can be like training, like the training a soldier does before going to war. No matter how badly the other person puts us down, it doesn't bother us because we are practicing mindfulness of dependent arising, how everything is a dependent arising, especially subtle dependent arising, being merely labeled by the mind, which means that all those things are empty of existing from their own side.

Therefore, nothing that person says hurts us, even if they say the heaviest things about our mistakes. Nothing bothers us while we are meditating on looking at the false view or dependent arising, seeing how all this comes from our own mind. At that time, we are not following ignorance, we are not following the ego, we are not following attachment, therefore what they are saying doesn't bother us at all.

It is especially useful to know that by this training we are developing our understanding of emptiness and getting closer to ceasing all the gross and subtle obscurations, meaning we are getting closer to attaining liberation and enlightenment. What we are doing has all these benefits, and we can be assured that we will one day realize emptiness. But the important thing is that we should use what we are learning about emptiness in our everyday life. When something bad happens, when we meet difficult circumstance, when somebody criticizes us or gets angry at us, when we meet any undesirable conditions, we should be able to use our understanding of emptiness.

In this way, it becomes extremely practical. This is what we need to do immediately. Even though it has all these long-term benefits, in our day-to-day life we should use the teachings on emptiness that we have learned like taking medicine when we have a headache. In meditation sessions we meditate on it, and in between sessions, when we meet adverse circumstances and life becomes very difficult, when there is the danger of creating heavy negative karma through anger or the like, it is extremely worthwhile to protect ourselves in this way. We protect ourselves, we protect our mind, we protect our liberation, we protect our enlightenment.

Anyway, I think sooner or later the sun might set! It might become dark.

Do not commit any nonvirtuous actions,
Commit only virtuous actions,
Subdue your mind thoroughly—
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

A MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

I, action, object, the surrounding people, friend, enemy, stranger, possessions, your life and so forth—all these phenomena are changing within every second by causes and conditions. Because of this, they can be stopped at any time.

Therefore, there is no reason to have any discriminating thought, to become angry with a dissatisfied mind, to have attachment or ignorance, to allow the concept of permanence to arise for all phenomena that are actually impermanent.

The reality of causative phenomena is that they are changing within every second due to causes and conditions and can be stopped at any time, therefore to hold such wrong concepts toward them is nonsense. When we follow these wrong concepts, such as seeing the impermanent as permanent, the result is only samsara, particularly the sufferings of the lower realms. The result of being aware of the reality of causative phenomena is liberation from samsara.

The I, the action, the object, all phenomena, what they are is nothing other than being merely labeled by the mind. Therefore the I, the action, the object, all phenomena—permanent and impermanent—are completely empty of existing from their own side.

The subject I is empty, the action is empty, all these objects of the eye sense, all the forms—what we see around here—are empty. What appears to us as real, as existing from their own side, all these are hallucinations, empty.

Concentrate just a little bit in this.

Next, the sound that is the object of the ear sense, which appears as real, as existing from its own side, as having nothing to do with our mind, which seems to come from outside, this is also a hallucination. This is the refuting object, which means it is a hallucination, it is empty. All the sounds you hear are empty.

Again, place the mind in this emptiness a little bit.

Each sound you hear appears as if it is a real sound, a sound appearing from its own side. All these are the refuting objects; all these are hallucinations. When you hear a sound, it seems you hear a real sound. That “real” sound you hear is the refuting object; it is the hallucination; it is empty. Every time you hear a different sound, think that it only appears to be real, appearing from its own side. Then, try to understand the meaning—that it is empty, that the “real” sound doesn’t exist at all.

So, as you hear each sound, meditate on emptiness. Meditate on the emptiness of that sound. First, be aware how the sound appears to you, as real, as appearing from its own side. Then try to understand the meaning of that, how it is empty. The more sound you can hear, the more you get to meditate on emptiness.

[Place your mind on emptiness like that.]

Next, concentrate on the objects of the nose sense. For any smell that you apprehend, the way the smell appears to your mind is from its own side, as a real smell existing from its own side. It appears as not merely labeled by the mind, so again that is the refuting object, that is the hallucination, that is empty.

Think of how those different smells appear to you. If they appear as real, as appearing from their own side, think that that is the meaning of emptiness, that they are empty of existing like that. That kind of smell does not exist at all.

If there is smell now, that's very good, because you can meditate on it. If there is no smell then you can think of those different very strong smells, how they appear, those strong smells. That is more effective to meditate on because they have a very strong appearance from their own side.

[Meditate on that for a while.]

If you can't smell anything, maybe the person next to you can help! [Rinpoche and students laugh]

The next one is taste. Again, remember a sweet taste. Even the sweetness is merely labeled by the mind. The way it exists, how it comes in existence, is by coming from the mind. Although it is merely labeled by the mind, it doesn't appear that way to you when you apprehend it. When we sentient beings taste something sweet, that sweetness appears real, existing from its own side. Again, this is the refuting object, this is a hallucination. That means it is empty.

Place your mind on this emptiness.

Now, think of the taste of chili. How does the taste chili appear? If you don't have any experience of chili, then you can think of something else. Does the taste of chili appear to come from your own mind? Does it appear merely labeled by the mind? The taste of chili is really hot, which means hot appearing from its own side, not merely labeled by the mind. That is opposite of reality. That real hot is the hallucination; it is the refuting object. It is that which is empty, which doesn't exist at all. That taste of chili doesn't exist at all.

Place your mind on that emptiness.

Next is the object of the body sense, the tangible object. As you are sitting on your cushion on the floor, how does it appear to your mind? Does the object of touch that you apprehend appear to be coming from the mind? Does it appear like that or not? It doesn't appear like that.

More specifically, does it appear as merely labeled by the mind or not? Whether it feels hard or soft, if what you are sitting on now does not appear as merely labeled by the mind, it is completely the opposite of reality. The real softness coming from its own side—not softness coming from the mind, merely labeled—or the real hardness coming from its own side—not hardness coming from the mind, merely labeled—that is the refuting object, the hallucination. That means it is empty; it doesn't exist. That kind of softness or hardness appearing from its own side, not merely labeled by mind, doesn't exist at all. It is a hallucination, completely false.

Again, place your mind on that emptiness.

The object of the body sense, the tangible object, such as the soft feeling of your clothes that touch your body—does it appear as coming from your own mind, merely labeled by the mind or as appearing from its own side, not merely labeled by the mind? The tangible object, the soft contact of your clothes with your body, which appears from its own side, that is the refuting object, the hallucination.

Place your mind on that emptiness.

Next, the object of the mind sense—impermanence, permanence, emptiness and so forth, all these objects of the mind—when you think of impermanence, permanence or emptiness, does it appear as coming from the mind, and particularly as merely labeled by the mind, or does it

appear as real, in the sense of existing from its own side? If it seems to appear from its own side, that is the refuting object, that is the hallucination.

Again, place your mind on that emptiness, the emptiness of all these mental phenomena—impermanence, permanence, emptiness and so forth—appearing from their own side. Place your mind in the absence of that.

For example, this space is empty of form, but even this is empty, even this has an absence of form. Space does not have resistance; it is empty in not having resistance. So, when we say “space is empty” that only refers to the ultimate nature of emptiness, emptiness only, that specific emptiness.

Thinking how even space is empty becomes another very effective meditation on emptiness. Ordinary emptiness is an absence of something, like the absence of form, something like that. But even this space, which is an absence of form, is empty. There is no other way to think of emptiness [only]. The other way to think is *ordinary* emptiness because space is an absence of form, but that is ordinary emptiness, the wrong idea of what emptiness [only, *tong pa nyi*] is. This phenomenon, space, that you are going to meditate on as being empty is already empty in the ordinary sense, in being an absence of form. But even this is empty.

This is very effective for those of you who are doing a highest tantra deity sadhana. There are two stages in highest tantra, generation stage and completion stage, and the meditation on the dharmakaya in the generation stage involves the ordinary death, the clear light, and the base time clear light, visualizing the result time dharmakaya. This visualization itself becomes the preparation to actualize the path time dharmakaya, that actually stops the ordinary death. It escalates the potential to achieve the result time dharmakaya. So, the meditation visualizing the three kayas in order to actually achieve the result time three kayas is the most important practice in the generation stage sadhana. This three kaya meditation is the heart of the generation stage, the essential practice of the deity sadhana. So, when you meditate on the dharmakaya, even the space that appears to you, even that is empty. Then, you do the rest of the visualization that is there in the highest tantra practice.

This is similar when you are taking a self-initiation to purify all your negative karmas, particularly your degenerated samaya vows—the degenerated pratimoksha or self-liberation vows, the

degenerated bodhisattva vows and the degenerated tantric vows. You can take a self-initiation after having completed the retreat where you completed a certain number of the mantras or had signs of having achieved the retreat or having done a time retreat. Whichever way you have done the retreat, after you have completed it, you can do this powerful practice, taking a self-initiation. Even when you are taking an initiation from your lama, as you meditate on the four blisses or four joys, with the last bliss, simultaneously-born great bliss, there is the appearance of space—even this space is empty. Seeing that is the foundation for the rest of the meditation. In that way it becomes very effective.

So, just meditate for a little while on the objects of the mind, permanent phenomena, impermanent phenomena, emptiness, seeing how all these—even emptiness—appear as not merely labeled by the mind but appear as existing from their own side. This is the refuting object; this is a hallucination.

Again, meditate on that meaning, which is emptiness.

WHEN WE DON'T LABEL “PROBLEM” THERE IS NO PROBLEM

How do we apply the understanding of emptiness, the meditation on emptiness, in our daily life? A great bodhisattva called Thogme Zangpo, who composed the *Thirty-seven Practices of the Bodhisattva*, said that we are very far from emptiness when, although we talk about it a lot from our mouth, when somebody criticizes or praises us, we immediately become emotional, excited. Does that happen to you? If you are praised, how do you react? Do you get excited? Kind of high, like having taken a drug? [Rinpoche and students laugh]

Normally, although we might be able to make a lot of noise about emptiness, as soon as we are criticized or praised in our daily life, even in such a small way, it immediately affects our mind. That means our mind is not stable. When just a few words can cause our mind to go up or down, causing us to suddenly become angry or excited, unable to keep our mind stable, that shows we are very far from emptiness. No matter how much we have studied the Madhyamaka philosophy, no matter how well we can explain it, if a small thing can disturb our mind, we have not applied it to our everyday life.

In another verse, Thogme Zangpo said,

All forms of suffering are like a child's death in a dream.
Holding illusory appearances to be true makes you weary.
Therefore, when you meet with disagreeable circumstances,
See them as illusory—this is the practice of the bodhisattvas.

What this verse says is that we should see our daily life problems as like hallucinations, illusions—relationship problems, work problems, health problems, depression, loneliness. Now, I've run out of problems! [Rinpoche and students laugh] When somebody treats us badly, harms us, abuses us, whatever, so many problems like this, so many fears, worries, upset, all these problems that are merely labeled by the mind, as I mentioned, when we do not analyze them, they look like harm coming from the outside, from other people.

For example, if our mind doesn't label something a "problem," there is no problem. The problem comes into existence the moment we create the label "problem," thinking, "I have a problem." The moment we merely label a situation a "problem" and we believe in that, that is the moment the problem comes into existence. As long as our mind doesn't make the label "problem," we have no problem, but as soon as we create that label, we find a problem in our life.

These various problems I have just mentioned, even though they are merely labeled by the mind—that is how they exist—when we experience a problem it doesn't appear to us in that way; it appears to come from the outside as a real problem, existing from its own side, not merely labeled by the mind. Even though this is a hallucination, it appears like this and we believe this to be true.

This is exactly like the mother [who dreams of her child's death.] In a dream that takes maybe an hour or even just fifteen minutes. We can dream that we meet somebody, get married and have children, that we go through so many problems in thirty, forty or even sixty years of marriage, and maybe in the dream our child is killed. First we find somebody we love and get married and we are all excited, then we have a child and they grow up [and we have so much attachment], but then they die and we are unbelievably upset. Having gone through many problems, we become very skinny and our hair turns completely white. In that long life there has been so much

excitement, so many fears, problems and worries, and yet this is just a dream. We were dreaming but during the dream we did not realize we were dreaming.

Nothing was real in that dream; everything that appeared came from our mind. We found a partner, got married, had children, experienced the death of our child, had all the excitement and upset, but these were all appearances coming from the mind. Nothing at all came from the outside. Everything in the dream was merely labeled by the mind but during the dream we were not aware it was like that.

Just as in that dream, in our everyday life we do not recognize what appears to us as being merely labeled by the mind. Everything appears as existing from its own side, as real, and we believe that appearance. The various sufferings and problems we experience are like this, exactly like in a dream, but we see them as not merely labeled by the mind. They are hallucinations, but we believe the hallucination to be true, as having nothing to do with our own concept. What is a hallucination we believe to be reality and that misconception tortures us, constantly making us suffer.

Therefore, Thogme Zangpo advised us that when we meet with disagreeable circumstances, we should see them as illusory. This is how we can deal with them. Whether we have a problem or not, we should practice looking at everything as a hallucination, as I talked about the other day.

This is especially true when we meet undesirable circumstances, problems, in our daily life. Whatever problems we have—relationship problems, health problems such as AIDS or cancer—all these come from the mind. They are merely labeled by the mind, but they appear to us as completely the opposite, as existing from their own side. That is hallucination.

When we can see those hallucinations as hallucinations, we are able to keep our mind stable, without ups or downs. We are then free from all those disturbing thoughts such as attachment and anger. This meditation cuts all that. And seeing the hallucination as a hallucination leads to seeing what is empty as empty.

So, immediately, this becomes a great protection. It protects us from constantly creating negative karma and saves us from falling down into the sufferings of lower realms. Protected like that, our actions no longer become the cause of samsara but instead become the cause of liberation. It

becomes the wisdom realizing emptiness, removing even the subtle mistakes of the mind. In that way, this practice helps us also achieve full enlightenment.

MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS LIKE SPACE

First think, if there is no mind at all labeling the I, then how does it happen? What happens with the I? Then, try to get the idea that there is no I, no self.

If there is no mind, there is no I, no self or me, how can it seem that there is one? What the I is, is merely labeled by the mind. *This* I is completely empty, completely empty of existing from its own side. It's the same with the base to be labeled "I," the aggregates. Without the mind labeling the aggregates, if there were no mind labeling the aggregates, there would be no aggregates, no association of body and mind. Therefore, this association of body and mind is completely empty of existing from its own side. This association of body and mind that is our aggregates does not exist at all as real, in the sense of appearing from its own side.

Without the mind labeling "body," there wouldn't be this body existing, so this body is completely empty of existing from its own side. Without the mind labeling it, even the base, which is the group of the parts of the body, the parts on which the body is labeled, would not exist. So, the group of the parts of the body, the limbs and so forth, is merely labeled by the mind; it is completely empty. What appears as real, what appears to exist from its own side, is completely empty.

So, this is what it is in reality. Even the parts of the body individually—the head, the legs, the arms, the heart, the liver, the lungs and so forth—all the pieces of the body that are called such and such, without the mind they wouldn't exist at all. There wouldn't be the head, there wouldn't be the arms, there wouldn't be the legs, there wouldn't be any parts of this body—hearts, lungs, limbs and so forth. None of these parts of the body would exist. They are all completely empty of existing from their own side.

So, place the mind on this emptiness for a little while.

The head is empty from its own side. The arms are empty from their own side. The legs are empty. Each of the parts of the main body, the heart and so forth, are also empty.

Now, the atoms of the body, the collections of atoms that make up the body. Without the mind there wouldn't be the collections of atoms. The collection of atoms is merely labeled by the mind; therefore the group of atoms is completely empty of existing from its own side. Without the mind labeling "atoms," there wouldn't be any atoms.

First, try to get that idea. If there is no mind labeling "atom," then what happens? What would it look like?

That means the atoms are merely labeled by the mind; they are empty. The atoms that appear to be real, existing from their side, are completely empty from their own side.

So, please place your concentration on this emptiness, on the emptiness of the atoms.

Now, without the mind labeling the sub-atomic particles, there wouldn't be sub-atomic particles, that which are the basis to be labeled "sub-atomic particles." What does it look like if there is no mind labeling sub-atomic particles? Without the mind labeling "sub-atomic particles," there wouldn't be sub-atomic particles.

That means the sub-atomic particles do not exist from their own side; they are completely empty of existing from their own side.

So, please place your concentration on this emptiness.

Now, without the mind labeling "mind," there wouldn't be any mind existing. That means the mind that exists is merely imputed by the mind, by the thought, so the mind is completely empty of existing from its own side.

The mind which appears to us as real, appearing from its own side, this mind is completely empty of existing from its own side; this is a complete hallucination. Without the mind, even the base to be labeled "mind" does not exist. That phenomenon that is opposite in nature to the body—it has no form, no color and shape, but it has the function and characteristics of being clear and able to perceive objects—that mind doesn't exist at all without the mind labeling it.

The mind is compared to a mirror. When the mirror is not obstructed by dust and those other substances, it is clear and can reflect objects. Objects can appear as reflections in the mirror because it is clear, not obstructed by other phenomena. Similarly, this phenomenon that is formless, that is not obstructed by form but is clear and therefore able to perceive objects—that which is clear [and has the ability to perceive] objects—is the definition of mind. This phenomenon that is formless and has these functions and characteristics is the base that receives the label “mind.” Without the mind labeling it, even this base of the mind wouldn’t exist.

So, this base of the mind, which appears to exist, to be real, existing from its own side, is completely empty from its own side. Please place your concentration on this emptiness for a little while.

Now, there are the six principal consciousness and the fifty-one mental factors that the whole mind is divided into. If there were no mind labeling these aspects of the mind, there wouldn’t be these six principal consciousnesses and fifty-one mental factors; they wouldn’t exist. This shows that the six principal consciousness and fifty-one mental factors are merely labeled by the mind, therefore they are all completely empty of existing from their own side.

Please concentrate on this emptiness.

The six principal consciousnesses and the fifty-one mental factors that appear to us as real, existing from their own side, are hallucinations, existing in mere name.

The base of the principal consciousness is a phenomenon that does the function of recognizing or perceiving only the actions of the object. That is the definition of the principal consciousness, the phenomenon that is clear and perceiving objects, that functions to perceive only the essence of the object. That is the base to be labeled “principal consciousness.”

Anything that functions to do more than that is called a mental factor. So, the phenomenon that functions to know the essence of the object is the basis to be labeled “principal consciousness,” and the phenomena that function to accompany the principal consciousness are the bases to be labeled “mental factors.” The bases to be labeled “mental factors” arise with the principal consciousness in five similar ways. The literal translation of *sem jung* is “arising with the principal

consciousness,” which makes it clearer than the term “mental factor” that is usually used. That alone doesn’t give a clear idea.

The principal consciousness perceives just the essence of a particular object, for example, a person, then, on the basis of that, remembering the object, being attached to or angry with the object, all those mental events are mental factors, not only knowing just the essence of the object but performing additional functions based on that initial perception. These fifty-one minds are called *sem jung*, “arising with the principal consciousness” or “mental factor.” They arise in five ways similar to the principal consciousness: similar aspect, similar time, similar object and so forth. Because a mental factor arises dependent on the principal consciousness, without the mind labeling it, it is merely labeled by the mind: even the base of this consciousness doesn’t exist at all. Therefore it is empty of existing from its own side.

For example, the mental factor “ignorance” is the mind that does not know what is right and what is wrong, what is right and should be practiced and what is wrong and should be abandoned, what is the cause of happiness and what is the cause of suffering. It doesn’t know these things and doesn’t know past, present and future or the ultimate nature of the phenomena. This mental factor receives the label “ignorance” by having this function; therefore, it is the base to be labeled “ignorance.” In the same way, this is also merely labeled by the mind, and therefore it is empty of existing from its own side.

The mind of attachment is the mental factor that clings to the objects, like oil soaked into paper or cloth, so difficult to separate from the object. That mind is the base that receives the name “attachment.” Again, this base is merely labeled by the mind. Without the mind labeling this, it wouldn’t exist, therefore it is empty; even this base is empty of existing from its own side.

The mind of anger is the mental factor that dislikes and wishes to harm others. That mental factor is the base that receives the label “anger.” Without the mind labeling this base, there wouldn’t be this base, so this base is merely imputed by mind. Therefore, this base is empty of existing from its own side.

This is true of all this body and mind, even the split seconds of consciousness. There is mind, this life’s mind, today’s mind, this hour’s mind, this minute’s mind, this second’s mind, this split-second’s mind. Just as [the shutter] of a camera clicks for a hundredth of a second, for that

duration there are many split seconds of consciousness. Without the mind labeling those many split seconds of consciousness, they wouldn't exist. They are all merely labeled by the mind, therefore all those split seconds of consciousness that appear to be real, existing from their own side, are completely empty; they are a hallucination.

So now like this, starting from the I, the split second of consciousness and the atoms and the sub-atomic particles, all these are completely empty of existing from their own side.

So now, this last minute, concentrate on that for a while.

Starting from the I, the split second of consciousness and the atoms and the sub-atomic particles, all these are completely empty of existing from their own side. All these are like space. They are not space but they are like space. From the I down to the sub-atomic particles and the split-seconds of consciousness, they are all completely empty.

Please concentrate on this.

[Something happens. Probably there is a power failure.] While you are meditating on this space-like emptiness, again the lights [go out] and there is darkness you don't want. You might think that this darkness is not something to meditate on, but it is an emptiness. The darkness is a very good example of the refuting object. This is not as dark as at night when the lights go out, then it is completely dark. There seems no appearance of dark from the side of the mind; the darkness seems to come from the outside. It seems to be real darkness, darkness existing from its own side, appearing from its own side. The inherently existing darkness is a very good example of a refuting object. Because the darkness is very strong, seeming to be real darkness appearing from its own side, if you can, meditate on how it is a hallucination, empty. That is very helpful when you do a highest tantra sadhana dharmakaya meditation, the near attainment dark path. You have to meditate on the emptiness of that.

This is similar when there is moonlight shining on snow. It seems to be white from its own side, even though it is coming from the mind. Without the mind labeling "darkness," there is no darkness. Darkness doesn't exist. Darkness comes from the mind but it doesn't appear to us in that way; it seems to be real, to come from the outside, to exist from its own side. It seems real in that sense. The way we use "real" is that something exists from its own side. So again, the

absence of that is the emptiness of the darkness. That is the ultimate nature of darkness that we have to realize.

Just complete this meditation now. Starting from the I down to the sub-atomic particles and the split seconds of consciousness, all these are completely empty from their own side, what appears like space.

While your mind is in that state of this concentration, you should consider what enlightenment is. When you think of enlightenment, it appears real, existing from its own side, but even *this* is empty, completely empty of existing from its own side, like space.

Now hell, when you think of hell, even hell appears real, existing from its own side, even *that* is a hallucination, empty, completely empty, like space.

And when you think of samsara, what appears is real, existing from its own side, even this is a hallucination; this is completely empty like space.

Now nirvana, liberation from samsara, when you think of liberation, it looks like there is liberation from the outside, existing from its own side, but even this is a hallucination; it's completely empty like space.

And when you think of suffering, there seems to be suffering from the outside, real, existing from its own side, but even this is a hallucination, empty like space.

When you think of happiness or pleasure, this looks like it comes from outside; it looks real, existing from its own side, but that is a hallucination. That is the refuting object. It is empty like space.

When you think of virtue, it looks real, existing from its own side but that is a hallucination; that is empty like space.

When you think of nonvirtue, the cause of suffering, it looks real, appearing from its own side, but again that is a hallucination. It is completely empty, nonexistent. This nonvirtue is empty like space.

So now, all phenomena—you and I and all phenomena—are completely empty of existing from their own side. All the phenomena are empty like space. Please concentrate well on this.

Intensely concentrate on this emptiness. Intensely concentrate on this emptiness so that you cannot differentiate the subject I and the object emptiness in that experience.

Now think. What is this emptiness? Emptiness is just one thing, but then the mind labels “this” and “that” and so many things, and those things appear, and we believe it. This is how we live our life.

In this emptiness, there is no I, there is no you, there is no suffering, there is no happiness, there is no virtue, there is no nonvirtue. In this emptiness, there is no liberation, there is no samsara, there is no enlightenment, there is no hell. I think there is only tea. [Rinpoche laughs. The students laugh and applaud]

In emptiness there are no conventional truths, those existent things. Not only that, it is the same thing, in emptiness there is no emptiness.

MEDITATING ON EMPTINESS LIKE SPACE DURING BREAK TIMES

This is also a very good way of meditating not only in session times but also in break times, just as we just have gone through—how everything is empty like space, *not* space but *like* space. This way of meditating is very effective for the mind, thinking that when there is going, emptiness is going, and when there is coming, emptiness is coming. Maybe I'll mention this way first, then mention the other way later.

According to the point of view of our ignorance, our hallucinated mind, it's like this is how everything in life looks. The I that has nothing to do with the mind, that is not merely labeled by the mind, the real I existing from its own side—that real I, having met a real person, one not merely labeled by mind, one who does not exist at all, and that real I heard from that real person who does exist at all some words about the Kopan course, real words about Kopan, not words merely labeled by mind, real words that do not exist at all. Or maybe that real I saw a brochure that is not merely labeled by the mind, that is a real one, a brochure that has letters talking about

the Kopan course, again that appears real, not merely labeled by the mind, but which doesn't exist at all. The whole thing does not exist at all in reality in the way that it appears.

To make it short, from the point of view of our ignorance, the hallucinated mind, everything that is merely labeled by the mind but appears not merely labeled by the mind, as real, existing from its own side, all these things are objects of ignorance that do not exist at all. Therefore, in reality there is the non-existent I who heard from the non-existent person the non-existent words about the non-existent Kopan course or saw the non-existent brochure about the non-existing Kopan course, then bought a non-existent air ticket and came by a non-existent airplane to non-existent Nepal, then came by a non-existent car to a non-existent Kopan. Then, the non-existent I took a non-existent course from a non-existent lama, sitting on a non-existent meditation cushion doing non-existent meditation, as well as doing all the other non-existent actions such as eating non-existent food.

By following the ignorance, this is what our whole life it is. The I that is born is non-existent, born from non-existent parents, then goes to a non-existent school to do non-existent study from non-existent teachers. That non-existent I has non-existent friends and non-existent enemies, goes to non-existent parties, receives a non-existent degree after attending a non-existent college or university, then does a non-existent job to receive non-existent money. After that there is a non-existent old age, non-existent sicknesses such as non-existent cancer, non-existent death and so forth.

But because we follow ignorance, all the objects of ignorance that are merely labeled by mind but that appear to the hallucinated mind, the obscured mind, as not merely labeled by mind, that appear as existing from their own side, as real, we believe that appearance as true. We believe all these hallucinations as complete reality, as truth. Then, the reality of how everything exists as being merely labeled by mind becomes like non-existent for our mind. The way things really exist becomes like non-existent. How things exist, the reality, becomes unknown to our mind and we regard the hallucination as the reality.

Therefore, the way we have been believing things to exist is [totally wrong.] We live our life with this concept of true existence, believing that non-existent things exist. As we were just meditating on looking at everything as empty like space, I just wanted to mention that it is also very good to practice this mindfulness not only in meditation but also in break times.

That means we see the I, that is in reality empty like space, is doing the action of meditating that is empty like space, on a cushion that is empty like space. Therefore, the subject is emptiness, the action is emptiness and the object is emptiness. What we meditate on is the path, and again the nature of that is also emptiness. The action of sitting is emptiness, the nature of the cushion is emptiness.

When we eat, again the nature of the I is emptiness, like space, then doing the action of eating is emptiness, like space, and the nature of the food we eat, the object, is emptiness, like space, so emptiness is eating emptiness. When we go shopping, if we drive, it's the same. The reality of the I, the car, the action of going, the action of giving money, the action of buying something, the person we buy it from, the shop—the whole thing is empty of the way that it appears to us, which means as real, as existing from its own side. All these things are empty like space—the I, the action of going, the car, the money that we give the shopkeeper, what we buy, the shop, the road—all these things are empty, like space. Therefore, one way of looking at it, the reality, is that emptiness is going to buy emptiness, emptiness is paying emptiness, buying emptiness.

That's the reality. This I that is in nature emptiness, like space, this emptiness wants to be with another emptiness. This emptiness is worried, afraid, scared that this emptiness is being given up by another emptiness. What I am saying is that is reality, that everything is empty, like space, so when we are attached to somebody and we are scared of being left or given up by them, or if we are afraid of meeting somebody, the nature of all these things is emptiness, like space. In reality, it is this emptiness being attached to that emptiness, and this emptiness afraid that that emptiness will meet another emptiness and leave this emptiness.

The other mindfulness is practicing the mindfulness of the hallucination, the refuting object. As I have just mentioned, to our hallucinated mind, all things that appear to us appear to exist from their own side. They are the objects to be refuted because they don't exist at all. The reality, the absence of all these hallucinations, is emptiness. So, we practice the mindfulness of this reality, their emptiness, while we are doing our activities. Being aware how everything is emptiness is also very effective for the mind.

For example, while we are walking on the road, we bring the understanding in our mind that this I is merely labeled by the mind and therefore this I is empty. What we label and what we

believe—“I am walking”—when we are concentrating like this, that I who is walking in reality is just emptiness.

And the same thing with [the action of] walking. We are on the road walking with emptiness. This way of practicing mindfulness, looking at the very nature of the phenomena, is very effective, very powerful. This wisdom of emptiness is the complete opposite to how we normally live our life, living with ignorance. Because of that ignorance, we normally live our life believing all the false appearances, all the hallucinations, that appear to us. We believe all these wrong concepts.

This wrong belief is the fundamental problem in our life, fundamental, the root of all the delusions and karma and all the sufferings, including death, rebirth, old age, sicknesses and so forth—the suffering of pain and the suffering of change—the temporary samsaric pleasures that are suffering by nature—and pervasive compounding suffering, that is the contaminated aggregates themselves, the seeds of disturbing thoughts that become the cause of our future lives’ samsara. This wrong concept, this belief, becomes the root of all our problems.

THE TRULY EXISTING I APPEARS DUE TO PAST NEGATIVE IMPRINTS

Now we should move away from this subject. For these last few days, you must be sick of emptiness! [Rinpoche and students laugh] Besides being sick with all the additional coughs and colds and all those things, you are also sick of emptiness. You have an ache in your mind from hearing emptiness, emptiness, emptiness! ([Laughter])

Then, just once more! [Rinpoche and students laugh] While the I is merely labeled by the mind, relating to the aggregates, the association of the body and mind, this merely labeled I does not appear that way but appears as existing from its own side. That is a projection of the past wrong concept, ignorance, the wrong concept of true existence, holding that the I is inherently existent. That comes from the imprint left on the mental continuum by that ignorance and then, by leaving an imprint, there is this appearance of inherent existence, of existing as real, from its own side. This is projected on the merely labeled I. We apprehend that appearance as true and we let our mind believe it is true, instead of apprehending it as a hallucination. We let our mind believe that this appearance is the reality, that this I is inherently existent as it appears. We believe the

way that the I appears to us, which is the projection of our ignorance, the wrong concept of the inherently existent I.

Every time we let our mind believe this mistaken appearance, we are creating ignorance, we are making our mind ignorant, because this concept is the one that receives the label “ignorance.” Each time we do this, we are creating the root of all the sufferings, the true cause of suffering, which is the start of the twelve links, the evolution of the samsara.

Therefore, we should not only meditate on emptiness during our meditation time but also practice mindfulness in break times, seeing all the hallucinations as hallucinations. This is a very effective, very powerful, emptiness practice, as I mentioned. Or we should practice the mindfulness of how everything is a dependent arising, how everything becomes merely labeled. In a similar way, we should also meditate on dependent arising, of the merely labeled I, the merely labeled walking, the merely labeled road, as I explained before. We can do it in different ways, depending on whichever is more effective for our mind. In this way, when we practice mindfulness like this, at that time we are letting our mind think in the correct way, according to reality.

While we are focused on the reality of the I and the reality of all phenomena, during such mindfulness, we are not creating ignorance or the root of ignorance. During that time our mind, when we think in the correct way about reality, is transformed into wisdom, and that cuts the root of samsara, like taking medicine. Here, we are taking the medicine of wisdom that takes our mind on the path to liberation and enlightenment. From method and wisdom, the two paths we need, this is the path of wisdom. During this time, our mind becomes the medicine to heal the chronic disease that has existed in our mind from time without beginning.

THE TWELVE LINKS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

This ignorance is like the cultivator, the farmer. It is the first of the twelve links of dependent origination. Then, the second one is compounding action, karma. This is like the field that the farmer cultivates. Then, the third link, consciousness on which karma leaves the imprint is like the seed, one tiny seed that carries all the potential to become a huge trunk with many tens of thousands of branches and so many leaves, flowers and fruit. Just as one tiny seed carries all this potential, the consciousness carries all the potential from one life to another life.

In that way, we can remember what we did this morning, what we did yesterday, what we did last year and in our early life. Although we can't remember what we did in our previous life, there are many people who can, just as we can remember yesterday or this morning. They can remember their past lives very clearly. This is because the consciousness carries all the imprints, all the seeds, all the potentials from one life to another life. And imprints left there manifest in this life. Just as from a small seed a sprout comes and the tree starts, becoming a huge tree, like the bodhi tree we have here.

I didn't mention about karma. Karma is like the field where various crops grow. From karma, the various positive and negative karmas we have on our mindstream, we have various experiences in our life, happy experiences and suffering experiences, not only from life to life but even within one life. For example, even within this one human life, even within one day, there are various happy and unhappy experiences; there are many things, many ups and downs. All this comes from karma ripening.

After that, there are the two links of craving and grasping, which are like the water and the minerals that cause the seed to grow and reach the stage where it is ready to produce the stem or the plant. Like that, craving and grasping make the seed, the imprint that gives rise to delusions, manifest. That is the definition of seed or imprint—"that which gives rise to delusions." I might have mentioned this once at the beginning, but we are talking about something internal; it is not an external seed, but something carried on the mental continuum that has the potential to cause delusions to arise. That is the definition of seed or imprint.

There are two kinds of wrong views, those simultaneously born and those that arise due to doctrine. On the Mahayana path to achieve enlightenment there are five paths and ten bhumis and bodhisattvas who are on the eighth bhumi or higher still have the first kind, simultaneously born, the view of true existence, which has been on their mindstreams from beginningless rebirths. They are free, however, of the other kind, the wrong views that are learned from doctrines or philosophies and that they believe intellectually, such as a belief in true existence that comes from having met a misguided philosophy.

Bodhisattvas on the eight bhumi or above don't have this kind of wrong view because they have completely removed the cause of samsara, karma and delusion. The wrong concept of inherent

existence has been completely removed, including its seed that gives rise to the delusions, so they don't have delusions. They are liberated, having completely abandoned samsara and all its causes. Although they don't have the seed but just the imprint, this imprint doesn't cause delusions to arise. Only the seed of delusion that is also the imprint gives rise to delusions.

That is called "seed." Eighth, ninth and tenth bhumi bodhisattvas have the imprints but because those imprints don't give rise to delusions, they are not the seeds of delusion. So, there are differences according to their function. The imprint is left by the concept of inherent existence, but the seed, the delusion, has been completely removed by having completed the eighth bhumi. Although there is this imprint, it doesn't give rise to delusions. What this imprint does, however, is project the dualistic view. It projects the two truths, the conventional truth and the absolute truth, which are one in essence but different in name. That translation has to be checked. I'm not one hundred percent sure of this. This is my own translation in the dark—I've just put it that way, but it has to be checked.

The two truths are one in essence. As I have mentioned many times, form is unified with emptiness and dependent arising. For example, the I is unified with emptiness and dependent arising. Without emptiness there is no I and without I there is no emptiness. So, the two truths are one in essence. However, this imprint projects the two truths, which are one in essence as they are different, as they are separate. It projects the hallucination of inherent existence. While things do not exist from their own side, they appear to exist from their own side.

By completing the eighth, ninth and tenth bodhisattva bhumis, by continuing to develop the meditation on the wisdom that realizes emptiness possessed with bodhicitta and with the support of the bodhisattva perfections, by accumulating inconceivable merit and completing the path of merit, the meditator completely ceases that subtle imprint, that subtle mistake of the mind. When that happens, the meditator becomes the dharmakaya, the omniscient mind, the dharmakaya, the ultimate nature of which is completely pure, completely separate from even the subtle obscurations. Therefore, it receives the label "enlightenment."

Buddhas do not have the hallucination, the appearance of true existence, but until we sentient beings become enlightened, everything that appears to us appears as inherently existent. The only exceptions are those arya beings, the arhats or arya bodhisattvas whose minds are in meditative equipoise on emptiness. The way buddhas see emptiness, the buddhas' wisdom is like having put

water into the water, being in equipoise meditation on emptiness forever, non-dual, by having completely cut off the dual view. But for arhats and arya bodhisattvas in meditative equipoise on emptiness, their way of meditating is not to cut off the dual view but to absorb it. At all other times, when they are no longer in meditative equipoise, what appears to them is the false view of true existence because of the imprint left by the concept of true existence, the delusion.

This is talking about the seed because I mentioned the seed and the imprint. This is just to clarify it a little bit. So here, the seed itself is the imprint. Craving and grasping make the seed that is left on the mental continuum or which the consciousness carries. This consciousness is the particular mental consciousness, the sixth consciousness, that which carries on the seed, the potential, of the various lives from one life to another.

Another example. There is quite often this question. If we have created various karmas—positive karma and negative karma—in past lives, how it is possible to experience those karmas in this life? I think that question is mainly through not having thought enough about the continuation of mind. It seems that whoever asks that question maybe concentrates on the body and there is no continuation of the gross body. This present gross body is not a continuation of our past life's gross body. Because there is no connection, that person thinks it's not possible that the karma created in a past life can manifest and be experienced in this life. So, my guess is that whoever put this question concentrates more on the body, not on the mind.

When we speak on the phone or watch television, a signal either travels by satellite or through a cable, but the sound or the image is more than just the cable or the satellite. There are the waves of electricity that carry the potential for us to hear and see what is carried. It is transmitted at one end and we receive it at the other. Similarly, even though the consciousness is not tangible, even though we can't see it, it carries the potential, just as electricity waves do, that can manifest, that can be actualized.

So, craving and grasping make the seed that consciousness carries ready to result in our future rebirth. When the seed is ready to bring the result of a future rebirth, that is called “becoming,” [the tenth of the twelve links]. Like the external seed which is ready to bring forth the sprout, after that comes “name and form” [the fourth link.]

Some of the texts used for memorizing and debating in monasteries like Drepung Monastery explain the consciousness from the twelve links as the result-time consciousness. Not the consciousness on which karma has left imprints but the result-time consciousness, the consciousness that enters and abides in the fertilized egg in the mother's womb. There are different ways of looking at consciousness, as causal consciousness and result-time consciousness. The consciousness that is the third of the twelve links is result-time consciousness.

With "name and form," name refers to the rest of the mental factors and form is what is substantial, the physical aggregates. So, from the five aggregates of mind and body, the aggregates of consciousness, cognition, compounding aggregates and feeling are "name" and the physical aspect of the aggregates is "form."

Then, there are seven results to be experienced, to be actualized. Name and form is like the sprout coming from the external seed and after that are the six sources, then contact, feeling, birth—when consciousness takes place on the fertilized egg—and old age and death, which is counted as one. Old age or aging starts right after the birth happens, right after the consciousness takes place on the fertilized egg. Then, what is left to experience is death, wonderful death! [Rinpoche laughs]

OUR AGGREGATES DERIVE FROM KARMA AND DELUSION

This is another explanation of how everything we experience in our daily life comes from the mind, both happiness and suffering. You can see this evolution, starting from the name and form. After death, name and form, then the six sources, then contact, then feeling, which includes pleasant, unpleasant and neutral feelings, then old age and death. The twelve links describe exactly where all the aggregates, the association of body and mind, come from.

The association of body and mind, this samsara, is the container that all our problems come from. This samsara which experiences heat and cold, hunger and thirst, which is in the nature of suffering, which is the container of the oceans of samsaric suffering, all the hundreds of thousands of problems, is nothing more than these aggregates. If we didn't have these aggregates, caused by karma and delusions, then there could not be ignorance, anger and attachment.

Relating to our present body, the body of a happy migratory being, this human body, not necessarily all the time, but there could be attachment clinging the future lives' samsara, motivated to attain the body of a happy migratory being. Then, for that reason, we practice morality, which results in another body of a happy migratory being, another human body. So, there could be attachment.

We can also receive a perfect human body through the good karma created with the renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and emptiness, possessed with the three principal aspects of the path. So, the motivation could also be renunciation of samsara, which means there is no attachment to the happiness of future lives. However, with the wish for the happiness of future lives, with that motivation of attachment, we could practice morality. This present life's body could be the result of morality activated by attachment created in previous lives. That could happen. However, it is impossible to attain the body of a happy migratory being when there is anger in our motivation.

However, the very root is ignorance. These aggregates, the association of body and mind, have come about through karma and delusions, which have arisen from ignorance, not knowing the ultimate nature of the I. That is why the nature of these aggregates is suffering, why we have to experience suffering. That is the answer; that is the evolution. Because it evolved from impure cause, the association of body and mind is in the nature of suffering. That's why we experience problems.

As I often say, if we just pinch our skin like this, we feel pain. Sitting for too long, we feel pain. There is some part of our cushion that feels a bit hard or something, and there is some discomfort. Or we feel tired after some time. So, even without pinching our skin we can see this evolution. If these aggregates, if this association of body and mind, had not come from karma and delusions, then we wouldn't need to suffer, then we can be shocked. If this association of body and mind had not come from karma and delusions, then it would be a huge surprise if we still got sick from AIDS or cancer or had to experience old age and all those problems. It would be a shock, because unless they all came from karma and delusions, there is no way we could experience them. It would be impossible to experience any suffering. But because our aggregates were created by karma and delusions, their nature is suffering. It is their nature to experience hunger and thirst, heat and cold, tiredness and all these other problems.

So, you can see now how these aggregates, this association of body and mind, come from our own mind, our consciousness that carries the seed. They come not only from the consciousness but from the karmic seeds within the consciousness, as I described the other day. As we have the body of a happy transmigratory being, a human body, those seeds were positive. In this case, our body has come from good karma, from positive thoughts, from positive intention, *sempa*, from the five mental factors that always accompany a principal consciousness. So, that is karma.

So, the second thing is that this association of body and mind comes from our own mind, from the positive intention, *sempa*. From the fifty-one mental factors, it is one of the five omnipresent mental factors, the minds that always accompany the principal consciousness.

The third thing is that these aggregates also come from attachment that is in our mind and from ignorance, the very root, the ignorance not knowing the ultimate nature of the I. So, these aggregates come from our own mind, from our consciousness, and within that, from karma. Then, if there was the motivation of attachment, that produced the karma, which is our own mind, and it all comes from ignorance, which is our own mind. So, this completely comes from our own mind.

Not only that, whatever appears to us comes from our own mind. For example, today, from this morning, during these twenty-four hours, all appearances that we experience today—form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects—today, and from birth until death, all the appearances of this life that we have ever had come from our mind. From birth up to death, beautiful, ugly, indifferent, all these appearances come from the mind.

What I was talking about before, how everything comes from the mind, can be seen in a much more extensive way. It includes impermanent phenomena, permanent phenomena, it even includes emptiness itself. Everything comes from the mind, because the mind labels these things and then they come into existence. But here, at this time, I'm not relating how every existence such as emptiness comes from the mind; I'm not explaining it in this way. Here, we are just referring to karma, so it's more specific. The previous one referred to any existence coming from our mind, but here it's how appearances comes from the mind, how it is a creation of that moment's mind, that hour's mind, that minute's mind, that second's mind.

Every appearance we have today and from birth until death—beautiful, ugly, indifferent, all these appearances—every appearance comes from that moment’s mind. This day’s appearances come from today’s mind. All the appearances we have in this life come from our mind because our consciousness carries the seeds, the negative and positive seeds left by negative and positive karma. So, any desirable object we meet, any desirable appearance we have, comes from our senses contacting that object which results in a pleasant feeling. Our senses contacting an undesirable appearance results in us having an unpleasant feeling, one of suffering. Then there is also [an indifferent object resulting in] an indifferent feeling.

So, it is not only these aggregates that come from the mind but also the appearances of our life, from birth until death. The appearance of a person or a place, of food, of views, as well as the feelings these appearances induce—pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent—by meeting the various appearances, our whole life has completely come from our own mind, our consciousness that carries the seeds, on which karma has planted the seeds.

All these come from our own mind, from the positive and negative intention, from karma. This whole life, these aggregates, all these appearances, all these feelings, all the ups and downs—all these come not only from our own mind, from karma, they also come from the root, from ignorance, from the mind not knowing the ultimate nature of the I. So, everything comes from our own mind, from the root, ignorance.

So now, as we go through the years, the months, the days, the hours, the minutes, the seconds, we have these aggregates that experience things and we have the sense objects, the appearances, and the feeling associated with what our senses contact. All these things that are happening every hour, every minute, every second, all these things that we are experiencing are the result of the karma, that is our own mind.

WE ARE THE CREATOR OF OUR OWN WORLD

It’s the same when we go sightseeing. Everything that appears to us, even though it appears to come from outside, is actually coming from our own mind. It looks like we are touring around, visiting places that exist as something truly coming from outside, but actually we are touring our appearances that came from our own mind. We buy tickets in order to tour our appearance!

[Rinpoche and students laugh] In order to see our own appearances, we buy tickets that also cost money! And the tickets are also part of our appearances.

Let's say we are going by car, passing through the villages, cities, mountains. Every minute as we drive through we constantly have appearances of some mountains, some people, some places. Appearances are constantly happening, of the scenery, of the people, of the mountains, sky, everything, including the sun, the moon and the stars. All these appearances on our journey arising one after another are manifesting out the imprints left on our mental continuum by past karma. They look like they have nothing to do with our present mind and with our past karma; they look like they exist from their own side, but that is completely the wrong view. We constantly have one appearance after another, and all these manifestations come from our own consciousness, from our past karma that derives from ignorance.

It's the same thing when we meet people. There might be one person we don't like, somebody who seems undesirable, then there might be one person we see as desirable and one we see as indifferent. When we meet many people, we have many different appearances, and again these appearances come from our own mind. Somebody praises us, somebody criticizes us, somebody blames us for something we that haven't done, for a mistake we haven't made, those appearances also come from our own mind, from our consciousness, from karma and ignorance.

While we are walking on the road or going by car, suddenly somebody comes along and beats us or shoots us with a gun. Even if we don't know that person, even if we haven't met them before in this life, this unknown person suddenly beats or shoots us while we are walking on the road or going by car. Or suddenly we have an accident. We are completely healthy, there is nothing wrong with the car, but the accident happens. We don't die but our body completely changes, with something broken or missing, and our whole life completely changes. We were totally healthy this morning, an hour before, but within an hour we are suddenly in a coma or we are suddenly paralyzed.

All these things—an unknown person suddenly shooting or beating us, having an accident—all these things arise from imprints left on our consciousness by our past karma. Because that particular imprint has not been purified, because nothing was done to that imprint, today it became ready by cause and conditions, and it manifested. We see a person and suddenly they are beating or shooting us, or suddenly this accident happens or this disease manifests and we are in

hospital, and our whole life completely changes unexpectedly. Beforehand, we never thought such a thing would happen.

All these things have to do with appearances, and appearance is something to do with the mind. Trees and rocks don't have mind so they don't have appearances. Appearances come from the mind, and all these things are to do with appearance and it comes from the mind, from consciousness and karma, and then the ignorance not knowing the ultimate nature of the I.

It's the same thing with AIDS and cancer. Somebody who doesn't have the karma—who doesn't have the seed planted by karma—will never get AIDS, no matter how much that person mixes with others who have AIDS.

So, the conclusion is that we ourselves are the creator, our own mind is the creator; there is no other outside creator of our life other than our own mind. It is the creator of all our happiness and suffering. For example, that person we never met before who suddenly shoots or beats us, that is the appearance of our own mind. That is due to our own past karma. If we hadn't created the karma, if we hadn't planted the negative seed on the consciousness, there is no way that this fearful appearance of being beaten or killed could happen.

In reality, there is nothing to blame from the outside, there is nothing to point to outside that is the root of our problems. There's nothing to point to except to our own mind, ignorance, the wrong concept, that is the root of our problems.

So, we need to practice mindfulness, being mindful of how the association of body and mind, the aggregates, how appearances and feelings, how our whole life comes from our own mind. That itself becomes a very powerful practice of patience because in this way we can see there is nothing to blame from the outside, and therefore we can't see any reason to get angry with others. It also becomes a meditation on true suffering and the true cause of suffering, the four noble truths.

And when we think of it, it also becomes the cause of inspiration, seeing that good things happen now, success happens, because of our past life's good karma, they also come from our own mind. Therefore, it inspires us to create more good karma, to have an even better life, to have more development of the mind in the future.

And when we look at how other sentient beings are suffering in samsara through the twelve links, always creating the cause of suffering and having to experience the result of suffering—true suffering and the true cause of suffering—constantly attacked by delusion and karma and all the problems, it becomes the cause to develop deep compassion for other sentient beings. It becomes a very deep meditation on compassion that then causes us to generate bodhicitta, thinking, “I must achieve enlightenment for them, to free them from all their suffering and lead them to enlightenment.” Then, by having this realization of bodhicitta, we enter the Mahayana path and achieve enlightenment, the cessation of all the mistakes of the mind and the completion of all the realizations. And then we are able to bring every sentient being to full enlightenment.

Lecture 9

December 10, 1993

MEDITATING ON REALITY IS THE ANTIDOTE TO SAMBARA

Do not commit any unwholesome actions;

Engage only in perfect wholesome actions;

Thoroughly subdue your mind.

This is the teaching of the Buddha.

Again, reflect on impermanence and how everything is empty of existing from its own side. Therefore, there is no basis for the arising of ignorance and discriminating thoughts, anger and attachment and so forth. All those emotional minds, those disturbing thoughts, do not arise by practicing mindfulness of the reality of these phenomena. Then, without these disturbing thoughts, we don't create karma and, in that way, we don't create the cause of samsara. By practicing mindfulness of the reality, of the nature of these phenomena, we don't create the cause of sickness, old age, death, rebirth and so forth, all the sufferings. The result of practicing mindfulness on the reality of phenomena is everlasting happiness, liberation.

Not practicing mindfulness on the reality of these phenomena, we let our mind be under the control of the wrong concept of true existence, which gives rise to anger and attachment and so forth, these disturbing thoughts, these emotional minds, which in turn result in samsara. What we achieve from this is just the suffering realm, samsara, and in particular the lower realms.

By practicing the meditation on the reality of phenomena, by understanding the reality of phenomena, we can see on a much deeper level how other sentient beings are suffering. It's not just people in the poor countries who are starving, who don't have food, who don't have the means to earn a living, or sick people. It's not just refugees who have to escape from their own countries or beggars who live on the street and have to beg for food. We can see how suffering is much deeper, how all the beings of the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm are suffering. This is something that common people—those who haven't met the Dharma, who do not meditate on the lamrim—can understand. Because their understanding of other sentient beings' problems or sufferings is extremely limited, their compassion is also extremely limited.

They only know one aspect of suffering; they have no idea of the suffering of change or pervasive compounding suffering at all.

The suffering of pain, the first type of suffering, is the suffering that even animals do not want to experience, but even their understanding of this suffering is very limited. They cannot understand how rebirth and death are in the nature of suffering. Some may think that is suffering but some may not, and they have no idea especially about rebirth, which is caused by karma and delusion. Those who have not meditated on the lamrim, who have no understanding of Buddhadharmā, don't even think much about the suffering of pain, or even the rebirth that is the suffering of pain. They cannot understand.

We can't remember when our consciousness took place in the mother's womb on the fertilized egg and what that experience was like. It doesn't mean everybody who gets born from the mother's womb has to go through suffering. When those holy beings, those highly realized beings, the yogis or bodhisattvas, take birth, they don't have the aspect of suffering. It depends on the level of mind of the being, whether the being who is taking birth is free from the delusion and karma. It doesn't mean anybody who gets born from a womb has to go through suffering, but generally, for us ordinary beings, we have to go through the suffering of rebirth that are listed in the five outlines in the lamrim texts to get an idea.

Even though we have gone through this experience, most of us cannot remember even how we came out of our mother's womb, leave aside being able to remember the experiences we had when we were in the womb, or the first time the consciousness took place in the fertilized egg. Similarly, there are many things that we did since we were born that we have forgotten. It is basically due to ignorance as well as the conditions, the pollutions and so forth, that we cannot remember. Maybe it is due to the distance of time—the longer ago it was, the less capacity we have to remember—but when the capacity of memory is developed, when there are less obscurations, then again we will be able to remember more and more.

IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

Practicing mindfulness, the more we realize the reality of the phenomena, particularly of the I and the aggregates, the sense objects and so forth, the more we are able to see how other sentient beings are suffering, how their life is totally living in the concept of permanence, their

hallucinated minds apprehending impermanent phenomena—that are changing within every second by causes and conditions—as permanent.

We all have this wrong concept of permanence, looking at impermanent phenomena as if they are permanent, as if our life and the sense objects in our life, and the surrounding people—friends, enemies and so forth—everything is always going to be like this. We have a fixed concept that things have always been like that and that they are always going to be like that. They're kind of fixed; they're going to last. When we are not aware of their nature, if it's left up to our mind, then we have the concept that things are going to last a long time, it's always going to be always like that.

I think the electricity in Nepal is a very good teaching, reminding us of impermanence! [Rinpoche and students laugh] When the lights go off, the appearance of many bright objects suddenly stops. It is there but suddenly it's gone. This is similar to the appearance of this life. Seeing the brightness of the object, seeing around us many people like our friends, places, objects, possessions, pleasures—including this human body we now have—all these appearances that are happening now can be stopped at any time. The appearance of this life can be stopped at any time, like the appearance that happens when we have electricity and the lights are on.

The day that the impermanence of death happens, at that time it is just like last night's dream. That appearance of this life that was happening is gone. It happened and then it is gone. Like when there is a flash of lightning, during that moment we have the appearance of a brilliant, bright object. We see our own human body and the people around us as well as all the other phenomena—this happens and then it is gone.

It is exactly the same when the day, the hour, the minute that the impermanence of death comes, when death happens. What we feel is just like that. The appearance of this life with all its many brilliant objects that were happening are suddenly stopped, just like the moment after a flash of lightning. During the flash we have this appearance, but we can't trust it. We can't assume this bright appearance of objects, people, material, places and so forth, including this human body, will remain. The appearance can be stopped at any time because life can be stopped at any time. The impermanence of death can come any time. Because the actual time of death is uncertain, the appearance of this life we now have can be stopped at any time. That is the nature of life.

When we look at others and ourselves we can see that even though we have met Dharma, we still can't conquer death, we can't overcome death. We have not yet gained complete freedom over the rebirth and death like the arhats and the arya bodhisattvas have. The practitioners of the Lesser Vehicle path, the arhats, have completely ceased the cause of the suffering, karma and delusions, including the seed of delusions, ignorance, the concept of inherent existence, and have achieved freedom over death and rebirth caused by karma and delusion. Arya bodhisattvas, the practitioners of the Mahayana, the great vehicle, have actualized the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness and have completely abandoned suffering rebirth, old age, sickness and death; they never have to experience them again.

Then the practitioners of the highest tantra achieve the realization of the completion state, which has six levels—the isolation of body, the isolation of speech, the isolation of mind, the clear light, the illusory body and the unification [of clear light and illusory body]. Those who have achieved the isolation of mind and the clear light are the real yogis; they have the qualification to receive the label “yogi.” These practitioners can achieve enlightenment in this very brief lifetime of these degenerated times. Having achieved clear light, with that realization, they can become enlightened within a few years. According to highest tantra, these are the great yogis. After having achieved clear light, they have overcome the suffering cycle of death and rebirth.

Without practicing tantra, even by practicing the Lesser Vehicle path or the bodhisattva path, the Paramitayana, we are able to overcome death and rebirth. Even if we don't get to accomplish these levels in this life, where we can be completely free from death and rebirth, by having met the Buddhadharma we can at least make preparation to receive a better rebirth again with a perfect human body, and then we can continue to practice the Dharma, and like this to complete the path to full enlightenment. The reason we do this is for the sake of the numberless sentient beings, to free them from all the sufferings and lead them to peerless happiness, to full enlightenment.

In this case, what is called “death” is just like changing our clothes. We take off our old clothes and put on new ones—this new body with which we can practice Dharma under even better conditions. Even if we don't get to achieve very high realizations in this life, at least we can accomplish this [better rebirth] by practicing the holy Dharma.

NOT UNDERSTANDING REALITY, SENTIENT BEINGS SUFFER

We need to look at how other sentient beings are suffering, how they are living their lives in the hallucination, the concept of permanence, apprehending impermanent phenomena as permanent—their own lives, the surrounding people, their material possessions and so forth. They have this fixed idea, and because of that, they are tortured because the reality they expect to last doesn't stay like that all the time, it doesn't last a long time. So, when phenomena show the reality of impermanence, opposing what they expect, life becomes so depressing. They get depressed and have a nervous breakdown, even becoming crazy. Their whole life is so sad.

For instance, their partner, the object of their attachment, dies or leaves them, and this is not what they expected. Because of that, they fall into a state of great anger, or if not anger, depression, with a deep sadness in their heart. All this is due to not having meditated during their life, not having the Dharma wisdom understanding of the teachings, understanding the reality of the phenomena. This fixed idea, this wrong concept of permanence, becomes a fundamental problem in their life.

Besides these other wrong concepts they have, they mistake the [second type] of suffering of samsara, [the suffering of change], a feeling that is suffering by its nature, thinking of it as pleasure, labeling it “pleasure,” believing it to be pure happiness and being attached to it. And because of that, it becomes the cause of further samsara, the cause to experience samsaric sufferings over and over again—rebirth, death and all the sufferings in between.

They see the body as pure, unable to see that it is dirty by nature, a dirty container of thirty-six or however many dirty things. It is like a septic tank that holds all the waste from the toilet, even though from the outside these things are invisible. There is a very thin skin covering what is inside, which is terrifying. If you go just a little bit below the surface of the skin there is nothing that is not terrifying. The body is just like the septic tank of a toilet.

For example, if we are attached to a body but suddenly there is a wound and blood seeps out of the wound, even just a drop, it is terrifying; suddenly we are not attached to that body anymore. This is the body's reality, but we cling to the fantasy that it is not suffering; our view is completely at odds with reality. On the basis of these hallucinations that we and other sentient beings have, delusions arise, discriminating thoughts such as attachment and so forth arise, which then create more negative karma, the cause of more samsara, more continuous suffering.

As I have mentioned during these last few days, while everything including the I is merely labeled by the mind—that is the reality—apprehending the I, action, object, everything as independent, as existing from their own side, is the biggest hallucination. This is the fundamental hallucination, the wrong concept that is the root of suffering.

BLAMING THE PARENTS WHO ARE SO PRECIOUS

We and other sentient beings are suffering like this, completely trapped in the hallucination. This is the fundamental one but there are many other wrong views.

For example, if we have any problems—no question about mental problems but even physical ones—we believe they are due to our parents and we blame them for our problems. We think, “When I was a child, my parents didn’t take care of me well enough. My parents didn’t love me.” Then we put all the blame on them and think we ourselves are completely perfect, that we have never done anything wrong. Whatever problem we have is all due to parents, not just our mental problems but even our physical ones. This is the explanation given by so many people, that they weren’t loved, that they were abused as a child. There are parents who abuse their children and there are parents who don’t, but whatever the case, this is one of the biggest explanations of why people experience mental problems.

When we blame our parents for whatever problems we have, any harmonious relationship we might have with them is completely destroyed. The good feeling we have for each other is completely destroyed; it becomes a disaster because of our habit of always placing the blame on something outside of us. The cause of the problem is always outside, even if that blame is put on the parents, who are so precious, so kind, who gave us this precious human body.

If they had decided to have an abortion, we could never have had this precious human body or even been able to experience samsaric enjoyments, samsaric pleasures, leave aside practicing the Dharma, practicing meditation, liberating ourselves from all the causes of suffering and achieving full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Leaving aside that, we wouldn’t even have this incredible freedom we have now—all the samsaric pleasures, enjoyments, comforts—if they had decided to not have us or not to take care of us in the womb.

Even without talking about all the other kindnesses they have shown us, just thinking of this kindness—that they gave us this precious human body, that they didn't have an abortion, that they took care of us in the womb—just that is an unbelievable kindness. We can realize how kind they are through the meditation on the perfect human rebirth, how this human body is qualified with eight freedoms and ten richnesses. By doing this meditation, we can realize how our parents are unbelievably kind, without thinking of all the other ways they have been kind to us.

Having this precious human body they have given us, we can practice the path and achieve any happiness we wish, the happiness of future lives, as a god or human, even liberation from samsara and enlightenment.

Having this precious human body gives us the opportunity to hear Dharma and to understand the meaning of the words. Animals such as dogs, cats, pigs, goats or sheep, even if they lived for a thousand years, even if we explained to them for a thousand eons what is the meaning of virtue, the cause of happiness, and what is the meaning of nonvirtue, the cause of suffering, there is no way they could understand. But for us, by having this precious human body, when somebody correctly explains what the cause of happiness is, and defines virtue for us, it doesn't even take a minute for us to understand the meaning.

It is easy to compare how easy it is for us to understand the Dharma, how quickly we can understand it, with this precious human body and how impossible it is for those other sentient beings who have taken a body that is not a human body, such as an animal body. Even though their mind has buddha nature, the nature of the enlightened being, the potential to become fully enlightened, because at this time they do not have a human body, they cannot understand the meaning of even something very basic like this, even if it were repeatedly explained over and over for a thousand eons.

If we compare like this, we can realize how without talking about a perfect human rebirth qualified with eight freedoms and ten richnesses, how just having a human body is so precious. We can understand how it gives us so much freedom, how it gives us the unbelievable opportunity to be liberated from the whole of samsara. Because of it, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute we can become closer to liberation, to the end of suffering.

When we see how valuable this human body is, the more we see this then the more we understand how precious our parents are, these people we received this precious human body from. We naturally see them as so kind, so precious.

With this understanding, we can realize how illogical it is that we still see ourselves as completely perfect and our parents as the source of all our problems. We put the whole blame on them, even though they are the ones who gave us this precious human body and hence are the source of all our happiness. By giving us this body with its infinite benefits, they have shown unbelievable kindness.

They have shown numberless kindnesses; they have not only shown the kindness of giving us this body, they have also saved our life from hundreds of dangers each day, and have shown the kindness of leading us in the path of the world by teaching us how to walk and speak, and giving us an education. There are numberless times they have been kind, bearing so many hardships for us. They have been doing this from beginningless rebirths. Every time they have been our mother or father, they have borne so many hardships and created so much negative karma in order to protect our life and to give us happiness. And we still place the blame for all our problems on them.

This is because we only ever place the blame on external things. We deny responsibility for our problems and we blame others, but when we put the whole blame on our parents it only creates extra problems in our life. Our life already has so many problems and we add another, the heaviest problem, cutting the affection toward our parents. The love we should have for them is completely destroyed. It brings them so much suffering. They don't know what to do; they don't know why their son or daughter is so angry with them. There is no explanation why they have been made into an enemy by their child. They don't know that this is because of the hallucination that their child lives under, how even though everything comes from the mind, as I have explained over the last few days, they are being blamed because of the hallucination their child believes in.

When I was coming back from Greece recently, I read a big article in *Time* magazine where a lady went to see a psychotherapist. I don't know what problem she had. The psychotherapist explained that because her parents abused her when she was young, she now has all these problems. I think her problem was depression, and that was the psychotherapist's explanation.

She hadn't remembered being abused by her parents, but then she became completely angry with them. However, even though her first reaction was anger, when she checked again using her own wisdom, she discovered that her depression had nothing to do with her parents abusing her. The article went into a very long explanation about how the diagnosis was wrong. Anyway, the cover of that edition of *Time* had the head of a person, maybe the psychotherapist, and the inside of the skull was empty. I think it was trying to show that without knowledge the head is empty or something.

DRUGS AND AWAKENING THE MIND

I think people's minds are slowly awakening; they are starting to see the truth more and more. Actually, I think it first started when LSD started, with those mushrooms and buddha grass and all those things! [Rinpoche and students laugh] Those things were a big part of breaking the very narrow concepts that were held at that time. The experiences that people had [with those substances] where they saw that the mind can travel without this gross body, that although everything appears solid, nothing is solid, concrete, that everything is a kind of formation of atoms.

This is similar to what is explained in the tantric teachings about the experience of the absorptions at the time of death, the white appearance path, the increasing red appearance, then near attainment dark appearance. Then, there is the extremely subtle consciousness, the clear light, the extremely subtle mind of death. So many young people who have taken LSD and so forth have some kind of experience that they have been able to relate to these highest tantra meditation experiences or death time experiences because at the same time their karma to meet Dharma ripened.

One of the original Dharma books [translated into English] is the *Tibetan Book of the Dead, Bardo Thodol*. Just by hearing somebody read it, you get liberated during the intermediate state. Due to the various experiences these young people had, if their karma to meet Dharma ripened, with this book they were able to relate their experiences to what was said in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism within tantra.

The other main book they read was *The Way of the White Clouds* by Lama Govinda, who was a disciple of a great yogi, Domo Geshe Rinpoche, whose incarnation now lives in America around

New York. And for some people, another book was Milarepa's life story. Milarepa himself made a promise that even hearing his own name or his story would benefit all the sentient beings in the world. Milarepa made a very strong dedication like this. Anybody who remembered his name or recited his mantra, Milarepa would guide to born in a pure land and to be able to meet him there and receive teachings from him.

Due to their karma, some people were able to read Milarepa's book and, because of that, they wanted to practice like him, completely renouncing everything. One student saw Milarepa's book in the West when he started to take these drugs like LSD. After Milarepa's life story, he gave everything away, all his belongings, and went to India. I don't know what happened after that. He went to India and then to Nepal. An Italian student told me the story.

Because of those young people coming to Asia, the Dharma was able to go to the West. Now each year, thousands of people meet and practice Dharma in many Western countries. It is increasing all the time. Basically, it's because of these young people who managed to break through the limited concept by having taken these substances, which happened according to their karma to wake up their mind. But after having met the Dharma, I don't think it's necessary to keep taking those things. Especially after having met tantra, tantric teachings, which is a much better [way to wake up the mind]. Theirs was temporary method and that is finished now. Anyway, what was I saying? Now I'm lost. [Rinpoche and students laugh]

I think it's better to have tea!

OVERCOMING KARMIC OBSCURATIONS

Rinpoche: Maybe there's one question?

Student: Rinpoche, at Institut Vajrayogini in France one morning, you spoke about two kinds of emptiness, emptiness and vast emptiness in relation to something about Guru Rinpoche.

Rinpoche: Vast emptiness? I am sorry. I think it's going out with the kaka. [Rinpoche and students laugh]

Student: Is it something related with the karma? With regard to how emptiness clears or eliminates dualistic elaborations of the experience. You said something to the effect that not only insight into emptiness, but also the sphere of emptiness, is responsible for eliminating dualistic elaboration.

Rinpoche: Collaboration, dualistic collaboration? [*Student:* Elaboration.] I thought you said emptiness is collaborating with dualistic view, elaboration of emptiness? Can you repeat the question?

Student: I don't understand what you meant. You said that meditating on the sphere of emptiness could eliminate the defilements in karma.

Rinpoche: Meditating on the sphere of emptiness—I think that just means emptiness, the emptiness that is like the space. The meaning of “sphere” relates to that, emptiness like space. Then, meditating on that eliminates karmic obscurations, karmic defilements.

Negative karma is like the mental pollution, mental obscurations. The more negative karma we accumulate, the less we can understand. For example, even when we hear Dharma we cannot comprehend the words. Before, we were able to comprehend the words, but now, because we have accumulated so much negative karma, we hear the sound but we cannot comprehend the words. It makes it more difficult to understand; our mind seems to become more distant from the words, therefore it becomes more difficult to keep the concentration and to understand the meaning. This is one example.

Before we were able to do this but now we can't, due to the obscurations. The negative karma pollutes the mind, obscuring it. Therefore, we have these difficulties. Even if we hear the sound, we are unable to catch the words and understand the meaning. The mind becomes distant from that.

It's similar when we meditate on compassion. Before, when we had less negative karma, we were able to feel compassion when we thought of others, when we thought of how the hell beings suffer, [how the hungry ghosts suffer], how the human beings suffer, but now, using the same words we used before, the feeling is not there. It just becomes words; it is difficult to get the feeling from the words because the heart is kind of empty. The words are repeated from the

mouth, but the heart is empty. Before, we did the meditation and we were able to feel it, but now even that doesn't happen.

It can be similar with devotion. This can also be an example of how karmic obscurations make it more difficult to do a visualization. Before it was clear, but now it becomes difficult to visualize something. I've heard some people express that they can never visualize anything, such as the Buddha or a holy object. That shows there is a need for a lot of purification. If that is so, we have to develop perfect compassion by using the four remedial powers of purification, the strong practice of purification.

Negative karma accumulated in relation to the virtuous friend is purified by depending on them. With the guru yoga purifying practice, on the basis of the compassion of the virtuous friend, because we have created negative karma in connection with them or degenerated the samaya vows we took from them, we confess to that virtuous friend. Then, on that basis, we do the guru yoga practice and the purification practice, such as Samayavajra. Then we do the *tsog* offering if we are practicing tantra. Even if we have not received an initiation and cannot do the complete meditation, we can still do the *tsog* offering to the virtuous friend for purification and to hook the realizations. This *tsog* offering is a common method and it is very powerful. The most powerful purification we can do is something that most pleases the virtuous friend.

The other powerful purification we can do is the bodhicitta practice of taking and giving, taking other sentient beings' suffering and problems on ourselves and giving them all our happiness and merit. We take other sentient beings' sufferings and its cause into our own heart by generating great compassion, and we give them our happiness, merit, body, possessions and so forth by generating great loving kindness. That this bodhicitta practice is the most powerful purification is mentioned in the first chapter of *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

Then, we can also meditate on emptiness. And reciting the holy names of the Thirty-five Buddhas while doing prostration is an especially powerful purification. If the virtuous friend has passed away, it is advised we should confess in front of any relics there are, such as the robes or any part of the holy body, the bones or hairs or whatever. Or we can confess to the guru's nearest disciple, the main disciple. This is explained if the guru has already passed away.

So, with karmic obscurations, we can tell according to the state of our mind whether or not there is more pollution, whether more negative karma has accumulated. We can get a gross idea from the experience of our state of mind.

I don't think I understood your first question due to my pollution, due to my karmic defilements! [Rinpoche and students laugh] I think I missed out something there in France. I think I was unable to catch up!

BELIEVING IN ONE LIFE AND FEARING DEATH

Since I brought up this topic, I just want to mention one or two things. On top of all these hallucinations, there is also the belief in having just one life. On one hand there is the fear of death and on the other there is this belief that there is only one life, which is strange. If that were the reality, it would be better in some ways, because there would be no need to fear death.

After death there would be no more problems—no more relationship problems, no more problems of discrimination and so forth—all our problems would cease at the time of death. It seems to me that believing in one life and being afraid of death are contradictory. If there was only this one life, any worries we have would stop at death. The objects of attachment that bring us problems and dissatisfaction would cease at death. All the wrong views that cause us suffering now would cease. The four sufferings common to us humans—getting what we don't want, not getting what we want, and so forth—would cease, because these are problems of this one life which has finished.

Based on the four major wrong views and according to the education we are given and the culture, we develop many other wrong views because we don't analyze what is reality with our wisdom. Therefore, because there is no clear understanding of what is mind, it seems to us that there can only be one life. We cannot explain the definition of mind and therefore we cannot explain what birth is, how it happens. Among [Western] psychologists there are many different views about this, so our own understanding of what mind is and the beginning of life, birth, becomes unclear.

We are also unclear about the end of life, death, what "death" means. It is unclear because our understanding of mind is unclear. How birth happens, how death happens, the beginning and

the end of life—there is a lot of confusion, a great lack of clarity on these two very important points. It's like there is a hole that is beyond the understanding of [Western] doctors. In reality, there are many things about death that are beyond their philosophy, such as what happens when the brain stops functioning. One of the older Sangha members who is an Australian doctor, Dr. Adrian, told me that a doctor witnessed how one patient's brain stopped functioning for some time and it was believed he was complete dead, but then he came alive again. Dr. Adrian said that he himself has seen things that are beyond what is commonly believed within the philosophy of the doctors about what death means. He has seen many things that don't fit with their explanation, which shows that their explanation is a wrong explanation, or at least it is not the complete explanation.

I'll mention this and another one, and then I'll stop. His Holiness Zong Rinpoche is a lama who both I and many old students have received many initiations and teachings from in the past. He was a great yogi who from past lives completed the three principal aspects of the path as well as all the realizations of the two stages of highest tantra. Once, Rinpoche explained what he saw in a place called Pagri in Tibet, where I lived for three years. It is near Bhutan and is a main business place, where people from Lhasa bring their things to trade with Indian businesspeople who come from Bhutan, bringing their nuts and stuff to sell. People come from many different places to sell things there, as it is on a main route between India and Lhasa.

It was in Pagri that Rinpoche saw a Tibetan man who didn't have a head. He had the rest of the body but no head. He might have had leprosy or maybe he was born without a head, I'm not sure. He had a neck and people would feed him *tsampa*, probably mixed with tea and things, spooning the *tsampa* down his throat. Because he had no mouth, he would indicate he was hungry by rubbing his stomach. He talked with his hands. People would take him outside to sit in the sun and then take him back inside the house into the shade. That's one story.

In another story I saw in a text that a very high Amdo lama, somewhere in the lower place of Tibet, also saw exactly the same thing, a person without head. Of course, similarly, there are people who have a head but no limbs, just a large face and a torso, with maybe hands. I saw this in Varanasi as well as in Spain, in a missionary hospital, where Christian nuns took care of people with disabilities.

Normally, when I travel to the West I like to see these things, such as the place where they keep all the dead bodies. The first time I saw this was in Sydney, many years ago, and then also with His Holiness Zong Rinpoche in America, near Vajrapani, but there were only a few bodies there, whereas in Sydney there were a lot. As soon as I entered the dead body house, it was very interesting to observe all the faces that were kept lined up around the door in glass frames. Looking at each person's face was very interesting and it took a lot of time. The students with me and the other friends went straight inside to where there was a small baby in a bottle. They called me to go inside but I still had not finished looking at all the faces by the door, right after you entered the house.

So, normally, I visit places like old folks' homes or places where the dead bodies are kept. We went to a place in Spain where people with disabilities were living. On one side there were the children and on the other were the older ones. In one section, there was an older girl whose arms were tied to a bar covered in leather and she had a kind of table with wheels that she could move on because she couldn't walk. It must have been cleaned just before we arrived. We had made a special appointment because the director of the Barcelona center had worked there before, so there was some connection and she was able to get the appointment to visit the place.

I was very surprised. It felt incredible that these nuns were able to look after these people where there was no hope at all that they could get better. If there is some hope somebody can get better [it gives you the motivation,] even though it might take a lot of energy to take care of them, but here the nuns had to look after these people even though there was no hope [of full recovery]. Their whole life was like this, no matter how long they lived. Everything, *kaka*, *pipi*, had to be cleaned. I felt it was incredible how patient the nuns were, how wonderful their attitude was, taking care of these people.

In a big hall there were a lot of people who were a little bit better. They had been given jobs to do, such as sewing. They were very happy to meet us and they were smiling and very happy. I tried to shake hands with everybody. One person had a small body and a very big face. As I was shaking his hand, I wasn't sure whether I was dreaming or not. But these people are like that, of course they are. I saw similar people in Varanasi. There are people in the West just the same, with the same karma, but of course you don't see them outside in the streets like you do in Asia.

It is similar. There are people like this who have the karma to not have a head. Although of course they are much fewer than those with other physical disabilities, those without faces and [with intellectual impairment] are alive and serving a function. They are able to express their wishes with their hands, whether they want to go into the sun or the shade.

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE MIND TO SEE HOW OTHERS ARE SUFFERING

The [Western medical] definition of death is after the brain stops functioning, even though there is a lot of factual evidence that shows that [the mind] goes beyond that. Nowadays there is a lot of confusion. As I was travelling in Australia, I saw on TV the top psychologists explaining their different points of view about birth. It became very unclear. The main problem is that there is no clear definition of what is mind, like it is explained in the teachings by the Omniscient One in the very early philosophical texts that form the elementary study of the young monks in the monasteries. They learn the definitions of all the mental factors and all those basic things, and then they learn it more elaborately when they learn the *Abhidharmakosha* and so forth.

Even just the simple, clear definitions of mind, such as the ones the young monks have to memorize, are very difficult to find in psychology books, even though there are many thick books talking about mind. Many years ago, when I was in America staying with Geshe Sopa, a student brought me a book on mind. Although I didn't read the whole thing, just the beginning and some of the middle, and then glanced at the end, I got the feeling that there was no real conclusion about the mind. It seemed to me that it talked about a lot of different things without offering any condensed, clear, complete definition what the mind is.

There are many aspects of [Western] education that need to be developed because there is confusion between what is believed in philosophy and the reality. But now, as time passes, by continuously doing research, as their research shows previous explanations are wrong and new discoveries are made, it seems that [Western mind scientists] are coming closer to the reality, to what the Buddha explained in the teachings.

As I was saying before, by doing our meditation practice we can come to understand the realities of phenomena. Then, the more we recognize what is the false view and what is truth—what is the wrong concept and what is right understanding—the more we come to know how other sentient beings are suffering because of their hallucinated wrong views.

Understanding emptiness and so forth helps us to see very deeply how other sentient beings are suffering, completely trapped in hallucinations, with this ignorance, the wrong concept of true existence. They totally believe in the existence of that which doesn't exist at all in reality, causing them to live their lives in a complete hallucination, which is the basis for anger, attachment and all the many other negative emotional minds to arise. Then, they suffer and create more negative karma with this wrong concept, which only ties them further to samsara.

It is extremely beneficial to understand this to develop compassion. The more we understand, the more we meditate, the more we realize the realities of phenomena, the stronger our compassion will be toward others. And that leads to bodhicitta and enlightenment for other sentient beings.

Lecture 10

December 11, 1993

[Chanting]

You can do the Vajrasattva mantra, either with prostrations or just reciting. Who can lead the Vajrasattva?

[Students recite Vajrasattva mantras]

DEVELOP THE TWO BODHICITTAS AND THE FIVE POWERS

What we are looking for is happiness in life and we don't wish to have any problems, therefore we need to find a solution to any problems that we have. As it is mentioned in the *Guru Puja* [LC 97],

In short, no matter what appearances arise, be they good or bad,
I seek your blessings to transform them into a path increasing the two bodhicittas
Through the practice of the five powers—the quintessence of the entire Dharma—
And thus to cultivate only mental happiness.

In English it starts from this way; it starts from backwards. The Tibetan is like this. So many times I start this way, then I get into trouble! [Rinpoche and students laugh] I get stuck in the middle and get a bit confused how to complete it. Then it becomes like putting pieces of a machine together that don't fit.

The meaning of the verse is that we train to always be able to keep our mind in a happy state, in peace, in satisfaction. This is not talking about trying to achieve happiness with a selfish mind. It is not talking about that. It refers to keeping the mind in happiness and peace with bodhicitta, the ultimate good heart, benefiting other sentient beings, cherishing others. The essence is that.

No matter what happens we always keep our mind in happiness and peace—whether we are praised or criticized, whether we receive material possessions or don't, whether we have comfort

or discomfort, whether we are treated badly by others and disrespected, or treated well and respected, whether we have a good reputation or a bad one. We are happy and at peace whether we are dying or living, whether we have cancer, AIDS or some other disease or we are healthy, whether we are successful or a failure, whether we are rich or poor. Whatever happens, whether it is a good appearance or a bad one, all these have to do with appearances.

Any appearance that happens, we always keep the mind happy and peaceful. How? This verse contains the answer. It talks about the practice we should do in our everyday life. Whatever our situation, we need to always transform it into the path to develop the two bodhicittas.

One bodhicitta is a conventional truth, the truth for the all-obscuring mind. Conventional bodhicitta is altruism, cherishing others, the wish to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings. The actual meaning of the other one, absolute bodhicitta, is the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. Therefore, of the two bodhicittas, one is wisdom and one is method.

So, what it is saying is that whatever situation happens in our life, whether it is good or bad in appearance, we should always use it to develop the wisdom realizing emptiness. In other words, we should use every situation to meditate on emptiness, and the other thing is to develop conventional bodhicitta—cherishing other sentient beings and taking the responsibility of freeing other sentient beings completely on ourselves. Taking the task completely on ourselves—that we alone will do this—is the special attitude.

On the basis of this thought, we then have the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings as the method, as the means to succeed in our task of working for others. This is the task that we have taken upon ourselves completely. So, we determine to use whatever situation, good or bad, to develop bodhicitta.

How do we do this? With the practice of the five powers, which is the essence of the entire Dharma—the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Mahayana Paramitayana teachings and the Mahayana Vajrayana teachings—all the teachings taught by the Buddha. That's what it says here, that we take whatever situation, good or bad, to develop the two bodhicittas with the practice of the five powers, which is essence of the entire Dharma.

Whether we experience happiness or unhappiness, we use it to develop conventional bodhicitta with this special attitude of completely taking on the responsibility to work for the benefit of other sentient beings. In that way we use whatever happens, whether it brings us happiness or unhappiness, whatever our life's experience, in the most beneficial way, making it most beneficial not just for ourselves but for all living beings, for every hell being, every hungry ghost, every animal, every human being, every god and demigod.

We can even use unhappy situations, such as relationship problems or mental illness—, we can use every situation in our life to be of benefit for all sentient beings.

THE MAIN GOAL IN LIFE IS TO BENEFIT OTHERS

I often mention this fundamental bodhicitta attitude that brings happiness in our life, especially when I am giving the healing courses where the particular subject is cancer, AIDS, and so forth. This attitude is the fundamental healing method, especially for those who have an incurable disease.

This life looks like there are many different lives. We die, there is an intermediate state, then we reincarnate again, and then, after another short life, we die again. Then, another intermediate state and another short life. It looks like that. We are reincarnating again and again. The main goal of life is not just to be healthy, not just to have a long life, not just to be rich, not just to be educated, to have an education and knowledge. It is not just that. It is not just to be famous in the world or to get power. Whether we have an education or not, whether we are rich or poor, whether we are healthy or unhealthy, whether we are living or dying, whether we have power or not, whether we have reputation or not, whatever type of life we experience, the main goal of our life is to be useful to other sentient beings, to cause them to obtain happiness. That is the main goal of life. There is only one ultimate goal in life, and that is to become beneficial for others, to cause others to be able to overcome their sufferings and obtain happiness. There is nothing higher than this; there is nothing better than this. We cannot achieve a better life than this. There is no better life than to become a bodhisattva.

For so many lifetimes we have made prayers to be like that, to accumulate merit by depending on sentient beings and by depending on the holy objects, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We

have accumulated so much merit from so many lifetimes to create the cause to achieve the realizations and actualize the root of the path to enlightenment, guru devotion.

Then, there are all those meditations within the graduated path of the lower capable being in order to actualize the realization of renunciation of this life, such as meditating on true suffering and the true cause of suffering, on the sufferings of the human and god realms, on the general sufferings of samsara and the cause of samsara—how samsara is totally in the nature of suffering. There are the meditations on renunciation of the whole of samsara in order to fully cut off the attachment clinging to that. Then, by depending on these preliminary realizations, there are the meditations to develop compassion and loving kindness toward other sentient beings, and then to generate bodhicitta. Through all these realizations, we become a bodhisattva.

The purpose of actualizing all these steps of the path of the lower and middle capable beings, all this is preliminary to being able to cherish other sentient beings, having compassion and loving kindness for them. All these are aimed at that. Finally, depending on loving kindness and compassion, we actualize bodhicitta. This is the practice of these great saints, the bodhisattvas. They think of nothing except other sentient beings. The only concern they have is for other sentient beings; the only thought is working for other sentient beings, obtaining happiness for other sentient beings.

GESHE RABTEN AND GEN JAMPA WANGDU

This reminds me of one of the oldest meditators in Dharamsala, who, like me, was a disciple of Geshe Rabten Rinpoche. I have more than twenty gurus, but I received my first Dharma contact and took teachings from Geshe Rabten, with the recognition of guru and disciple. He was the first teacher who taught me, beginning with the preliminary philosophical teachings, the debating subjects. After Geshe-la did the examination and received the highest geshe degree, as a lharampa geshe, he was invited to help His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The very high incarnate lamas in Tibet, besides having an actual teacher, they also have helpers, geshe who have a very good understanding of the philosophical subjects. They choose to help the incarnate lama for his quick development. They are a bit like a substitute teacher who helps in education so that we can have deep and extensive study and finish the study soon. These people are called Tsenshab.

After that, Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was invited to Switzerland to be abbot of a Tibetan monastery there called Rikon Monastery, which was probably built by the Red Cross to support the Tibetans. Even in Dharamsala, before he left for the West, Geshe-la had been teaching Dharma to Western people for a long time. After being abbot of Rikon Monastery, he founded another monastery called Tharpa Choeling,⁵ which was mainly for Western student monks. There is a very good Tibetan language class there and quite a number of monks have learned Tibetan very well. There have been very good results. Those who studied well for many years became very good translators and some have translated books from Tibetan texts.

However, maybe due to a shortage of merit, some didn't last long. They didn't get to continue, even though there were excellent qualified teachers and very comfortable conditions. They only had to pay five dollars for their food and living and they even had a choice of food, whether it was Italian food or some other type of food. This was all due to Geshe-la's kindness. They all had sponsors and very comfortable conditions but somehow some didn't last.

Anyway, Geshe Rabten Rinpoche took cancer and passed away in 1986. He has already reincarnated, and the reincarnation is now in Switzerland, looked after by Geshe-la's closest disciple or Geshe-la's translator, a high incarnate lama, Gonsar Rinpoche.

I'm just talking about how I had the same teacher as one of the oldest meditators who lived in Dharamsala and Dalhousie (which is near to Dharamsala) whose holy name is Gen Jampa Wangdu. He was the best friend of Lama Yeshe and me. Whenever we went to Dharamsala, it was his company we enjoyed the most, talking and eating with him. Whenever Gen Jampa Wangdu went to Tushita Retreat Centre to see us, it was the best time, the most enjoyable time. He always explained what kind of realizations the other meditators from other places such as Bhutan or around India had achieved, either tantric realizations or the lamrim ones, such as impermanence and death, or guru devotion or bodhicitta. He gave us this information because he would hear it from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He could see His Holiness any time he wanted without having to make an appointment, without consulting the attendants or secretaries. He could just go straight to see His Holiness because he was one of the most successful meditators who has actualized not only the three principal aspects of the path but also the third stage of the tantric realizations. There are five stages and clear light is the third one, which means the meditator can become enlightened in that very lifetime.

⁵ Tharpa Choeling, located in Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland, was later renamed Rabten Choeling.

I think because Gen Jampa Wangdu was one of the most successful meditators in actualizing the path, he was an exception and could go to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama any time to discuss things with him, to ask questions and to make offerings of his realizations. His Holiness would tell Gen-la of the realizations other meditators had offered to him. When Gen-la told us this and the many other stories of the meditators, it was very inspiring, very encouraging.

What was most enjoyable, however, was when Gen Jampa Wangdu told us his life story, how he was extremely naughty in the monastery where he lived, not studying the Dharma, not following the rules, not following the monastery programs, always fighting and teasing the other monks. There were so many stories. One of his stories was how he teased the other monks by waiting on top of the gate of the monastery and when a monk passed underneath he would spit and blow snot onto him, hitting him on the head. One of the monks he hit with his snot was a very old monk with a bald head. He was Geshe Rabten Rinpoche's main teacher, from the area of Kham where Geshe-la was born. Before Geshe-la went to Sera, this very highly respected great practitioner taught him and took care of him for many years. I think he might have been the abbot of Geshe Rabten's home monastery. Anyway, this old monk didn't clean the snot off immediately. He went on a few steps and then he slowly wiped it off with his woolen zen. He didn't show any shock or anything. When he saw this was Geshe Rabten's teacher, Gen Jampa Wangdu ran away as far as he could.

Once in the debating courtyard there was an old monk who Gen-la teased for no reason. It wasn't that the old monk had harmed him, but Gen Jampa Wangdu picked up a stick and repeatedly beat the old monk's knees. Later, when Gen Jampa Wangdu was in Dharamsala, he took the aspect of having much pain in his knees for quite a number of days. Usually Gen-la just used his sicknesses for practice; he wouldn't go to hospital. However, when His Holiness found out about it, he sent Gen-la to a very good, large Indian hospital in Ludhiana with a translator from the private office to help. Afterwards, Gen-la told me that during that time he could remember the cause of this pain. The reason he had so much pain in the knees was because he repeatedly beat the old monk with a stick when he was young. This is what came in his mind so much during that time.

For ordinary beings, such an action as beating a member of the Sangha would be the cause to be reborn in the lower realms and experience the result for an inconceivable length of time, for

many billions of human years. Even when they were born in the human realm again, they would have to experience problems due to this past negative karma. However, because a practitioner such as Gen Jampa Wangdu has realized emptiness and bodhicitta and because he had done such powerful purification during his life, the negative karma that for an ordinary being would mean eons experiencing the heaviest suffering, for him manifested as some problem or sickness and then was finished. In the ordinary view, it might be like that; that due to the power of his realizations, all those heavy karmas were finished.

LIKE THE BUDDHA, ONLY WORK FOR OTHERS

The main reason I mentioned Gen Jampa Wangdu is this. Once, Gen-la told Lama and me that for seven years he had never been to anybody's home for himself. That means that he had generated bodhicitta seven years before he said that. He didn't mean that he had never gone to any other person's home but that he never went for his own purpose. That is just one example. No activity he did—not just going to somebody's house, but also walking sitting, sleeping, and so forth—no activity was done for the self. Because he said he had not done this for seven years, that implied that he had generated bodhicitta seven years before.

I also remember, during a conversation about somebody, Lama Yeshe asked how he could ever get angry with that person. He said, "That person is a sentient being. How can I get angry?" I think the conversation was because Lama seemed upset with this person. By saying that, Lama showed that this person was a sentient being, a being who is suffering, whose mind is obscured—that is their nature—so how can you get angry?

The conclusion is that what those great saints, the bodhisattvas, cherish is *only* other sentient beings; who they work for is *only* other sentient beings. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's past lives as a bodhisattva showed this. He accumulated merit for three countless great eons, practicing charity and so forth. He made charity of his eyes and limbs to other sentient beings; he even gave his whole life. For example, there is a holy place where the Buddha gave his entire body, making charity to five tigers, a mother and her children who were starving death. For three countless great eons, during the Buddha's past lives as a bodhisattva, he made charity of his holy body to other sentient beings. He practiced pure morality for three countless great eons; he practiced patience and perseverance for three countless great eons. No matter how difficult it was to work for other sentient beings, he continuously bore all those hardships, practicing the paramita of

patience, perseverance, concentration and wisdom, accumulating merit for three countless great eons in order to be able to achieve the full enlightenment, the cessation of all the mistakes of the mind and the completion of all the realizations. He was able to achieve the goal to do perfect work for all sentient beings without the slightest mistake.

The ultimate goal is to help other sentient beings, to be useful to other sentient beings, to benefit other sentient beings, to free other sentient beings from suffering and to obtain happiness for them. This has been the goal of the numberless past, present and future buddhas. This is why they have become enlightened, and, after having completed all the realizations and achieved enlightenment, this is what they do. They do nothing except to benefit other sentient beings, to be useful to other sentient beings.

EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS FOR OTHERS

The reason I was saying all this is to show there is nothing in life better than this. What better life is there than working for other sentient beings, for ourselves to be useful to other sentient beings? It just took a little bit of time explaining the stories but anyway that's the essence.

There is only one ultimate goal in our life. If we don't make our life useful to others, even if we live for a thousand years, even if in that time we never have AIDS or cancer or any other disease—if we are completely healthy in that thousand years—what would be the use of that life? It would be completely empty. There is nothing interesting in such a life.

On the other hand, even if we have AIDS, relationship problems, whatever problem we might have, even if we are dying—even if we are actually experiencing death—if we can make the experience beneficial to others, if we are able to make our life useful in helping others obtain happiness, the ultimate goal of our life has been obtained. That is the heart, the very essential thing.

Even if we are able to benefit one person and bring them happiness, our purpose for living has been obtained. Our life has been successful, fulfilled. We put so much effort into living, into surviving, for our home, our protection, our health, our body, our entertainment. Having a home is expensive, buying food and clothing is expensive, medicine is expensive, taking care of our body, from our head down to our toes, is expensive. However, trying to keep healthy and have a

long life and all these things, our life becomes fulfilled and completely worthwhile when we are able to bring another person happiness. Even if we are only able to serve one other person, all those unbelievable expenses and all that effort needed in just being alive are worthwhile.

If this is so when we are healthy, there is no question this is the best way to make our illness and death most beneficial. Experiencing AIDS, cancer, even death, on behalf of all other sentient beings [is the most worthwhile thing we can do.] The best way to experience death is when we die on behalf of all other living beings, allowing them to have everlasting happiness, free from all suffering and its causes. When we take on the suffering of others and experience it for them, even experiencing death is for them.

In this way, we are even using death to develop bodhicitta, conventional bodhicitta. That is how we can keep our mind happy, peaceful, tranquil, satisfied, even while we are dying. Because we are using the experience of dying to be beneficial for other sentient beings, because our mind is one of bodhicitta, our state of mind is something completely different [from an ordinary person's]. It has no worries, no fear at all; we feel completely happy.

When the goal of our life is just to be healthy and have a long life, or just to have a good education or be wealthy, or just to have power or a good reputation, then that attitude becomes a source of problems. It becomes the root of all the problems we have in our life, the root of confusion. But it is completely the opposite with the other attitude. When the goal of our life is not just being healthy, having long life, power, wealth, reputation and so forth, but the goal of our life is to be useful, then no matter what we experience, whether there are good or bad experiences, whether we are successful or we fail, the most important thing is to be useful to others, to help bring happiness to other sentient beings.

As soon as we have that attitude, it immediately transforms our mind. So much confusion, so many problems are cut off. We are suddenly free from all the problems related to the previous attitude which came from attachment, from ego, from clinging to the happiness of this life. Then suddenly, even if we have AIDS or cancer, it doesn't bother us. It doesn't seem important. Before, when our goal was only a long and healthy life, there was so much fear and depression. We were so frightened of death.

You can clearly see how all these problems are related to that selfish attitude, how they originated from that attitude. But now our mind has been transformed by this new attitude where we want to be useful to others no matter what is happening in our life. Then things like AIDS, cancer, things that are normally regarded as life threatening, are no big deal; they don't bother us much because our main focus is being useful to others.

We can make our life useful *especially* when we have problems such as these diseases. They can make us determined to make our life even more beneficial for others, because having these problems makes us practice the Dharma. Without the problem, we become lazy but when we have problems, they persuade us to seek a solution. They make us meditate, practice the Dharma, practice bodhicitta. It makes us look for the best solution, the one that will make our life most beneficial for the numberless sentient beings, and we will see that the solution is altruism, the thought to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all other sentient beings.

Having these problems makes us put into practice the teachings we have received from the holy mouths of our virtuous friends. This is the Buddha's message to us: the lamrim teachings, the bodhicitta teachings, the teachings on thought transformation. This is the advice from the numberless buddhas of the past, present and future; this is their message to us. It makes us put into practice whatever teachings we have heard or studied, and then whatever happens to us, whatever good or bad appearance we experience, it doesn't bother us. It is not important because our main goal, being useful to others, is achieved.

Therefore, now you can see how this attitude is the source of happiness, peace and success in life, how it is the root of happiness and peace. When our mind is transformed into this attitude, we immediately find satisfaction. Why are we here? Why do we have a precious human body? The reason we are alive is to be used by others for their happiness. As soon as we have that attitude, immediately there is satisfaction. With the old mind, the old attitude, we could live for billions and zillions of years but we would never find satisfaction. The way to find satisfaction is to transform problems into happiness, to enjoy problems. How do we do that? By thinking of their benefits.

Maybe I'll stop there.

Lecture 11

December 12, 1993

WE NEED TO KNOW THAT EVERYTHING COMES FROM THE MIND

As I mentioned at other times, whether our everyday life activities become the cause of happiness or the cause of suffering depends on our attitude in life, whether our attitude for doing the action is virtuous, and hence Dharma, or not. Whether the action becomes the cause of happiness or suffering, whether it is a Dharma action or not, depends on whether the attitude of our daily life is virtuous or not.

It is not sufficient that we have heard the Dharma, the teachings that reveal the path to peace and happiness. Even explaining the Dharma is not sufficient for it to become Dharma. It is not even sufficient that the subject we are studying or explaining is Mahayana, the path that directs us toward enlightenment.

Whatever we do must become the cause to enlighten other sentient beings. So, the present action we are doing here, explaining the Dharma or listening to the teachings, should become the cause for us to achieve enlightenment, which means that itself becomes the cause to enlighten every other suffering sentient being.

Traditionally, when the lamrim is taught, the teacher follows the outlines of the text from beginning to end. That is what I used to do in the past but somehow, in recent years, I've broken with that tradition. In the past, I used to very much stick with the outlines, to follow the text as much as possible. I did it for many years, never finishing the whole subject but just as much as possible by follow the outlines. Somehow, in recent years, I haven't been following the text, just jumping about everywhere, like a jumping bean. [Rinpoche and students laugh] Like that little animal that looks like half a seed and jumps!

I think basically it can be done either way as an introduction, as long as it is done skillfully. If you know how to present it, I think it can be done either way, generally speaking, either the traditional way or by depending on whichever subject is more beneficial without following the outlines. So, somehow, I prefer that way as an introduction, without following the outlines, just

whichever subject is most suitable at the time. That's the way I have been teaching, to lay the foundation.

Actually, having the part of the subject on how everything comes from the mind and those things as the introduction seems to be the main thing, the most important change [to the traditional approach]. Everything coming from the mind is the reality according to life's experience. Happiness and problems appear to come from outside when we don't analyze it, but if we analyze it, it does not come from outside but from our own mind. When we have problems in life, it looks like they come from the outside; when we are successful, it too seems to come from the outside. But if we analyze it, that is not so; it all comes from our own mind.

So, I think this is the very root, this is the very fundamental introduction to Buddhism, like changing the earth and sky. This is the reality, but when we live our life with the misconception of something that is other than reality, then we face big confusion. It brings fundamental problems and we suffer. We believe in something other than reality, and then, when things don't manifest in accordance with our belief, we suffer. This is what makes the suffering of samsara endless.

In the same way, when we always obscure our mind with this wrong belief, we cannot liberate others; we cannot give them the right view, the right understanding. We cannot give the right wisdom, Dharma wisdom, to others, what is to be practiced and what is to be abandoned. We cannot really help others. The real help is helping their mind, so if we ourselves are ignorant, if we ourselves are hallucinated, we cannot liberate others.

So, this introduction is the very root or the fundamental method to liberate ourselves from the suffering, from the hallucinations, from the wrong view, the wrong concepts. We need more than an intellectual understanding, we must meditate intensely on these points to see how everything comes from the mind. Even those of us who met the Dharma many years ago, who have quite a bit of intellectual understanding of the Dharma, because we haven't really meditated well, intensely, because we haven't practiced mindfulness in everyday life on these fundamental subjects, according to the reality of phenomena, we have been unable to continuously practice the Dharma and therefore we have had to experience so many obstacles arising in our practice.

Actually, I've explained this point in recent weeks. It is a very profound subject, something that is worthwhile meditating solely on, even if we have to spend many years on it. No question about emptiness, even if it takes many hundreds of lifetimes, even if it takes eons to realize emptiness, to understand karma, it is extremely worthwhile because, by putting effort into it, we can see what is the root of all suffering, of all samsara, this particular hallucinated mind of ignorance. And we can see that the only direct remedy is by realizing emptiness. There is no other solution; there is no other way to escape from the whole of suffering and its causes, there is no other way to liberate other sentient beings from the entire suffering of samsara, from all those various problems of the human, god and demigod realms, from all the various problems of hell, hungry ghost and animal realms, to liberate others from all the sufferings by liberating them from the cause, karma and delusion, the root, this ignorance.

Another thing is that this is just one time work. It's not that we must repeat it again and again. It's not like the work of this life, the work of samsara, where there is no end, there is no way to ever finish it. We repeat again and again, over and over, without end. Dharma work is one time work, actualizing the path is one time, something we do once and then it's finished. Once it's actualized, completed, there is nothing to repeat.

Therefore, no matter how many eons it takes to realize the subjects of the Dharma, it is extremely worthwhile. We have been doing every type of samsaric work numberless times from beginningless rebirths, from time without beginning, and the result is we are still caught in problems, we are still caught in samsara. So, this meditation I have introduced is something to practice for years and years, for your whole life. This fundamental meditation is like an atomic bomb. It is the solution to even solve everyday problems.

UNDERSTANDING KARMA IS THE FOUNDATION FOR PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

Understanding the Buddhadharma cannot happen without having created the causes and conditions, and we need to have a lot of merit to do that. Therefore we can't expect everyone to be able to understand and practice it, especially having to listen to my language, which is broken, unclear, with lots of noises in between, lots of spaces. When there is no space, there are a lot of noises! [Rinpoche and students laugh] Noises that are disturbing to the ears and heart!

But if you know how to listen, it's not like a professor giving a lecture. You need to know how to listen, how to analyze the essence of the talk to extract the meaning. As I mentioned before, because it depends on causes and conditions, we can't expect everyone to understand, but if you check, if you concentrate on the essence of the subject and try to understand the point, my talks may not be entirely meaningless. Even though I repeat it many times to try to get to the point, to get clarity, sometimes by repeating more it becomes more confusing! The main thing is to check the meaning of the subject, the point it contains, and to try to understand. Then these talks can be useful. They may not be completely meaningless. Even though you might feel the talks don't have much meaning, if you can even understand the subject intellectually, it might make sense later when your mind is ready.

With this previous subject, the introduction of karma, how everything comes from the mind, we are then able to understand karma, and then understanding karma shows again how whatever we experience in life comes from our own mind. The teachings on karma show in a more elaborate way how whatever we experience in life comes from our own mind. This can be a foundation for the preliminary practices.

We need that foundation when we talk about the preliminary practices found in the *jorcbö*, because these are the traditional practices that all the lineage lamas of the past have practiced and used in order to become enlightened, to realize the path and become enlightened in order to be able to enlighten numberless other sentient beings. So, when we talk about preliminary practices there needs to be this strong foundation, otherwise the various specific practices we do for purification and to accumulate merit don't have much feeling. It's difficult to understand the purpose of doing them.

For example, making offerings to the holy objects, water bowl offerings, mandala offerings or prostrations, all these practices create the conditions for gaining realizations. Even though we might know this intellectually, even though it has been explained, we still don't have any strong feeling for the practices. Somehow, they don't make much sense. However, having this foundation helps to break the fundamental wrong concepts and to have a deeper feeling when the specific practices are explained. Talking about the view of emptiness and understanding karma, both of those, are supposed to be the introduction to the *jorcbö* preliminary practices.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE KARMIC RESULTS

There are some oral transmissions to be done this morning. Before that, the subject I stopped halfway through last night was explaining the five powers within thought transformation, and then more talks on how to use happiness and suffering on the path to enlightenment. I think maybe I'll mention those another time.

For the oral transmissions, we need more details on karma. Since I explained that in a deeper way, how whatever we experience in life, happiness or suffering, comes from our mind, is explained through the twelve links. The external example is how a plant grows. That is how the twelve links were explained by the Buddha in the sutra called the *Rice Seedling Sutra* (Skt: *Shalistambasutra*; Tib: *sa by ljang ba'i mdo*). Whichever way we look at it, the meditation on the twelve links basically shows how this samsara is a creation of our own mind, our karma and delusions and the root, ignorance. That's why its nature is suffering.

But it is more effective to look at this more extensively, seeing not just how samsara comes from our mind, our karma and delusion, but also, as I explained the other night, how the sense appearances are appearances of our mind, coming from our consciousness, which comes from karma, which comes from ignorance. By meeting the objects, there is the appearance of desirable, undesirable and neutral objects, but these appearances come from the mind. We talked before about how all appearances are creations of our mind.

By our senses contacting these desirable, undesirable and neutral objects, feelings are created, pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent feelings. So, again we can see that these feelings, like the aggregates and the appearances, come from the mind. The whole thing comes from the mind, from karma and delusions, which come from the root, ignorance.

We can go into more detail on how specific problems come from the ripening of specific karma, from which specific attitude, from which specific action. There are detailed explanations of this in the sutra teachings on the ten bhumis, how these specific problems of life come from those specific negative karmas, which means that the happinesses of life, which are the opposite of this, come from the opposite positive actions, from morality.

It shows how the problems we have just being born in the human realm are the possessed results of negative karma. We have these problems such as food having very little protein, medicine

being unable to cure us, crops becoming less and less nutritious. Even when we eat food we are unable to digest it, or eating food becomes a condition for contracting a disease. Sometimes I meet people who have a digestion problem. Even this is the result of past negative karma; it is the possessed result of having taken another's life, killing.

There are four suffering results of the negative karma of killing. These results become negative karma because they are done out of the ego, the self-cherishing thought, as well as ignorance, anger, attachment. Because of this impure motivation, that action of killing becomes negative karma. It's made negative by the impure mind.

It brings problems of life such as an untimely death happening. Even though our length of life is not finished, even though we could live longer, suddenly untimely death happens. We experience a shortish life, or while we are alive we have to live in a very dusty place, one that is not glorious, magnificent. Experiences such as this are the possessed result of the past negative karma of killing. Experiencing a short life, being killed by others and so forth, or by disease, these two things—a short life and disease—are experiencing the result similar to the cause of the negative karma of killing.

Then, creating the result similar to the cause, even if we are born as a human being again, we repeat the negative karma of killing due to the habits of our past lives, the imprints of our past lives' negative karma. It's like somebody who from childhood likes fishing and hunting very much and kills without thinking about it.

Then, the ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms. This depends on how heavy the karma is. The heaviest result is rebirth in the hell realm, then the hungry ghost and animal realms. So again, from what Buddha, the Omniscient One, has explained, we can understand how all these problems come from our own mind, from the past karma of killing, which became negative due to the impure negative mind.

The opposite of this is the happiness and peace that we need, that we are looking for. I don't have to repeat them one by one. Just think of the opposite of each one. For example, the opposite to the ripening aspect result of rebirth in the lower realms is rebirth in the body of a happy migratory being, such as a god or human body. And the opposite to experiencing the result similar to the cause of a short life and disease is having a long and healthy life, without

disease and being in a place where there is medicine and food, and the food has a lot of protein and doesn't cause disease but becomes the condition for a long and healthy life. All these opposite things are the happiness we want, what we are looking for every day.

For example, in the West people spend an unbelievable amount of time, effort and money on exercising to be healthy, with machines and legs moving like this. [Rinpoche demonstrates. Rinpoche and students laugh] People make up all sorts of methods, whether it is for their own business or to be good for the heart, or to benefit others. Then, people try to learn whatever method there is in the world to be healthy, by exercising or whatever. They do running in the mountains in the hot weather, running and juggling? Jiggling? [*Students: Jogging.*] They run in the hot sun, putting so much effort into being healthy. I was going to say something, but I've forgotten.

Anyway, looking for ways to be healthy becomes the greatest object of concentration, the greatest aim in life. So, all these opposite things such as peace and happiness come from positive karma, practicing morality, which in this case means living in the vow to not kill, to abstain from killing, having made the vow in relation to the object, sentient beings, and determining to achieve enlightenment in order to free all sentient beings from suffering and its causes and lead them to peerless happiness, full enlightenment.

THE MEANING OF “ROOT GURU”

Therefore, these holy objects are called the “merit field.” In the thangkas, the paintings of the lineage lamas, there are the direct and indirect gurus, then the lineage lamas of the path, the enlightened beings, the different aspects of the deities according to the four types of tantra. Then there are nirmanakaya aspect buddhas, the one thousand buddhas of the fortunate eon, the Medicine Buddha, the Thirty-five Buddhas and so forth. Then there are the bodhisattvas, the arhats, the dakas, dakinis and protectors.

These are various aspect for different functions, and all these are manifestations of one being. If I relate this meditation to myself, all these are the embodiment of one being, my root guru, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, the one who first gave me the teachings on the steps of the path to enlightenment. All these are the embodiment of one being, the root guru. This is what we have to realize. All these different manifestations are the embodiment of one being, our own root

guru. That is the ultimate meaning of “root guru.” But again, we have to think of the ultimate meaning of the guru. Only then can we understand how all these manifestations are the embodiment of the root guru, that is, the mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya or the primordial mind, that which is the unification of method and wisdom, the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and voidness, that which has no beginning and no end, that which is eternal.

This is exactly what it means. This is how to think of the meaning of the guru, this dharmakaya, bound with the infinite compassion embracing all of us sentient beings. This primordial mind that is nondual bliss and voidness is bound with the compassion; it has completed the compassion embracing all of us sentient beings. Because of this compassion, this dharmakaya, this transcendental wisdom, is the absolute guru.

There is the conventional guru and the absolute guru. The conventional guru is the ordinary aspect we are able to directly communicate with. We are able to see and receive teachings and guidance from this conventional guru, leading us to happiness, to liberation from samsara and to the highest state, full enlightenment. This transcendental wisdom, this dharmakaya that I have described before, is the absolute guru.

Because it is bound with infinite compassion embracing all of us sentient beings, because that compassion has been completed, and because our ordinary minds are impure, obscured, having so many mistakes and wrong views, because of that, if this absolute guru were to manifest in the aspect of the Buddha, we would not be able to see them at the moment with this present state of mind. We do not have the karma, the pure mind, therefore we cannot see the guru in pure view, in the aspect of the Buddha, and the absolute guru cannot directly guide us in the pure aspect of the Buddha, which has only qualities, which has no mistakes, no suffering, no delusions, at all.

The absolute guru is bound with the infinite compassion for all of us sentient beings, therefore the absolute guru manifests in ordinary aspect. The definition of “ordinary aspect” is having delusions, having mistakes, having the suffering of samsara such as rebirth, old age, sickness and death and so forth. By manifesting in this ordinary, mistaken aspect, the absolute guru can directly guide us sentient beings by revealing the various means to happiness, to liberation from samsara and to peerless happiness, full enlightenment. This is the only aspect that we sentient beings have the karma to see at this moment.

These ordinary aspects are the conventional gurus. They are manifestations of the absolute guru, the dharmakaya, the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and voidness, this primordial mind that is eternal, that has no beginning and no end.

Maybe I'll put it this way. When sentient beings actualize the path of method and wisdom by removing both the gross disturbing-thought obscurations and the subtle obscurations, all the mistakes of the mind, at that time the mental continuum becomes the absolute guru, the primordial mind, the transcendental wisdom of nondual bliss and voidness. Each sentient being who becomes enlightened achieves the state of the absolute guru at that time.

That means that the numberless sentient beings who have become buddhas, who have achieved [the state of absolute] guru, all their holy minds are one, they are inseparable. There are many different aspects of the Buddha, but the mind is one, like one person manifesting in many billions, many zillions of forms through miraculous powers. So, all the buddhas are one mind, just in different aspects.

By thinking of what I said originally, that the primordial mind, the dharmakaya—that which has no beginning and no end—is eternal, how this is the absolute guru, the rest of the ideas are easier to understand. If we don't understand exactly what the absolute guru means, then it is difficult to understand the rest of the explanation on how all the buddhas are different aspects but one mind.

So now you can see that from this absolute guru all the buddhas happen, all the Dharma happens, all the Sangha happens, all the objects of refuge happen. They all come from the absolute guru. Without the absolute guru, there is no object of refuge to purify our negative karmas that are the cause of the lower realms and the cause of samsara. There is no way to actualize the true path and the true cessation of suffering; there is no way to be liberated from the entire suffering and its causes; there is no way to achieve peerless happiness, full enlightenment. The conclusion is that without the absolute guru there is no way to achieve any happiness.

THE GURU IS THE MERIT FIELD

Now it should make some sense. All these many different aspects of the merit field that we visualize, starting from the direct and indirect lineage lamas down to the Dharma protectors, all these are embodiments of one being, the root guru.

With the previous explanation, it now makes sense, there is truth in this. All these various aspects of the merit field are all embodied into one, integrated into one, the root guru, and the root guru is one manifesting into many. Like that, one manifests into many, and many are embodied in one.

And this is visualized on the lotus, according to this particular visualization. There are eleven levels of petals, then the different aspects of the merit field are visualized in their categories. All these are on thrones and the thrones are lifted on the trunk of the tree with branches that spread out.

In the painting you see there is tree and then on the tree there is the merit field seated on it, with the lineage lamas and so forth. Because of that, many people call it the “guru tree” or the “assembly tree.” That is mistaken. The name that is written is “merit field.” The merit field, the field we get merit from, is like the external seed we get fruit from or the crops that allow us to have life and survive. By receiving crops from the field, we live our life and have all the enjoyments. This is a field like that, so we can accumulate merit, we can plant the merit seeds to achieve the stem—the realizations of the path—and then the fruit—happiness, success, the long-term happiness of future lives, liberation and full enlightenment. That is like the fruit, like the crop.

I was trying to tell you the correct label. It should not be “guru tree” or “assembly tree” but “merit field.” I meant just to say that but it’s become a long explanation. [Rinpoche laughs] But in this short explanation, the meaning of the guru contains the essential meditation, the heart, of the guru yoga practice.

When we do a guru yoga practice, whether it’s an extensive one, like the *Guru Puja* or a preparatory practice or the *Six-session Guru Yoga* practice with any deity, with this understanding of exactly what the guru means, there is a deeper meaning in doing this guru yoga practice. Put it this way, we can transform the ordinary mind that sees the guru in an ordinary aspect into a pure

mind, a mind of pure devotion, by seeing the guru in the aspect of the Buddha, inseparable from the Buddha, for example, inseparable from Lama Tsongkhapa, the enlightened being.

We can see Lama Tsongkhapa as an enlightened being by understanding his amazing story, how he achieved all the incredible attainments of the whole path to enlightenment, how he practiced and was of unbelievable benefit for the teachings of the Buddha, for sentient beings, by writing, debating and explaining the Dharma. In so many ways he was of incredible extensive benefit and due to special reasons, to best benefit the teachings, for sentient beings, even though he could have become enlightened in a human body, he became enlightened in the intermediate stage.

So, we look at the guru and see them in the aspect of Lama Tsongkhapa, inseparable from Tsongkhapa or inseparable from Manjushri, Chenrezig, Vajrapani or any aspect of an enlightened being. It's the same meaning, inseparable from any other deity or buddha.

There is more logic with this understanding. It is not just visualizing the guru from our side. We are trying to see the guru in the pure aspect of the Buddha so that we can stop our negative thoughts of heresy, anger and so forth from arising. It stops all the thoughts of looking at the guru as ordinary, the obstacles in relation to the virtuous friend, that become the greatest obstacles for developing the mind on the path to enlightenment. By receiving the blessings of the guru that come from having devotion, this positive mind transformed within the guru yoga, we stop the obstacles and have all the realizations of the path and we finally achieve full enlightenment.

This is the most important reason to practice guru yoga. There is all this purpose, but by understanding this short explanation, by having this understanding and meditating in this way, this is for our own development on the path to enlightenment.

However, I am not saying that I am a buddha! [Rinpoche laughs] That part is finished, so now we'll go back to the original subject.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF STEALING

The first subject—the four suffering results of killing that become negative karma because the action was done out of ego and the three poisonous minds, as well as the results of the four

successes or the four happinesses, which are the result of good karma, the morality of abstaining from killing—that is finished. That subject was explained.

So, now we'll look at stealing. Due to the past karma of stealing, which became negative because it was done out of ego and the three poisonous minds, with one of those, the action of stealing has become a completed action. When I say "completed action" it means this. The material that was stolen does not belong to us but was owned by others. It is said in the teachings that it can be anything that costs any amount, even the smallest amount. There are some examples given using Tibetan coins, saying it could be something smaller than a *zho kang*, which is the smallest copper coin. I'm not a hundred percent sure of that, but anyway, it is something that has practically no value. However, I think the main thing is not that it has some value but that it has an owner, somebody possessing it.

For example, garbage. If we took somebody's garbage away, I don't think they would mind. What do you think? [*Student*: It would make them happy.] But if somebody in their mind possessed that garbage, if they liked it and felt that they owned it [that would be different.] Normally, when something becomes garbage nobody feels like they own it. It just becomes garbage for that person. If we peel a banana or an orange, we don't think of the skin as ours. We don't think, "That is *my* banana skin," or "That is *my* orange peel." [Rinpoche and students laugh] "This skin belongs to me!" People don't usually think that way. Right or not?

Because they don't believe it is theirs, if we take it, it doesn't become stealing because there is no owner, no possessor, nobody who thinks, "This is mine." Stealing is taking that which has not been given. This garbage is not that; it has been renounced.

But now, in this example, where there is somebody who feels like they own the garbage, who possesses it, thinking that the garbage is theirs, even though it has no value, not even a penny, by taking it away, we hurt that person. So, the value isn't really what it costs but whether there is a mind that thinks, "This is mine." And if we then take it away, that person is hurt. I think the definition of what is stealing is mainly to do with this. Sometimes it could even be something worthless, like garbage, but if somebody feels they own it and we take it away unoffered, that is stealing. This is just a small detail to clear things up.

So, there is the base, the object we have taken without it having been offered, and then there is the goal. In the case of stealing, not only is it having taken the thing that has not been offered, but then thinking that this thing is ours, that we now own it. When this thought happens, the action of stealing is completed. Not just thinking, “I have received it,” but also “I’ve got it,” with the sense of “This is mine.” To possess the object is the goal, and when that has been achieved, it is a complete action of stealing.

This has four suffering results. Depending on how heavy the action is, the ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms. If it is heavier, then it is rebirth in the hell realm; if it is lighter, then it is rebirth in the hungry ghost or animal realm. Even when we are born in the human realm, we experience the result similar to the cause, which is poverty, like the people in Somalia and those places in Africa who are starving to death. No matter how much other countries try to help they are unable to receive the aid. The result similar to the cause is poverty, having little means of living, without food or clothing, or having to share what little we do have with others because we don’t own anything completely ourselves. These two things—not having enough and having to share what we do have—are explained in the *Ten Bbumi Sutra*.

Generally, the lamrim teachings mention poverty the most and how we lose what we have. Others steal from us or they confiscate our things. That is experiencing the result similar to the cause of our previous negative karma of stealing. Stealing becomes negative karma because it is done out of our negative mind. That’s why we have these results, these problems.

Another problem is the possessed result, which is to do with the place. Where we live, even though the crops are planted in the field and cultivated, they cannot grow. The seeds are destroyed by either being burned by fire or eaten by worms or rabbits or other animals and so forth. Either no crops grow, or they rot. Or even if the crops grow, the harvest is very small and the quality is very poor. Or it grows but then it becomes dry. In that way, there are so many obstacles. The conclusion is that even the crop grows, it is not a good one.

There are a few more things explained but I don’t know exactly what they mean from these two texts. So, this is the possessed result of the past negative karma of stealing. There is famine and drought. There is either too much rain and there are floods, or there is no rain and there is drought and nothing can grow. When there are famines like this, these are the possessed results of the past negative karma of stealing.

Now you can see from this explanation of karma how these problems come from the specific karma of stealing, that which has become negative. When there are so many rabbits or mice eating the crops, from this understanding of karma you can see how killing all those animals is not the solution. It doesn't really become the solution to never having to experience the problem of the crops being eaten. Killing the animals not only doesn't solve the problem, but we then creating another negative karma, killing them out of anger. We create another problem in this life and future lives.

The real solution is that we need to purify. Because this is the possessed result of the past negative karma of stealing, we therefore need to purify the karma. So, it's work to be done with our own mind. Purification is work to be done just within the mind, purifying our negative karma, the seed planted on our mental continuum by past negative karma. There is a reason why rabbits, mice and so forth came into our field and ate our food. There is a connection between us and these animals, a connection in the past. In the past we did a similar thing, enjoying the food that was theirs, and there is a karmic debt. Just as when we borrow money from somebody we owe them that money, in the past we did something similar, eating their food or taking their food from them, and because that negative karma has never been purified from that time until now, the seed that was planted on the mental continuum has now manifested. Now, our crop of food is being eaten by rabbits, mice, worms, or animals like this. There is a reason why this has happened.

Sometimes, the neighbour's field is unaffected. No animals come and eat their crop, or it is of better quality. People only look at external conditions—the condition of the soil, the way the seeds were planted, how they were looked after—but that is just looking at the conditions, not the cause. The cause is the mind of the owner of that field. The cause of having a successful crop, one not eaten by animals, not full of worms, is in the mind of the owner. Normally, only external conditions are considered, not the good karma of the owner having practiced the morality of abstaining from stealing and having made charity to other sentient beings. That is the cause and the result is crops growing well, without any obstacles, even though right next door, in the next field, in *our* field, there are lots of problems, such as the seeds being eaten by worms. These are common experiences.

It might be that it rains on the field of one family but not on another's. Some areas don't receive rain; other areas do. What decides the weather, whether it is hot or cold, wet or dry, windy or calm, even cyclones, all these weather conditions are the result of the karma of the people. Having weather that is pleasant and assists the crops is the result of positive karma, whereas bad weather that brings suffering is the result of negative karma.

REPAYING THE KARMIC DEBT

Lack of things is the result of stealing. We owe others because we have harmed them by taking food from them. So, it is this karmic debt that brings all these worms into our field to eat the crops, and things like that.

There is a practice we can do to pay off the karmic debt, which involves giving *torma*, ritual cake. The practice is actually called *paying the karmic debt*. There are also practices such as incense offerings, meditation practices, mantras and other practices specifically for paying off karmic debts. We can sprinkle blessed powder on the fields and dedicate for the beings in the fields, the worms and other animals, helping to protect them.

Particularly in South India, the Tibetan monasteries were given land because there was no other way to earn a living. Not having money to hire laborers, porters and other people to work in the fields, they had to do the work by themselves. This is what happened. They received support from the government and were given land in the early times so the monks could get food. In Tibet they never even planted flowers in the monastery because it was regarded as a distraction for their Dharma study. They couldn't even plant flowers in pots in Sera, Ganden and Drepung. I didn't have enough merit to go to Lhasa to study in Sera Monastery when Tibet was independent. I was about to go but it didn't happen because it was foreseen that Tibet was about to be overtaken by the Communist Chinese. Anyway, in Tibet you were not allowed to even plant flowers because it was regarded as a distraction to Dharma study. But in South India, there was no other way to get food, so they were given land and they had to work. The whole monastery, so many monks—even the very old monks—had to work in the fields. They did this for many years because there was no other way to earn a living. Those who had a little bit of money could hire other Indians to work in the field.

In the Tibetan settlement, because there were many worms, His Holiness Zong Rinpoche taught the other monks to do the practice of paying the karmic debt. I received many teachings and initiations from His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, as did many Westerners, many old ordained and lay students, especially from the early Dharma celebrations. We also invited Rinpoche to some of the centers, especially in America and Italy, especially to give tantra commentaries and initiations. Anyway, Rinpoche taught other monks to do these practices and he also did them with the other lamas and monks. When they did this practice of paying the karmic debts, they dedicated it for the worms and the other sentient beings that had been killed. Because they owed the karmic debt, they had to pay it back by doing this puja and offering incense. It involved a few different practices as well as reciting mantras and maybe sprinkling powder on the earth or the field, things like that. Then, they saw the worms leaving the field after the practice was done.

There are various methods for paying the karmic debt, such as reciting mantras over sand and so forth and then sprinkling it [on the ground], but that one seems to be an important one. The main reason this happens is that the owner of the field has done a similar thing, taking food from the animals. If the karma has not been purified, the karma ripens and the animals take and eat the person's food.

I think there is a similar thing happening when you see, for example, families who keep chickens or pigs, feeding them and then killing them. I think there is a reason, a cause that happened between the animals and the people, karma that already happened in previous lives. When those chickens or pigs were human beings before, they must have done similar things, but now they are born as that animal and it is happening to them. The harm that they gave the now-human owners when they were humans and the humans were animals, is now happening to them; they are receiving the same harm of being killed.

Karma circles around like this between them. One being gives harm to another being and then, the next time, when the circumstances of rebirth have changed, the other being gives harm to the first being. The suffering goes on and on like that until they stop creating the negative karma of killing and harming each other. Until they practice morality, the karma just goes on and on; they experience the result then do the same thing again. This is what is happening when the farmer's fields are overrun with insects.

When we kill, it shortens our own life. It shortens this life and many, many future lives. Even when we are reborn as a human being, we can die in the womb before we are even born. We can be given an abortion, or, even without that, conditions occur that cause us to die very young. Because karma is expandable, [with one act of killing] this will happen to us for many future lives, not just for one life. Even if we are born as a human being we will have a short life. So, killing others is the unhealthiest thing to do. Why? Because it shortens our current life and many future lives, even if we are born as a human being. We may still unintentionally kill some sentient being but we should attempt as much as possible to not kill intentionally. If we can do that, it is very good. That is the best way to have a long life and be healthy.

As I have already mentioned, the two aspects of experiencing the result similar to the cause for the act of committing the negative karma of killing are having a life and becoming sick. These things are explained in the texts. Therefore, to live in the vow of morality of abstaining from killing becomes the best way to be healthy, to not become sick and to have a long life.

I think we'll stop here.

THE NEED TO PURIFY AND TAKE VOWS

The conclusion is that we need to purify. That is one conclusion. We need to purify not only today's negative karma, not only this life's negative karma, but all the negative karma collected from beginningless rebirths. Because the continuity of delusions has no beginning, we have collected all the various negative karmas from beginningless rebirths, and there is so much on our mental continuum that we haven't finish experiencing. So, the conclusion of talking about all this is that we need to purify with very good practices like Vajrasattva and prostrations to the Thirty-five Confession Buddhas and so forth. There are many very powerful practices we can do, especially in a strict retreat. That is extremely worthwhile.

But we should not feel that once we have purified so much negative karma in a retreat we are then free to do anything. It's not like that! [Rinpoche and students laugh] "Now I am free, now I can do anything!" We should still practice purification however we can in everyday life. Even if it is small, even if it is only for a few minutes, we should attempt to do this, because we don't like suffering, we don't like to experience problems. That is the main thing. When problems come, we don't like them, so, if that is the case, we need to purify.

Then, on top of purification, we need to take and hold as many vows as we can. There are many lay vows, like the five lay vows we take for life or the eight [Mahayana precepts]. Even if it is not possible to hold the vows until we die, we can take them for some years. That is extremely worthwhile; it's much better than not taking any vows because we can't take them for life. Not taking any vows would be a great loss.

To give just one example. Even if we don't ever kill, when we have not taken the vow of not killing we don't have the benefit of living in the vow, which brings us unbelievable merit. That doesn't happen. The difference between just not killing and living in the vow of not killing is huge; it's like the earth and the sky. I am not going to mention the details now because that will take time. I'll mention them when the time comes tomorrow.

Once, in India, some butchers wanted to take the vow of not killing but felt they could not because their job meant that they had to kill. However, they only killed in the daytime, not at night, so an arhat, Gathayana, gave them the vow not to kill at night, to live in the precept just during the night rather than for the whole twenty-four hours. Similarly, there was a prostitute who could not live in the precept of abstaining from sexual misconduct during the night, so he gave her the vow of keeping it during the daytime. Even just keeping the vows for half of each day makes a huge difference, resulting in happiness now and in many future lives. The result is only happiness and a fortunate rebirth. There is further explanation on this topic but I just wanted to give this short example.

So, the conclusion from all this is that we need to purify and we need to protect our karma, we need to abstain from creating negative karma by taking vows, if possible. There is unbelievable merit in that. Which is more important, purifying or taking vows to abstain from negative conduct? Taking vows is more important because, unless we protect ourselves from creating negative karma, unless we change our attitude, then we will continue to create negative karma and so the need to purify will never end. We will always have to purify. In this life we will have to purify, in the next life we will have to purify, and in the life after that and so on. The need to purify will never end because we will keep on creating negative karma. Therefore, taking vows is the more important of the two because we must change our attitude and our actions. Since our life is very busy, we must choose the most important practice.

Lecture 12

December 13, 1993

BASE AND LABEL AND THE QUEEN OF THE NETHERLANDS

In our daily life, for most of the actions we do, whether it becomes the cause of happiness or the cause of suffering depends on our attitude, our general attitude in life and our attitude when doing the action. There are some exceptional actions done in relation to holy objects, like the merit field. Anyway, I would like to ask this. What is the definition of a negative action? And does negative action exist? Is there such a thing?

Student: Conventionally there is. [Students laugh]

Rinpoche: So, everyone believes there is negative action? Does everyone believe there is negative action? What? [*Students reply:* inaudible] Not ultimately? But emptiness exists? [Rinpoche and students laugh] Huh?

Student: There is a label.

Rinpoche: So it doesn't exist? Anything that is imputed doesn't exist? Huh? [Reply inaudible] Do you have nose? Huh?

Student: I can feel it.

Rinpoche: So, you have nose. Do you have a stomach? [Replies inaudible] You think all are merely labeled except your nose and stomach? [Rinpoche and students laugh] Yeah? Your stomach is not merely labeled by mind? What is called "stomach" is not merely labeled?

Student: I think it's labeled by mind.

Rinpoche: It's labeled by the mind, so the stomach doesn't exist? It doesn't exist? [Students agree] So, you don't have a stomach! Please don't eat lunch tomorrow! [Rinpoche and students laugh] You don't need food. You don't have a stomach, you don't have a body, so why do you need food? And if you don't need food, you don't need money. Are you going to have lunch tomorrow? [*Student:* Yes.] Why? Why do you need lunch?

Student: Tomorrow I don't know, but today I need lunch.

Rinpoche: Today you need lunch? Do you need dinner or lunch today?

Student: No, I need lunch. There's no dinner today.

Rinpoche: What? No dinner? Anyway, tomorrow, if this still exists, do you need lunch or not?

Student: Tomorrow I'll take lunch, yes.

Rinpoche: But why do you need lunch tomorrow?

Student: To keep me alive.

Rinpoche: But if you don't have a body, you don't need food.

Student: I feel I have a body. [Rinpoche and students laugh]

Rinpoche: "I eat because I have body." [Rinpoche and students laugh] "I have a body so that's why I eat." But you don't have a body and yet still you eat. That becomes very confusing! Anyway, you don't even exist.

Student: Where does this voice come from?

Rinpoche: That's a question to ask yourself. [Rinpoche and students laugh] Anyway, what is called "you" is also labeled, right? What's called "you," this is a label, no? [Reply inaudible] No, you! What is called "you." Pointing here, what's called "you," here. What's called "you" is a label. According to your point of view, anything that is labeled doesn't exist, so you don't exist. So, there is no eater. There is no you, the eater, the subject—eater, right? So, tomorrow, your lunch should be given to somebody else? [Rinpoche and students laugh] Because you don't exist, because you, the eater, don't exist. So, the lunch should be given to somebody else, somebody who exists!

Anyway, who is talking now? [Reply inaudible] Your throat is talking? Your skin is talking?
[Reply inaudible] Do you want suffering or do you want happiness?

Student: I want a balance.

Rinpoche: Balance? I thought you want to dance. What? Huh?

Student: I love dancing. If I have only pleasure, if I have too much pleasure, I think suffering comes from somewhere.

Rinpoche: So, you want pleasure most of the time, and sometimes suffering? [Rinpoche and students laugh] Sometimes a little bit of suffering.

Student: I think suffering is what we do here on earth.

Rinpoche: But why do you need pleasure? [Reply inaudible] Why do you need pleasure? You don't exist, so why do you need pleasure? [Reply inaudible]

Rinpoche: Next year you can answer! For example, there are those figures in shop windows where they sell dresses, the figures of men and women, mannequins. According to their appearance, on seeing the mannequin, there appears to be an actual person and we merely label "person." On the other hand, there might be a person there, but we label that appearance "mannequin." Just as the mannequin is merely labeled "person," the person is merely labeled "mannequin." But as we get closer we see that what we thought was a mannequin is a person. They are the same in that they are both merely labeled by the mind. The difference is that one exists and one doesn't. The mannequin that was merely labeled by our mind does not exist whereas the person that was merely labeled by the mind does exist. Do you see now?

What's your name? [*Student:* Mark.] So now Mark, concentrate, OK. There are a few who say that negative actions don't exist. In order for something to exist, it should be devoid of three harms or the three mistakes, and it needs to have the three qualities—not exactly qualities but three things.

The first is having a valid base. Continuing that example that I mentioned before, the base on which we label “person” must be a valid one. So, we thought it was a mannequin from a distance but as we got closer we saw it was a real person. As I mentioned, both “mannequin” and “person” were merely labeled on the base, but afterwards we discovered it was a person, so it has both the appearance of a person and is merely labeled as a person, whereas the mannequin that we labeled does not exist.

I’m talking here about how things exist. The person is merely labeled by mind but how does it exist? What we label “person” has a valid base. Why? Because it is the association of body and mind. Without the body, if there was just the mind, such as in the formless realm, it could also be a valid base, but just a valid base for something to be labeled “mind.” But here the valid base is the aggregates, the association of both body and mind, which makes it suitable to receive the label “person” or “living being.”

Can this particular base, the aggregates, the association of body and mind, receive the label “football”? Can it receive the name “kaka”? [Rinpoche and students laugh] [Student replies inaudible]

It looks like you meditated too much on emptiness! [Rinpoche and students laugh] It looks like you’ve lived too much in emptiness and then you went beyond. You’ve slipped out from beyond the Middle Way. Which country are you from?

Student: The Netherlands.

Rinpoche: Does the Netherlands have a king?

Student: No, we now have a queen.

Rinpoche: So, if you told other people that you were the queen of the Netherlands, what they would say?

Student: They would be happy! [Rinpoche and students laugh]

Rinpoche: No, no, if you advertise to the people of the world, if you tell them, that you are the queen of the Netherlands, would they accept that? Would people recognize you as the queen?

Student: People would say no. They would think I was crazy.

Rinpoche: But why would they think you were crazy if you told them that you were the queen. That is very important point to understand.

Student: Emptiness—because there's a label.

Rinpoche: Because there's a label they think you are crazy? Then? [*Student:* inaudible] But why do they think you are crazy? If you announce that you are the queen of the Netherlands, what makes them think that you are crazy?

Student: Because they know what the queen looks like, and how she behaves.

Rinpoche: Quite a person! [*Rinpoche and students laugh*] But why do people accept that she is the queen and not you?

Student: We had another queen before, and there was a crowning, and she's the old queen's second daughter.

Rinpoche: That's why. What you're explaining is the base. She receives the label "queen," but you, this association of body and mind that is you, does not receive the label "queen." Your base, your association of body and mind—the aggregates—doesn't have all those stories that are connected with her particular aggregates, being born in that royal family, being crowned and so forth. Your base doesn't have those qualities or that function to receive the label "queen," but her association of body and mind—the one that people crowned and so forth, that involves all those connections or stories—can receive the label "queen." Right?

That base receives the label "queen" and people accept it, they agree with it because the label has a valid base, that particular association of body and mind connected with having been crowned and all the stories. The base has the function [of being the queen] so when she tells others that she is the queen, people don't think she's crazy. But you don't have that valid base, all those

stories such as being crowned and so forth, therefore even if you label yourself, “I am the Queen of the Netherlands”—even if your friend labels you—because the base is not valid, it cannot receive the label “Queen of the Netherlands.”

THE THREE CRITERIA FOR AN OBJECT TO EXIST

Anyway, it’s enough. So, we see a person from a distance who is not moving and we label that person “mannequin.” Afterwards we realize it is not a mannequin but a person. It appeared to be a mannequin but that was wrong. We realized the mannequin didn’t exist, that it was an actual, real living person. The mannequin and the person are the same in that they were labeled by our mind, on that base, but the mannequin doesn’t exist whereas the person does, because the base of the person, the body and mind, is valid for it to be labeled “person” but not “mannequin.”

The person exists because it has a valid base—the aggregates, the association of the body and mind—that can receive the label “person.” That is the main reason, the ultimate reason, why the person exists and why mannequin doesn’t exist.

That is the main reason. But now there is more. Whether anything exists or not is not just up to the mind labeling it. It’s up to whether there is a valid base. If the only criterion for it to exist depended on it being labeled by the mind, without needing a valid base, then hallucinations would be reality. There wouldn’t be any hallucinations. If things only exist by depending on the mind that labels them, there would never be any false views or any hallucinations. Whatever the mind labels would have to exist.

In that case, just as I was asking, whenever we announced we were a king or queen, while we were not, just by announcing that to others, “I am the king of Nepal” or “I am president of this and that,” just by labeling, then we would become that. Of course, that doesn’t happen, because we don’t have a valid base. To be president we need a democratic vote where the biggest number of people voted for us. Then we have a valid base to be labeled “president,” and people will accept we can take on that responsibility. Without the majority of votes there is no valid base and we can’t be labeled “president.” Even if we still label ourselves like that, people will not accept it because we didn’t get the majority of votes. When we say, “I am the president,” people will think we are crazy! We have labeled our aggregates “president,” but that president doesn’t exist.

So, whether any phenomenon exists or not is not solely up to the mind labeling it so. Each of these words has much meaning—it is not *solely* up to the mind labeling it; it is also up to whether there is a valid base or not.

There is another criterion needed for something to exist. For a person to exist, for instance, as well as having a valid base, the association of the body and mind, it *cannot receive harm from another valid mind*. We can also say from another undeceptive mind or unbetraying mind. The main criterion for a person to exist is having a valid base but it must have the support of not being harmed or negated by another valid mind, one that realizes that the person does not exist. Another undeceptive, unbetraying mind sees there is a person and that therefore does not contradict the other valid mind.

Then, the third criterion is that it *does not receive harm from absolute wisdom*, the wisdom directly realizing emptiness. If the person labeled on the valid base, the association of body and mind, receives harm from or is negated by the wisdom realizing emptiness, that means the person has to be false. It is a false view.

By analyzing this, what our wisdom discovers is the absolute truth, the absence of the person existing from its own side, how the person is empty of existing from its own side. When that valid base is not harmed by this absolute truth, we can say the person exists.

To exist, something must be devoid of these three mistakes and have these three prerequisites. In the case of a person, what we label is related to this valid base, the association of body and mind, and is devoid of these three mistakes and has these three prerequisites. When we think about the person we mistook to be a mannequin, we labeled it “mannequin” in relation to the base of body and mind, but that is not a valid base to be labeled “mannequin.” It hasn’t got a valid base. Why?

Student: The mannequin is different from a person. It doesn’t have mind and the different aggregates.

Rinpoche: There’s no aggregate of form? The mannequin has the aggregate of form?

Student: I think so, yes.

Rinpoche: So, the mannequin has a body but no mind? Like a dead person?

Student: Well, not really.

Rinpoche: Anyway, the mannequin doesn't exist [on this body and mind] because it doesn't have a valid base. The base is not the association of body and mind, OK? Then not only that, the person exists because it has a valid base of body and mind, but the mannequin, what we first thought was the person, doesn't exist because it doesn't have a valid base. It just existed according to our point of view, our perspective, [when we were far away]. How do we prove this? We can prove the mannequin does not exist because of the other valid mind. Another undeceived or unbetrayable mind realizes it does not exist, therefore it receives harm from that valid mind. How? Because that other unbetrayable, valid mind discovers that the mannequin does not have a valid base and therefore does not exist. This supports what we have discovered.

I think that is a very big confusion in Western culture in the definition of what is truth and what is false. Truth or false is not a small subject; it is like the sky. It looks like it's simple but it is not. It includes so many things, all the false views that sentient beings have, all of reality—it covers so much. What is truth and what is false is the most important study. The reason there are so many problems in life is due to the limited knowledge of what is truth and what is false. I think that becomes the biggest problem, so it is a very important point to reflect on, to study, to meditate on, to research on this.

I think that the third criterion [not being harmed by absolute wisdom] might involve more details. The merely labeled I exists, but what appears on top of that, in addition to that, is the inherently existent I, that one that appears and we believe in totally. That doesn't exist at all. The merely labeled I exists but the inherently existent I doesn't exist. So, I think the third criterion involves more specifics, in aspect of the merely labeled I which exists and the I that is the object of ignorance, the I that doesn't exist. I think the third one is specifying more, bringing more to that aspect of the I that doesn't exist. That is my conclusion but maybe there are other explanations.

We discover the mannequin doesn't exist because it doesn't have a valid base but not only that, another valid mind discovers the same. So, the knowledge that this is a person and not a mannequin is not harmed by another valid mind. I'll put it this way. The mannequin doesn't exist due to the first criterion, that it doesn't have valid base, but it also receives harm from another valid, unbetrayable mind, proving that this is not a mannequin, that it does not exist.

Even if we believe that this is a mannequin—our mind has labeled it “mannequin”—when another valid mind harms our belief, we can then discover that it is not a mannequin. It's the same as having met a friend in a dream and in the daytime when we are awake. Both are merely labeled by the mind in the same way, but the dreamtime friend does not exist because it does not have a valid base, whereas the daytime friend, although also merely labeled by the mind in the same way, does exist because it has a valid base.

The appearance of the body of the friend in the dream doesn't exist; it is a hallucination. Unless it is influenced by some material substance or mantra by the power of a magician, causing us to hallucinate, the appearance of the body in the daytime does have a valid base. It's the same as the dream in that it is merely labeled, but unlike the dream in that, because of the valid base, it exists. Even without referring to another person's valid mind, we can discover how the dream friend does not exist. It seemed real in our dream. We completely believed it while we were dreaming, but once we woke up, even our own mind can discover how it is not true, how having that friend there in the dream didn't happen.

The friend we met in the dream receives harm from our own valid mind when we wake up. We realize it is not true. For the duration of the dream we believed it but on waking we can prove it's not true.

To give another example. In a dream we won a million dollars in a lottery. We bought a lottery ticket and won. But when we wake up there is no million dollars. Let's say, though, that we did actually buy a lottery ticket and win a million dollars. Both the dream winning and the actual winning are the same in that they are both merely labeled by the mind, but the big difference is that we can't spend the dream million dollars whereas we can spend the money we won in the daytime. If the million dollars we won in the dream were real, when we woke up we should be able to relax, knowing we would never have to go to work again! “Now I don't have to go to work. Now I don't have to keep busy all my life. I can have years of holidays.” [Rinpoche and

students laugh] After waking up, however, we don't have the million dollars to spend. But the million dollars we win from that daytime lottery ticket is functionable. With that money we can buy a house or property or something. Even after we die, what we bought with that money would still exist, the property or house or whatever. If we left a will, then it could be spent by our family members or other people. But when we dream of winning a million dollars, we can't use it like that.

Recently, when I was travelling in Italy, there was a plan to meet the pope. Some students succeeded in getting an interview, so I mentioned that only if they thought there was some benefit for me to meet him, [they could arrange it]. One thing I thought to request the pope was to help bring as much peace as possible in the world. And the other thing I thought to ask was his definition of what is truth and what is false. I was curious to hear what the pope would say. In that way, I thought the meeting might have some fruitful result, just talking like this. However, it was not possible and it was cancelled.

DYING WITH THE FIVE POWERS

If there are one or two questions, maybe during teatime.

Student: If there's no clinging to the self and someone else wanted to kill you, would that be suicide?

Rinpoche: No, it doesn't become suicide. It doesn't become killing yourself. You can use a similar example even subtler than that. If you are completely unconscious, if somebody kills you at that time, does that become suicide? [*Student:* inaudible] Which action are you talking about? Becoming unconscious or the person killing you? [*Student:* inaudible] So, now you're talking about the motivation for the action—the other person killing you or which one? [*Student:* inaudible]

There's no attachment to that fear? You said, "no attachment to that fear"? I don't think there would be attachment to fear. [*Student:* inaudible] So, there is lot of fear, but what you are saying is there is no self, there is no thought of self? [*Student:* inaudible] OK, then.

If it is empty, if there is no thought of the self but [the mind] is in a state of emptiness, then if we definitely die with that thought, it is said in the practice of five powers that is the power of training. There is the power of the white seed, the power of the prayer, the power of the attitude or intention, the power of putting the blame on the ego and then the power of training.

These five are really how to die. This is really how to make preparation for death. When we know we are going to die, that we are going to die this week or on any of these days, then there is the practice of the five powers near death time. Of them, the last one is the power of training, but maybe a clearer translation would be the power of transformation, the power of transforming the mind.

We begin with all the other practices, and then, when we know we are going to die, we lie down in the position of lion sleeping, which is the position that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was in when he showed the aspect of passing away. This is how the Buddha laid down his holy body. He lay on the bed on his right side, with both his legs stretched out and his left arm stretched out on the top of his body. By remembering that position, we are also remembering the Buddha, so it becomes a refuge practice; the position itself becomes a way to be guided by the Buddha.

It is normally advised in the teachings that when we go to bed, we should sleep in this position. It is a sleeping yoga practice. There is a way to do it in the lamrim and it is especially explained in tantric practice, where the explanation is much deeper, where there are more transcendental or higher meditations explained. We can practice sleeping yoga when we go to sleep.

In this position, first of all, we remember the Buddha, so it becomes the cause for liberation and enlightenment. That thought itself leaves an imprint. Then, in this position, other beings, spirits cannot harm us during the sleep. Then also, remembering Buddha's position, lying down in that way and then going to sleep helps us not to die with the delusions. It helps our very last thought to be virtuous, whether it is devotion, compassion, wisdom, or whatever.

When the very last thought before we die is Dharma, our mind becomes Dharma, and that Dharma protects us from the lower realms. Even though we might have created many negative karmas, if we are able to transform our mind into Dharma with our very last thought, we are saved from being reincarnated in the lower realms. If it is more successful to be reborn in the pure realm then there could be the karma to transfer there, however it is definite that we will at

least receive the body of a happy migratory being, a human or deva's body. So, the physical preparation is like that.

The mental preparation is by first doing the special bodhicitta practice, taking all other sentient beings' sufferings on ourselves and giving all our happiness and merits to them. We try to die with the bodhicitta mind, the purest attitude, the thought of benefiting all sentient beings, a mind as vast as the infinite sky. That is one thing. The other thing is emptiness.

This is the answer to your question. We should meditate on the emptiness of the I, that the I does not exist at all from its own side, that it is completely empty of existing from its own side. During that time, if we are really able to meditate on emptiness, with no thought of the self or I, that is the best way of dying.

The best way to die is while the mind is transformed into bodhicitta and while meditating on emptiness. That is explained in the commentaries on thought transformation where they talk about this practice of the five powers near death. To die while meditating on emptiness becomes a very rich, very powerful way to die. While we are meditating on emptiness, because neither attachment nor anger arise, it is like an atomic bomb. Emptiness is the most powerful meditation to directly eliminate the root of all karma and delusions, ignorance, the concept of true existence. It directly eliminates the root of samsara, ignorance. Therefore, there is no question that there is no opportunity to generate anger or those other delusions during that time. So, that mind becomes very powerful Dharma, very rich Dharma.

While our mind is in this state, if we die with this mental state, whether we are killed by somebody or not, it cannot be suicide. I think committing suicide means having the intention to kill yourself. That is my definition of committing suicide. The person has the intention to kill himself and then does the action, otherwise it does not receive the label "suicide." Did that help a little bit? [*Student: inaudible*]

If you die in meditation? [*Student: inaudible*] You mean you are not doing meditation? [*Student: inaudible*] So, because you are meditating, you are now aware, and then somebody kills you? [*Student: inaudible*] You don't see the person who is killing you as solid? [*Student: inaudible*]

There could be the possibility that if you lived longer you could have more success in this life. For some people that is possible. But since the person died in meditation, with either renunciation or bodhicitta or emptiness or guru devotion or something, if they did it with faith, with devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, if the person died with a Dharma mind, there is no question; they would definitely attain a good rebirth.

Maybe, if the person had lived longer, there would have been more success, realizations and so forth, but even if there was an untimely death, because they died with a Dharma mind, because there had been a lot of preparation done and imprints left, it should be possible in one of the future lives, sooner or later the person will have realizations. Because there was an obstacle, it was just delayed. This can happen. Of course it *is* better that in this life we don't die now and receive the realizations of the path more quickly. That is more meaningful than taking a longer time, because the more quickly we can achieve realizations, the more beneficial it is for other sentient beings.

Enjoy the tea.

RINPOCHE ALMOST DROWNS

What is your name? [*Student: Melinda*] So what Melinda asked, whether it becomes suicide if somebody kills you during that time. Does this question stop there or is there something else after that? [*Student: inaudible*] If you are drowned? [*Student: inaudible*]

That's my aim, to have bodhicitta! [Rinpoche laughs] That's my aim. I wish that could be my aim for many, many thousands of lifetimes.

I don't know why, but in one part of Solu Khumbu, in autumn and spring, tourists used to come for trekking and climbing, using the Sherpas for porters. They camped with their tents. The place is called Rolwaling. It is regarded as the hidden place of Padmasambhava. It is a very strong place for Dharma practice, this is without question for meditation. There are huge mountains and in the center there is a river with green ground around. There is the monastery where my alphabet teacher was a monk. There weren't really other monks, just lamas doing pujas and rituals. They also did retreats from time to time and did service for others, pujas for sick people, this and that.

So, there is the monastery, with the temples and the houses for the lamas below, and then there are the huge rocky mountains all around, where Padmasambhava's cave is situated. There are five different colored lakes in front. From there you can see the five pointed mountains where there are many caves with a lot of footprints left by those past great yogis and Padmasambhava's natural footprint left on the rocks. There are many small footprints left on the rocks from previous times. It is Padmasambhava's holy place and there are many caves and many stories, many things related with Padmasambhava, such as the holy water, the long-life vase and so forth.

When I was very small, I sometimes saw foreigners. They might have been Americans, I'm not sure. I couldn't judge where they were from, because I was so young. They seemed to have a completely different appearance than the Western people have now! At that time they seemed to come from a different planet! [Rinpoche and students laugh] From some place very far away, from some other planet or star. When I was very small, what I saw was the yellow hair and blue eyes, and the language, which I remember sounded to me like something made by a movie projector, as the film goes around, you know, sort of *sic, sic, sic, sic, sic!* [Rinpoche and students laugh] That's what I remembered, the yellow hair and eyebrows and blue eyes, and the language that was something like, *weesh, weesh, weesh, weesh*, something like that. I was very small, watching their lips, and that seemed to be the sound coming from their lips! And I saw them taking some round tablets, probably iron pills to keep healthy or something. [*Student: Vitamins?*] Vitamins or something like that. I remember I could see them taking two white tablets.

Anyway, I found those people very strange, like they had come from very far away, from another planet or something. What I remember from that time is I didn't think their appearance was particularly attractive in any way. They were kind of strange, very hairy. That's what I remember.

We used to really like collecting the jam jars they gave us, still half-full. We had no interest in the red stuff inside, which I presume must have been jam, but we liked the containers very much. When somebody threw the jar away, we would take it. People used them to drink *chang* from because they were kind of neat-looking. There were also brown square things that I guess must have been chocolate. Brown square things that were kind of sticky. We found that strange and didn't like it.

I stayed in that place for seven years, then I went to Pagri in Tibet, to Domo Geshe Rinpoche's monastery, where I memorized texts and did many, many pujas, participating with my teacher and others. For many years, I read many texts, the hundreds of volumes of the Kangyur and Tengyur and I did puja for other people, who requested them for their health or success or whatever, or when somebody had died. And so my teacher and I had to read the texts every day.

Afterwards, I was ordained in Tibet, in Domo Geshe-la's monastery. I think it was around the time Tibet was overtaken by the Communist Chinese. I spent three years in Pharping. I went to the monastery there to offer examination. Whatever was memorized, you make offerings of that to the monastery in order to enter the monastery, to be a monk of that monastery. I think that was done after I was ordained along with the many other young boys by a very good abbot of that monastery, a very good practitioner, a very good geshe from Sera Je College who was sent by Domo Geshe Rinpoche to be the abbot of this monastery in Tibet.

In Sherpa country, drinking *chang* remained an enjoyment, a reward for working. But there were some people who didn't drink. Anyway, even though my teacher told me not to go, I wanted to go where the Western people camped, to give them a present of some potatoes in a brass container we used for eating food and drinking *chang*. Potatoes are the main food in Solu Khumbu; that is the main product over there. My teacher told me not to go, not to give them a present, but I insisted. So, I filled up the pot with potatoes to give them.

There was a wide river with a bridge of two trees, not big like this one but small. The two trees put together were the bridge. When I reached the middle, the bridge was going up like this, and then I fell down. It was an obstacle because I didn't listen to my abbot, my guru, so the river went down like this and then the bridge went like that, and I fell into the river. I think my head must have been upright. I didn't realize it at the time but that's what I heard after. A little bit further there was very deep water with the water waves [rapids?] like that, which I was about to reach. My head kept coming out of the water, and I could see my teacher running to catch me. He was in a house and saw me fall in the river from the window, so he had to run down all the way from there. I think some other people saw me from their house and maybe shouted. My teacher was running toward me and as my head kept coming out of the water, I could see the mountain and the ground with the huge stupa in the center, quite far away. I could see my teacher trying to pull up his pants as he was running toward me. Anyway, the reason I have survived until now is because of the kindness of my teacher who grabbed me at that time.

At that time I didn't know any Dharma—nothing. I just memorized the words, but I didn't know any Dharma. I had read Milarepa's life story three times, I think. Because it seems very clear now, having read it in childhood seems to have left a very strong imprint in the mind. What I do remember from that time [of being in the water] is that there was definitely no fear. And although I didn't know anything about emptiness or the three principal aspects of the path, as I was going under the water, I had in my mind, "What people call the Lawudo Lama is now going to die." The "Lawudo Lama" was more like a label, a name. This was there but it was somehow strange because I hadn't memorized any texts or had any understanding of the scriptures. I think it might have been to do with past lives' imprints. I think in a previous life I must have done a good job, but I think in this life I'm doing a very bad job! [Rinpoche and students laugh] Maybe at that time it was like that, the childhood mind was kind of fresh, but now the mind has degenerated.

Anyway, the main thing I meant to say is that my teacher saved me. I don't remember being scared, but the fact that my teacher saved me was the main thing.

THE MIND AT THE TIME OF DEATH

I don't know whether this is particularly related to your question or not, but it just came out of me talking about somebody dying and emptiness. Probably your question wasn't about that, maybe not related to emptiness, but more related to not having a strong thought of self, like for example, when we try to meditate and sometimes our mind becomes blank. We're not actually meditating, but stuck, blank, like seeing a white cloud from a plane. Not quite like that, but stuck. At that time, there is the self-cherishing thought but it's not strong, not visible.

Similarly, during a meditation like a zen meditation where you are supposed to think of nothing. At that time there is the self-cherishing thought, but it's not visible. Just because negative thoughts like attachment or anger are not manifest, that does not mean we are free from them. So, we can relate that to the mind as we are dying. I'm not sure whether that's related to your question or not. Certainly, during that time, there is no visible attachment or anger. When the mind is in that state, we are blank and thinking of nothing.

According to His Holiness Zong Rinpoche, with such meditations, when we meditate on nothing, we create the karma to be a fool or an animal, whose mind is very foolish. The highest we can achieve in samsara is the formless realm, where there are four categories: infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness and the tip of samsara. With this kind of meditation, the best we can achieve is the third level of the formless realm, nothingness, which is still samsara. During the courses he gave in the Western centers, His Holiness Zong Rinpoche used to quite often say that when you are bored with thoughts and look at nothingness as peace, if you cling on to that idea, the highest state you can achieve is the third level of the formless realm, nothingness, which is still samsara.

Rinpoche also used to say that continuing that kind of meditation makes the mind dull and forgetful. Sometimes you meet people who have more problems the more they meditate. They become more and more forgetful, duller and duller. The mind loses its sharpness. That shows there have been some mistakes in the method of meditation, in the way of concentrating.

That is one thing, but forgetfulness can be due to other causes and conditions, such as how well we protect our karma. It can also depend on how much we have been correctly devoted to the virtuous friend in this life and in past lives. So, forgetfulness can also result from having made mistakes in correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, degenerating our samaya vows and so forth, as well as not having protected our karma well. Not having protected our karma well is the main thing, whether we are Buddhist or not. Then, for somebody who practices, it also depends on those other details.

The other thing is making mistakes in the way we meditate. Instead of developing wisdom, alertness, sharpness of mind, the mind become duller and duller. If that is happening, that means we have to check our practice to see what mistakes we are making. We do that by studying the Dharma, especially the lamrim, which is the essence of the whole Buddhadharma, and then the other scriptures. The more we study and listen to qualified Dharma teachers, especially experienced ones, the more we check and analyze and gain understanding about the path, the more wisdom we will have to judge whether we are meditating correctly or not. And if we are doing it wrongly, we will know how to stop and practice correctly. So, it is very important to listen to as many teachings as possible from qualified virtuous friends, especially experienced beings, and to study and check. By consulting and expanding on what we know, we will be saved

from that danger. Therefore, the three principal aspects of the path—renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness—become extremely important.

This gives you some idea of what happens when a person dies with such a mind, what happens with the rebirth. That is the conclusion I was trying to make.

[At the time of death] the four elements—earth, water, fire and air or wind—absorb. First, the earth element absorbs, then the water element, the fire element and finally the wind element absorb into the consciousness. Then, the gross mind stops; it too absorbs. I guess by that time the brain function and everything has stopped.

But there is still the subtle consciousness as we go through the meditation of three appearances—white, red and near-attainment dark appearance. There is the subtle consciousness and then the extremely subtle consciousness, clear light. That means the mind is still there in the body. Death finally happens only after the clear light has stopped, when the extremely subtle consciousness leaves the body from the heart.

Of course, there is no question that if we are able to recognize and use the clear light for meditation, that is a virtuous thought, but generally that is not possible and those subtle thoughts can be indifferent.

After the wind element absorbs into the consciousness and the gross consciousness absorbs, if that mind can be transformed into virtue, we will not reincarnate in the lower realms. But if that last thought of the gross mind is nonvirtue, that is what causes the consciousness to migrate to the lower realms.

It is explained that when the person is dying the signs of reincarnating in the lower realm are that heat starts to absorb from the head and the head starts to become cold before the feet. The eyes roll up and there can be a lot of terrifying karmic visions. The person can scream so much, opening their mouth, thrashing their limbs and emitting urine and kaka, things like that. It is an unpeaceful death, and very frightening. I think Lama Tsongkhapa in his lamrim explained five external signs of reincarnating in the lower realms, but a person does not necessarily have to experience all five. It depends on how heavy the negative karma is. There is also blood coming from the mouth, nose and ears. It depends on the heaviness of the karma.

Even if the person is already on their way to the lower realms, already in the intermediate state, if the family members have Dharma wisdom and if they are generous and kind, they can change that person's rebirth due to the power of tantric practice, such as the *jangwa* purification done by a good meditator, a qualified lama. This is a special practice that hooks the consciousness and purifies it, shooting it into a pure land. If the family members request a qualified meditator to do that practice, the person's rebirth can still be changed and they can attain a human or deva body or be born in a pure land.

This is similar to a person who becomes unconsciousness and stays unconscious for a long time in a coma. During that time, although there is no conscious thought that strongly thinks "I", there is still the self-cherishing thought. The person may stay in the coma for one or many days and then die. I don't know how much their mind was able to function in the coma, I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I'd say that before they became unconscious, whether the last gross thought was virtuous or nonvirtuous would determine their rebirth. Generally, in an unconsciousness state, there are many invisible [subconscious?] positive thoughts or thoughts of attachment or anger. This is just to give you an idea; it's just my point of view.

THE TWO PRACTICES: NOT HARMING AND BENEFITING

We'll just do Vajrasattva. So Visualize Vajrasattva on the crown.

Think that you have attained this perfect human body, and from your own side you have met the virtuous friend who can reveal the whole, unmistaken path to enlightenment without missing anything. And you have not just met the Buddhadharma but you have also met the Mahayana teachings, the teachings of the Great Vehicle as well as, for some of you, the Vajrayana, the Secret Mantra teachings. For those who haven't yet met the Vajrayana, the Secret Mantra, there is the opportunity to meet and practice that which is quickest path to enlightenment.

At this time, it is not sufficient just being satisfied with having peace of mind in daily life. Just living life with a quiet mind, some peace of mind, is not sufficient. We should be able to make preparation for death, whenever it happens, ensuring we won't be reborn in the lower realms but will receive a deva or human body, the body of the happy migrator being.

But even that alone is not sufficient. While we are not liberated from samsara, we have to constantly experience suffering without a break of even a second. In other words, until we are liberated from samsara, there is not even one second's break from the suffering of samsara. We are constantly attacked, overwhelmed, by the cause of samsara, karma and delusions. We are not only being constantly attacked by the true cause of suffering but we are also being attacked by true suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. This happens even if we are born in a deva or human realm. We can understand that by looking at our present example, our own experiences, and by remembering what the Omniscient One has explained.

Therefore we must be liberated from the entire suffering of samsara. Once that is achieved, it is impossible to experience suffering again. Practicing Dharma, following the path to be liberated from the entire suffering of samsara is one-time work.

But even if we can achieve liberation from samsara, that is not sufficient. As I mentioned at the beginning of the course, in the very first introduction, the purpose of our life is not just to obtain happiness for ourselves, to only solve our problems. The purpose of our life is to free everyone from all suffering and lead them all to happiness, and especially the most important service, which is to bring all suffering sentient beings, whose minds are obscured, to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. What is the ultimate goal of life? It is to make our life useful to others, to be beneficial to other sentient beings, to obtain happiness for others. To allow our body, speech and mind to be used by others for their happiness—that is the ultimate goal of our life.

In the teachings that are the collections of Kadampa geshe's advice, the advice of those great yogis, those hidden tantric practitioners, those highly realized meditators, it is said that they see everything as an instruction. Not only the Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Hinayana, not only the Mahayana Paramitayana teachings or the teachings of the Secret Mantra, besides all these different levels of teachings taught by the Buddha, any verse, any line, even any syllable that they see anywhere appears to them as an instruction for practice, for them to achieve full enlightenment.

Because we practice Mahayana we reject the Lesser Vehicle teaching, or because we practice Vajrayana, the Secret Mantra, we reject the Mahayana Sutra teachings, or because we practice

Mahayana Sutra teachings we reject the Vajrayana, thinking that this is not for us. The Kadampas never have such thoughts. To them, everything appears as an instruction for them to practice in order to attain enlightenment. Even one line, even one verse, even one syllable they see anywhere appears to them as an instruction to practice. That is the meaning of the title these meditators have, “Kadampa,” *Ka* is any advice, any teaching of the Buddha, and *dam* is instruction. So, in the collections of Kadampa geshe’s experiences, they explain that this is how they practice Dharma, how they develop their mind.

I don’t exactly remember the name, but probably Kadampa Geshe Chekawa said that the entire Buddhadharma is integrated in these two practices—to avoid giving harm to others and to benefit others. All three baskets of teachings, the Vinaya, Sutra and Abhidharma are contained in these two instructions, abandoning giving harm to others and benefiting others. As far as the three vehicles of teachings, the Hinayana, Mahayana Paramitayana and Mahayana Vajrayana, abandoning giving harm includes all the Hinayana teachings and benefiting others includes all the Mahayana teachings. On the basis of avoiding giving harm to others, on top of that, we benefit others.

The main aim of the Lesser Vehicle teachings is to stop giving harm others, to change our actions of body and speech that harm others. In the Mahayana teaching the main emphasis, the attitude to adopt, is to not only stop giving harm with the body, speech and mind, but on the basis of that, to transform the mind into bodhicitta, the altruistic mind that renounces ourselves and cherishes other sentient beings and, because of that, to make our body, speech and mind most useful for others, to offer most extensive benefit to other living beings.

Relating this to the lamrim, the graduated path of the lower capable being and the graduated path of the middle capable being are included in the first instruction, to stop giving harm to others, and the graduated path of the higher capable being is included in the second instruction, to benefit others. So, the whole lamrim practice, the whole path, is condensed into these two instructions.

As I mentioned, every one of us here has the universal responsibility to free everyone from all suffering and to obtain happiness for all the living beings. We can offer all these extensive benefits to other living beings if we generate compassion toward others. If we develop our mind in the path, we are able to offer these extensive benefits to all living beings, to bring them

peerless happiness, full enlightenment. It depends on ourselves, on how we want to use the mind, whether we want to use the mind that way or not.

Not only that, now we have opportunity to generate compassion for all other living beings, to develop on the path to enlightenment, to achieve the infinite qualities to be able to guide all other sentient beings perfectly. At this time, we have all the opportunities. While we have this perfect human body, we are able to offer extensive benefit to all other living beings. That is why I say that everyone of us has the responsibility for all other living beings' happiness.

Therefore think, "I must achieve full enlightenment, no matter how long it takes, no matter how hard it is, because there is nothing more beneficial than this, there is nothing more worthwhile to do in life than this, there is no higher success, no higher goal to achieve in life than this. Concerning both others and myself, there is no other higher achievement. Therefore I must generate the stages of the path to enlightenment. For that reason, I am going to listen the profound holy Dharma, the lamrim teachings."

FOLLOWING THESE TWO PRACTICES IS THE ESSENCE OF THE DHARMA

So, just a little bit about karma to finish, just the last part. These two instructions are about karma; these are the fundamental Dharma, the fundamental practice.

As I just mentioned and as it is said in the teachings, the essence of the whole Buddhadharma is to abandon giving harm to others and, on top of that, to benefit other sentient beings if we can. Therefore if we do not understand karma, the various things [to abandon and practice], and if we don't do the practice of protecting our karma, no matter how much we intellectually understand the whole of Buddhism, [it is worthless.] It is like when we want to eat a pizza then we just look at a picture of a pizza! [Rinpoche and students laugh] Just having a picture of a pizza without actually having a pizza we can eat doesn't fill our stomach. We have to actually buy a pizza or make one. Making a drawing of a pizza when we are hungry doesn't help.

Similarly, without this basic understanding of Dharma practice, and especially without protecting our karma, without abstaining from negative karma, only having an intellectual understanding of the subject without practicing it doesn't help. No matter how much knowledge we have, our life won't change; it will be the same as before, when we didn't know anything about Buddhism. We

will continue to constantly have all the problems, all the confusion; we will continue to harm others. There will be no change in our mind and so no change in our actions and no change in what we have to experience: the confusion, the problems and so forth. So these basic understandings are essential; they are the practices we need to do down on earth, the ground practices, not just something insubstantial in space or in some hallucination.

Dharma practice involves benefiting others or at the very least abandoning giving harm to others. If we cannot do even that, there is no Dharma practice. Abandoning harming others means abstaining from the negative karma that harms others and ourselves, abstaining from these harmful actions as much as possible, watching the mind and protecting the mind from delusions. That's Dharma practice. No matter how many extensive sutra and tantra teachings we have studied, many hundreds of volumes with very technical explanations, with many very involved philosophies that are difficult to understand, that simple advice—abstaining from harmful actions—is the very heart of the Dharma; it is the essence of what it means to practice the Dharma. It is simply just abstaining from those harmful actions and protecting our mind from the delusions that endanger us and other sentient beings. That's all it is; that's the very heart.

Whenever we do this, at that time we are practicing Dharma. When this does not happen, we are not practicing Dharma, we are not doing the real meditation, even though we might sit for many hours without talking, without eating, without meeting people, just living in a cave or hermitage, being away from the world, from cities, from other people. Unless this is happening, we are not practicing Dharma. No matter how much we might believe we are meditating or practicing Dharma, that doesn't mean that we are. But when we *are* able to do this, there is development, progress, in the mind, and then there are realizations. Then we are able to benefit other sentient beings. Then everything comes, including the highest realization, enlightenment.

So, these are the real subjects we must listen to again and again, again and again, we must meditate on and realize that the practice starts from karma, changing our actions from harmful ones into beneficial ones, from actions that become the cause of suffering into actions that become the cause of happiness, that result in peace and happiness for ourselves and others. This is the real Dharma, the fundamental Dharma to listen to, to study, to meditate on and to realize.

Anyway, now we've finished. I think it's a good time to stop. So again it didn't happen. Maybe in the afternoon! [Rinpoche laughs]

Lecture 13

December 14, 1993

ORAL TRANSMISSION OF THE *LAMA TSONGKHAPA GURU YOGA*

One of the practices is guru yoga practice, the practice of guru devotion that allows us to receive the blessings of the guru. From the blessing, the realizations of the path to enlightenment come. That is the purpose of practicing guru yoga. It is a very important preliminary practice and the root of the path to enlightenment. We can practice guru yoga with any buddha but here we are practicing guru yoga with Lama Tsongkhapa, the guru yoga practice [where we see the Buddha as] inseparable with Lama Tsongkhapa.

There are eight particular benefits of doing the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* practice, as explained by Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, the great enlightened being who taught *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, the commentary on the stages of the path to enlightenment.

The *first benefit* is that it establishes the root of all the collections of goodness. (That sounds like “my goodness!”)[Laughter] It establishes the root of all the collections of goodness of this life and future lives, which means happiness in this and future lives, temporal happiness and ultimate happiness: liberation from samsara and even highest enlightenment.

The *second benefit* is that whatever we do—listening, studying, reflecting, meditating—becomes effective, beneficial. Everything we do takes our mind in the right direction, diminishing the self-cherishing thought and so forth. Whatever Dharma study we do benefits to our mind.

The *third benefit* is that we don’t get harmed. We don’t receive obstacles, interferences.

The *fourth benefit* is that we are not harmed by nagas, spirits. For example, many diseases such as arthritis and cancer are related to naga harm; the outside condition is to do with nagas. Different types of spirits [bring different harm] such as paralysis or epilepsy. But we are protected because the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* is not just Tsongkhapa’s aspect alone but an integration of the three deities, Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom; Chenrezig, the Compassionate Buddha; and Vajrapani, who is the embodiment of all the buddhas’ power.

The *fifth benefit* is that it brings all of us all our wishes.

The *sixth benefit* is that we see our own guru as inseparable from Lama Tsongkhapa. This is the particular benefit of doing this guru yoga. It transforms our mind into this pure thought of guru devotion, looking at our own guru as inseparable with Lama Tsongkhapa, integrated in these three deities, and in particular Manjushri. It is a common experience that through this guru yoga meditation people are able to develop [the seven] wisdoms: great wisdom, clear wisdom, profound wisdom, quick wisdom, the wisdom of explaining Dharma, debating wisdom and writing Dharma. It is a common experience that by doing this guru yoga practice related to Lama Tsongkhapa, people are able to develop wisdom, even just through doing a one- or two-month retreat.

The *seventh benefit* is that from life to life we are able to meet Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings. There are special benefits from meeting the sutra and tantra teachings, but this is one of the very special benefits. One of the special qualities of Lama Tsongkhapa's teaching is that they clearly show the most subtle points of the Dharma, in both sutra and tantric practice, ones that many famous meditators make mistakes with. Lama Tsongkhapa made very clear, detailed explanations, explaining what are the mistakes and what are the correct teachings, the right path to be practiced.

For example, in the calm abiding meditation, shamatha, there are two obstacles to having perfect single-pointed concentration: attachment-scattering mind and sinking mind. To achieve calm abiding, the special concentration that is achieved through the extremely refined rapturous ecstasy of mind and body, we must completely overcome these two obstacles, both of which have gross and subtle aspects. It is very difficult to recognize subtle sinking thought and there are many meditators who believe this subtle sinking thought is perfect meditation. It is impossible to ever achieve perfect calm abiding while holding this misconception.

Lama Tsongkhapa especially made extensive clarification of the subtle points of emptiness, the right view, giving an extremely detailed explanation, showing what were the wrong understandings of emptiness, the wrong meditations on emptiness, and explaining the extremely subtle dependent arising, the Prasangika's view of how everything is a dependent arising, existing by being merely labeled by mind and at the same time empty of existing from its own side. This very subtle emptiness or dependent arising is the only path that can directly cut the root of samsara.

He also showed how to achieve the illusory body in tantra, something many meditators make mistakes with. Lama Tsongkhapa made extensive clarification on all those subtle points where many meditators make mistakes, believing they were doing the right meditation or achieving such and such a realization.

So, this benefit is not just having met Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, which have these special qualities, the extensive, clear explanations, the clarification of these subtle points; it also allows us to have a successful practice with correct understanding, where we are protected from obstacles to quick enlightenment.

The *eighth benefit* of practicing the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* is that even if we do not become enlightened in this life, when death comes we can reincarnate in the pure realm of Tushita, Lama Tsongkhapa's pure realm. Once there, we will have the opportunity to practice tantra and complete the path and become enlightened.

So, these are particular benefits of practicing the guru yoga, seeing one's own root guru as inseparable from Tsongkhapa, like that.

Think, "At any rate I must achieve enlightenment quickly and more quickly for the sake of all sentient beings, to free them from all suffering and lead them to enlightenment. Therefore, I am going to take the oral transmission of the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*."

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission]

Along with this guru yoga, there is also the lamrim prayer, the oral transmission of the prayer of the steps of the path to enlightenment, which is extremely important to recite every day to leave the imprint of the whole path to enlightenment. Reciting this prayer each day leaves the imprint of the whole path to enlightenment, which means that each day we become closer to the realization of the path to enlightenment. Each day we become closer to enlightenment, and that means each day we become closer to freeing all sentient beings from all suffering and leading them to enlightenment. Therefore reciting this lamrim prayer at least once a day is the fundamental practice; it is more important than just spending time reciting mantras or doing a breathing meditation or so forth. It makes our life very rich; it makes each day life very rich.

Then, whatever other practice we do on the basis of reciting this one lamrim prayer mindfully, even meditating on the lamrim, if it's done mindfully, it leaves an imprint. So this is the very fundamental practice, whether we recite mantras or meditate on the lamrim or do tantric sadhanas or whatever.

For beginners who cannot do a long guru yoga practice or long prayers, there is a condensed meditation that I put together, a short everyday practice on how to meditate on the lamrim, on the steps of the path to enlightenment. There is a short preliminary, then the lamrim prayer and then the dedication. You can recite whatever mantras you have to, to heal a disease or solve problems, whatever it is. You can do those mantras after that. Then, you can meditate on the lamrim. And for those who can do the practice, there are many other practices like the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, the *Guru Puja* and so forth.

[Rinpoche chants]

This is requesting the transmission. This should be done before the lamrim prayer.

[Rinpoche chants]

DEDICATIONS

Then, we dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, and collected by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, may bodhicitta, which is the source of all happiness and success, be generated in my mind and in the minds of all the other sentient beings, and in those who have bodhicitta, may it be developed.

“Due to all these merits, may I and all sentient beings be guided by Lama Tsongkhapa, and may Lama Tsongkhapa be our direct guru in all our lifetimes. May we never be separated from the pure path that is highly admired by all the buddhas, the pure path of Lama Tsongkhapa.” You can include your own family and anybody you wish to pray for. You can include them here and then the rest of the sentient beings.

[Rinpoche chants]

“Due to all the three-time merits accumulated by me, and collected by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to all those merits, may I and all sentient beings, my family and all sentient beings, be guided in all our lifetimes to only meet the perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friend. From my side and the side of all sentient beings, may we only see the virtuous friend as the Buddha and only do actions pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend. May I be able to fulfill his holy wishes immediately by myself, and may it be the same for each sentient being.”

So, this prayer is the cause of all the success.

[Rinpoche chants]

“Due to all the three-time merit accumulated by me and by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, all these merits that are empty from its own side, may the I, who is empty from its own side, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, Lama Tsongkhapa’s enlightenment, that is also empty, and lead all sentient beings, who are empty, to that enlightenment as quickly as possible by myself alone.”

[Rinpoche chants]

I received the lineage of the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga* practice from His Holiness Zong Rinpoche and from His Holiness Ling Rinpoche. I also might have received it from other lamas, I don’t remember. Then, yesterday morning, the very powerful purification practice, Dorje Khadro, the offering burning practice, that we did, I received the lineage of the oral transmission here at Kopan many years ago from Lama Yeshe.

That’s all. Thank you very much.

Lecture 14

December 15, 1993

MEDITATING ON SUBTLE DEPENDENT ARISING

[It seems the beginning of the discourse was not taped]

The definition of existence that was explained by the Omniscient One in the teachings is the object that can be discovered by the valid mind. That is the definition of existence. But now here, it is not just that, by thinking of the meaning of dependent arising, we can say that any phenomena that exists does so by depending on the base to be labeled and depending on the label, that which is imputed. So, there are these two things. By depending on the base to be labeled and the label that is imputed, on those two, [an object] exists. Depending on those two, it is able to exist, it is able to arise, it is able to function.

For example, the I exists depending on the aggregates—the association of body and mind—on the base to be labeled. So there are the aggregates, which is the base to be labeled, and the label, the “I,” that which is imputed on the aggregates. We can also count on the thought that labels [as needed for an object to exist], but the essence is the dependence on these two: the base of the aggregates, and the label, the “I” that is imputed on that base. Depending on those two, the I exists and it is able to function—walking, sitting, sleeping, eating and so forth.

The merely labeled I is able to do all these functions, experiencing happiness and suffering as well as being able to abandon suffering and achieve happiness, by abandoning the cause of suffering and by practicing the cause of happiness. This merely labeled I can do all that.

So, this is not only defining the existence an object in the usual way, as that which can be ascertained by a valid mind, one that is not hallucinated, not defective. Here, we define an object as existing through subtle dependent arising, how, like the I, everything exists by depending on the base to be labeled and the label that is imputed. By depending on those two, the object arises or exists, and is able to function.

Defining existence in this way is very helpful. When we think of all existent things, in our heart we think of subtle dependent arising, and the understanding that arises from that is that all existent things are therefore empty of existing from their own side. The result is the

understanding arises in our heart that everything is empty, that nothing exists from its own side. The I is empty, the action is empty, all other phenomena are empty—empty of existing from their own side.

We should just concentrate on this a little bit, looking at all phenomena as empty, starting from the subject—the I, the self—and then the action, and then all other objects.

[Rinpoche and students meditate on this]

The conclusion of this meditation is that, because of this, now there is no basis for the delusions to arise. There is no object to get angry with; there is no object to cling to; there is no object to cause ignorance to arise, to cause the concept of inherent existence, the root of samsara, to arise. None of these concepts make any sense; they have no meaning. The way they apprehend the object is a total hallucination.

When we look at other sentient beings, at all the six realms' sentient beings—the hell beings, the hungry ghosts, the animals, the human beings and the suras and asuras—we see how all these sentient beings' lives are completely trapped in this hallucination. They are totally living in the hallucination, the appearance of true existence. Ignorance, the wrong concept of inherent existence, apprehends that the appearance is true, that the object does truly exist [as it appears].

Then, all the other wrong concepts such as anger, dissatisfaction, attachment and so forth are built on the basis of this truly existent appearance, this hallucination and the belief that the appearance is true. With all these hallucinations and wrong concepts, the sentient beings of the six realms create karma and then have to experience its result, samsara which is only in the nature of suffering, and in particular the suffering of the three lower realms, that have the heaviest sufferings.

[This is the cause of] all of life's problems: depression, loneliness, dissatisfaction, relationship problems, the problems of desire and so forth. Beings are unable to find satisfaction. No matter how many samsaric perfections, enjoyments, they experience in the world, they never find satisfaction. This ignorance leads to dissatisfaction. It is the door of all the sufferings, such as not being able to find satisfaction and the many other problems of life. And nothing is definite in samsara. Material possessions, relationships, even life itself—nothing is definite. Like this, they

experience the general sufferings of samsara, the six types, four types and three types, those that are integrated in the sufferings of each particular realm.

[When we think like this,] we can use the understanding of emptiness to generate compassion toward all living beings, thinking how they are suffering continuously from time without beginning by not having realized emptiness. As long as they do not realize the truth of how things exist, the reality of the existence of all phenomena, emptiness, they will have to continuously experience the suffering of samsara without end.

Think, “How wonderful it would be if all the sentient beings were free from all the suffering of samsara and its causes. I will free them from all suffering and its causes by myself alone, and lead them to happiness and the cause of happiness, particularly to the peerless happiness, full enlightenment. Therefore I must achieve full enlightenment. No matter how many eons it takes, no matter how hard it is, I must attempt to achieve full enlightenment. I have the universal responsibility to free all living beings from all suffering and to lead them to happiness. Therefore I am going to listen the profound holy Dharma, the steps of the path to enlightenment.”

ACCUMULATING MERIT WITH HOLY OBJECTS

According to Lama Tsongkhapa’s holy words, actions that are not possessed by the three principal aspects of the path, which means the renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and right view, become just ordinary actions. These are called “all-arising,” which means they cause further karma. Actions which are “all-arising” are the cause of samsara, karma and delusions or disturbing thoughts. All ordinary actions that come from karma and delusion are called “all-arising” because all the problems of life, all the sufferings, arise from karma and delusion. In Tibetan it is called *kun jung denpa*, the “all-arising truth,” which means the cause of suffering, karma and delusions, except for some exceptional actions.

The whole of yesterday’s talk was about exceptional actions, the actions Lama Tsongkhapa said are done by depending on the power of the merit field, that means holy objects. As I mentioned yesterday, every single action done with respect, such as circumambulating, prostrating, making offerings and so forth, to holy objects like statues, stupas and scriptures of the Buddha, becomes the cause for enlightenment. The action itself leads us to enlightenment when done in relationship with these holy objects. The whole of yesterday I was talking about that path.

The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and even material objects such as statues, stupas and scriptures are called a merit field. Why? As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, actions not possessed by the three principal aspects of the path become only ordinary all-arising actions and hence the cause of samsara. The exception is actions that are done by depending on the power of the merit field. By practicing the seven-limb practice—prostrating, offering, confessing, rejoicing, requesting to holy beings to have a stable life until samsara ends, requesting them to turn the wheel of Dharma and making dedications and offering a mandala offering—through these practices done by depending on these holy objects, we accumulate merit. These are the holy objects we receive merit from, good karma, the cause of happiness.

It is like the external field where we plant seeds and then the crops grow that allow us to enjoy our life. All that comes from the field where we plant the crops. In the same way, by depending on these holy objects, we accumulate merit, and then, from the merit, realizations of the path come, like stems coming from the seeds. Then just as the stems give fruit, when all the realizations are achieved within our mental continuum, we achieve full enlightenment, the fruit of the path.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Sexual misconduct becomes a negative action as a result of being done out of an impure mind and with at least one of the three poisonous minds of ignorance, anger or attachment. But the main thing that makes sexual misconduct a negative action is ego, the self-cherishing thought.

A complete action of the sexual misconduct is one where all four aspects are gathered—the base, the thought, the action and the result, which is the goal. When all these four are gathered, that makes the action complete. Then due to the attitude, the negative, impure mind, there are four suffering results. The ripening result is rebirth in one of the lower realms and experiencing the sufferings of that realm, depending on how heavy the action is. Then we have to experience the three other problems after some time when we are born in the human realm. These three are experiencing the result similar to the cause, creating the result similar to the cause and the possessed result.

With experiencing the result similar to the cause, when we are born as a human being, those around us and those we live with, our partner, servants and so forth, disturb us greatly; they are very annoying. We cannot trust them. Our relationship with our partner becomes incompatible. They always go against our wishes. This is the way it is described in the *Sutra of the Ten Bhumis*, where it explains two types of experiencing the result similar to the cause for each of the ten nonvirtues. A complete action of sexual misconduct is explained like that.

Our companion, our servants and so forth, the people around us, are always annoying, always disturbing us. We cannot trust them, we cannot trust our companion and we become incompatible, which means that our partner either doesn't follow our wishes or else goes against our wishes. This is what is explained in these teachings. The relationship becomes disharmonious and that leads to separation. Our partner might go off with somebody else.

When this problem happens, it looks like it totally happens from the side of the other person, from the outside. It appears like that when we don't understand karma, but in reality it comes from our own mind. It appears like that when we don't know how these problems come from our negative karma, the imprint that was planted on our mental continuum by the past karma of sexual misconduct, which becomes powerfully negative, [ripening] this year, this month, this week, today.

Even if we were in a harmonious relationship, suddenly this year, this month, this week, today, suddenly there is a big change in the relationship. The whole thing completely changes. That is due to the imprint that was planted by the past negative karma of sexual misconduct powerfully manifesting. Because that negative karma wasn't purified, because nothing was done to purify it, that imprint remained in our mental continuum until today, when, due to causes and conditions, it becomes ready to be experienced. Then, suddenly there is a change in the appearance of our life, relating to our companion and to the people around us. There is a different appearance, a different projection, and we have to go through all those problems again and again.

So much of what is happening in the world is this aspect of karma, experiencing the result similar to the cause of the past sexual misconduct. That shows that all these problems come from the mind.

Then, there is the possessed result. Even when we are born as a human being, we have to experience undesirable places, places that are very muddy or dirty, filthy places where there is a lot of garbage, a lot of kaka, of excrement, places that are poor and smell very bad, that are very depressing and unpleasant. The possessed result of sexual misconduct is to be reborn and have to live in such a place. However, even if we have to occasionally experience an undesirable place like this, one that is very filthy and smelly, even for a short time, this is also the possessed result of the past negative karma of the sexual misconduct.

What this explanation shows is that all these appearances of unclean, dirty, unhealthy places, and the unpleasant, suffering feeling that arises from having to experience them, this all comes from our mind, from [the ripening of] past negative karma.

The other aspect of karma is creating the result similar to the cause. Because of the past habit of doing that action, an imprint is left on the mental continuum. Then, even when we are born as a human being, we do the same action of sexual misconduct again and again, over and over.

This is similar to the action of stealing, where no matter how much a person is punished or imprisoned for stealing, having to go through a lot of difficulties, somehow, uncontrollably, because of their habit of stealing, they steal again and again. Similarly, even though we might have suffered a lot, experiencing so many problems due to this many times, and even if we don't wish to experience these problems again and again, somehow it becomes uncontrollable and we commit sexual misconduct again and again, creating the result similar to the cause due to the imprints of the past action.

Of the four suffering results of this complete negative karma, this one is the worst. The ripening result of reincarnating in the hell realm and experiencing suffering there looks like the heaviest one, the worst one, but actually the worst among the four suffering results is creating the result similar to the cause—doing the negative action again and again. Why is this the worst, why is it more harmful than reincarnating in the hell realm? Having to suffer in hell is not forever. It's not like what is said in the Bible, that once we are born there it is forever, that it can never change. It's not like that. Depending on how heavy the karma is, there is always a duration of time that we have to experience any of the lower realms, but even the heaviest karma of the lowest hell does not last forever.

Therefore, it is very logical that creating the result similar to the cause, doing the negative action again and again, is the worst of the four suffering results. It is the one that is the most harmful. After the negative karma of reincarnating in the lower realms and experiencing the suffering there is finished and we are reborn as a human being, if we do the same thing again and again—the negative action of killing, stealing or sexual misconduct and so forth—then *each* of those negative karmas, when it is a complete negative karma, produces four suffering results, one of which is again creating the result similar to the cause. From *that* one result, after some time when we are again born as human being, we again do that complete negative karma, and again we have to experience the four suffering results. In that way, it goes on and on and on, on and on and on and on.

By creating the result similar to the cause again and again, the suffering of samsara is without end. We will forever be creating this negative karma again and again, which again and again will result in the suffering that is the result of that past negative karma. This makes the suffering of samsara endless. This is even worse than having to reincarnate in the hells because that is just for a period of time and then it is finished. If we analyze it, we will see that this is the heaviest, the worst one, because this is what traps us in samsara forever, making us experience suffering continuously.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING VOWS

When we think like this, we can see just how important, how urgent it is [to stop negative actions like this]. It is like the emergency treatment that a car accident victim or a heart attack victim receives to save their life. Immediately something like that happens, the ambulance races them to hospital for emergency treatment, otherwise there is great danger.

The ten nonvirtuous actions are not the only negative actions; they are just the basic examples of the negative karma we can commit. Because of them, we must continuously experience suffering. Therefore we must stop them. [It is such a waste] if we don't take a vow in front of a lama or abbot or a holy object to abstain from at least one of them, such as killing, stealing or sexual misconduct.

First, I'll explain it the other way around. Unless we take a vow to abstain [from a specific negative action] or unless we stop doing it, that negative action will have the four suffering

results, of which the worst is creating the result similar to the cause, which results in more negative actions and more sets of creating the result similar to the cause. This goes on without end and the suffering that results from this goes on without end. And this all starts from this one negative action we do today, this negative action we have not abstained from doing.

On the other hand, if we don't commit this negative action today, all this continuation of the four suffering results and the suffering that comes from that will stop. We will not have to experience all the suffering from life to life that this one act of nonvirtue would have started. So, you can now see the incredible peace of being free from all the problems without end that result from this negative action, the peace that happens when we refrain from that action. There is peace now and in all our future lives because of not committing that nonvirtue.

There is incredible profit in not starting this evolution of creating the cause of suffering and then having to experience the resulting suffering, creating the cause and experiencing the result on and on, without end. No longer having to experience this is the unbelievable peace and happiness we achieve. Even if we can just stop creating one negative karma once, we bring ourselves unbelievable benefits; we protect ourselves from suffering. This is without talking about abandoning negative karma and living in the precepts, dedicating our life to achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, to bring them to full enlightenment. Without all that, this is just the benefits we gain from just stopping one negative karma today by living in the vow.

For example, when we take the eight Mahayana precepts for even one day, those eight negative karmas are stopped. Because we abstain from committing those eight negative karmas, we give ourselves unbelievable protection for this life and for all future lives, protection from the unending suffering and its cause that happens due to those eight negative karmas. Taking the eight Mahayana precepts for one day, we don't have to experience any of that.

This becomes the best way to have a long and healthy life, now and in the future lives. If this is true of taking just one vow for one day, there is no question of the benefits of taking the lay vows for life, whether it is one lay vow or more or all five. If we are able to take and keep even one lay vow until we die, the benefits are unbelievable now and for our future lives. And this is without talking about how it is the basis for achieving liberation and enlightenment, the cessation

of all the mistakes of the mind and the completion of all the realizations, how it is the basis for all the realizations of the path.

Even looking at it practically, if you think about the benefits, if we live in just one vow until we die, such as to not kill, it's an extremely practical service for other sentient beings. Sexual misconduct creates many, many problems in our relationships and in other people's relationships, as well as bringing dangers like suicide or murder, and of course it leads to many other negative actions, bringing so much harm to ourselves and others.

Even if you cannot take the vow to not kill others, you can still take the vow to not steal or the other vows, depending on whatever you think you can do. It doesn't have to be only this first one, to not kill, but here I am just using it as an example. If you can take and live in the vow of not killing until you die, this is a practical way to bring peace to other sentient beings who are numberless, and to the world. By taking and living in this one vow, numberless other sentient beings don't receive the harm of being killed by you. Animals don't receive the harm of being killed by you; human beings don't receive the harm of being killed by you. They don't receive danger to their life from you—the whole world doesn't receive the danger of being killed by you. The absence of killing, the absence of this danger of life is peace. Therefore, all the animals are receiving peace from you because they don't receive danger to their life from you, and all the human beings are receiving peace from you because they don't receive danger to their life from you. All sentient beings are receiving peace from you.

This is what is lacking, to not have killing in this world, with people killing each other. As much Dharma practice as people can do, and as many people as possible who can do it, brings protecting karma in this world. There is less danger in the world, less danger to the life of animals, to the life of human beings. As many people as possible who are able to practice this Dharma of not giving harm to others by living in the vow not to kill, there is less and less danger for people and animals, and more and more peace, more and more happiness in this world. Just practicing this one Dharma to not kill brings so much peace and happiness in the world, in the lives of human beings and animals and so forth.

On the other hand, no matter how many meetings there are, when there is the lack of this Dharma practice, living in the vow to not kill, the world becomes incredibly dangerous, not only for animals, but even for human beings.

UNLESS WE TRANSFORM OUR MIND THERE WILL ALWAYS BE PROBLEMS

Although it is good that we are able to also offer service to others, such as giving food, medicine, clothing and so forth, or teaching handicraft so others have a means of living, the most important service we can offer somebody else is to help them change their mind from a negative one into a positive one, from an egoistic one into a compassionate one, a mind of bodhicitta, cherishing others. We can help them transform their mind into compassion, helping them understand what is the cause of happiness and what is the cause of suffering, how happiness and suffering come from the mind, not from outside. We can show them that the correct way of thinking brings happiness and the mistaken of thinking produces problems, sufferings. From right thought comes happiness, peace, success in life. From the wrong way of thinking, the mistaken way of thinking, comes problems, harm to ourselves and others, harm to the world. Therefore, the best way to stop problems comes from within our mind and best way to achieve happiness comes from within our mind.

We can explain this to other people, even though we never use the term “karma,” which is a Sanskrit word. We don’t have to put that label on it by using the language of another country; we can use understandable terms instead. “Karma” means “action” so we can explain that happiness comes from positive intentions or actions and problems come from negative intentions or actions. This becomes a way of explaining karma.

However, the most important subject is compassion, how to develop and practice compassion. Giving this education to others, by introducing how everything comes from the mind and why we need to develop compassion, is the most important education we can give. We can help others change their attitude from self-cherishing and anger into compassion and loving kindness and other positive attitudes like patience. They can change from having a mind of dissatisfaction and attachment, transforming it into a free, healthy, happy mind, a satisfied mind, which means a renounced mind, that which becomes the renounced mind. Then, they can transform ignorance into wisdom.

By changing their minds, *only then* can they change their actions. Changing their actions means stopping actions that cause suffering for themselves and others and, instead, doing positive

actions that bring peace and happiness as well as success for themselves and others. This is the best service we can offer others. This is what they really need; this is what is really missing.

For example, as long as the people in Africa and other places who are suffering from poverty and drought don't change their minds and don't change their actions, but still engage in negative karma such as the ten nonvirtues—killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so forth—they will continue to create the same negative karma and continue to create the cause for suffering again and again. Killing again and again, they continuously create the cause for an unhealthy, short life, where they can be killed themselves. Stealing again and again, they continuously create the cause for poverty, drought, disease and all those things, again and again and again. Because they don't change their attitude and action, they continuously create the cause of those problems, not only in this life but in all future lives, and they have to experience the same problems over and over, even when they are reborn as human beings.

For instance, during a drought many countries send food and water, but they never receive it. There is the story of a plane that flew fresh drinking water to Somalia, I think. The water was perfectly drinkable before, but when it was offloaded at the airport it smelled terrible and it was undrinkable. That is another clear example of karma. No matter how others tried to help, because from their side the people had not created the good karma to enjoy fresh water by things such as practicing charity, the opposite of stealing, they were unable to have drinkable water. Other things were sent there but they never got them. There is a definite reason why that was so.

Within the four outlines of karma, this shows how karma is definite. Whatever negative or positive karma is created definitely brings the result of happiness or suffering. That is definite. Then, karma is expandable. And without having created the cause, we cannot experience the result. In this case, what happened was, from their side they had not created the positive karma and therefore they were not able to experience the result, the success, the happiness. They were unable to receive the means to sustain their life.

The last one is that once the karma is created it doesn't get lost. For example, unless negative karma that has been created meets a remedy, by practicing virtue, that destroys the seed, even if it is a very small negative karma, no matter how many eons it takes, it never gets lost. In time, when the causes and conditions come together, when it becomes powerful, the result will

definitely be experienced, even though it may have been created an unconceivable number of eons ago.

It's the same thing with virtue. As long as it doesn't meet an obstacle, no matter how many eons since the virtuous action was done, it will never be lost. If it hasn't been destroyed by anger, heresy and so forth, when the causes and conditions come together, when it becomes powerful, the result will definitely be experienced. No matter how small that positive karmic action was, the result will definitely be happiness.

LIVING IN MORALITY IS THE BEST CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD PEACE

Therefore, living in the morality, living in the vows, even if it is just one vow such as abstaining from killing, becomes the most practical service for other sentient beings. It becomes the most practical contribution for the world peace. Here we are talking about peace for people in this world, this earth, this one globe, but in reality there are numberless universes. Not only in the teachings by the Buddha, even scientists explain that there are numberless universes, numberless galaxies. Just living in even one vow becomes the best contribution for peace in the world, for all sentient beings' peace.

If every human being in this world practiced this one Dharma, this one morality of not killing, then everyone would have peace. There would be so much peace and happiness from just this thing. This practice, this cause of happiness, is what needs to be taught. People have to be educated in this.

I think I mentioned this when I first gave the eight Mahayana precepts. There are many people, even in the East, who think that people who are retreating—living in the mountains, in the caves—or living in monasteries, nunneries, or isolated places, not living in the city and mixing with others, many people think that they are not offering any service to the people of the world. They criticize them because of that, but that is due to not knowing the Dharma, and especially not knowing karma. They don't understand how developing the mind in the path—doing meditation, doing retreats, living in morality, living in ordination—is the most practical service for the world and for all sentient beings. From their point of view, service to the public is only by working in hospitals or doing voluntary work or something like that. That is the only service they see, the only service they understand. They cannot see how the profound service offered by

ordained people and those living in isolated places is any service at all. They cannot understand the great benefit this kind of service brings.

Some people even criticize some of our centers in the West, such as in Italy. Even though the students have received many teachings, some have not really thought well about subjects such as karma, and they say that the meditation center does not do anything for other people. They think that there should be a place to care for sick people, otherwise the center does not offer any service for others. Of course, it would be very good to be able to build places to take care of sick people as well, but their idea of offering service is very limited. They cannot see how all those giving teachings and all the unbelievable activities happening in the meditation center are offering service to other sentient beings.

That is an ignorant thought. It has not really been well thought out, especially about karma. Without changing the mind, there is no change in the action, and so there is no change in a person's life and no way to reduce their suffering. If from their side they constantly create the cause of suffering due to their attitude and their action, they constantly create the cause of problems.

Christianity says everything is created by God, but if it is only up to God, God must have compassion. If it is only up to God, if God created everything, since God has that much power, and since God should have compassion for other living beings, there wouldn't be any living beings suffering. When it comes down to details, it shows that it is not only up to God. If you do the opposite of the ten commandments, like the ten nonvirtues, or if you don't believe in God, you will go to hell. That shows, even though God created everything, it is not only up to God, it is also up to you; it also depends on you, on your mind and your actions. Even in Christianity or Hinduism, which says that everything is created by somebody, when it comes down to particular points, it also depends on yourself, your mind and actions.

This is especially so in Buddhism. The doctor checks the diagnosis, gives the prescription and the medicine to be taken, and advises on diet and conduct—what should be done and what should not be done—but if from the patient's side they don't take the medicine or follow the doctor's advice, what can the doctor do? No matter how much compassion the doctor has, wanting the patient to recover immediately, if the patient doesn't listen to the doctor or take the medicine, what can the doctor do? It depends on both the doctor making the correct diagnosis

and giving the correct medicine and the patient following the doctor's advice and taking the medicine.

Similarly, the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas have completely renounced the thought of seeking happiness for themselves; that thought of working for the self does not arise for even a second. The only thought they have is seeking happiness for other sentient beings and only working for other sentient beings. The compassion that a new bodhisattva, one who has just generated bodhicitta, has for us is much more than the compassion we have for ourselves, so there is no question that the Buddha has much more compassion for us than we have for ourselves, hundreds of thousands of times more compassion. And the loving kindness the Buddha has for us is hundreds of thousands of times more than the love we have for ourselves.

It is like this. The Buddhas has an omniscient mind, perfect power, compassion and everything—the infinite qualities of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind—but, just like the doctor and the patient that I mentioned, although from the side of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, they wish for all obscured and suffering sentient beings to be free from all this without the delay of even a second, if we don't follow the path revealed by Omniscient One, the kind, compassionate Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, as long as our actions don't change (like the patient not taking the medicine) we will be continuously caught in samsara and experience suffering. If we continue to do the same things, nothing will change, nothing will happen in the future.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDITATION CENTER AND THE TEACHER

Therefore, the meditation center is offering the most important service, which is especially benefiting the mind. Starting from the Dharma teacher, the geshe or the lama who is there, the whole point of a meditation center is to offer the most important service of benefiting the mind, showing how to eliminate the attitude that brings all the sufferings and how to develop the cause of temporal and ultimate happiness, highest enlightenment.

The center offers the students the way to transform the mind into the path to liberation from samsara, the cessation of the entire suffering and its causes, and then highest enlightenment. It does this by explaining the lamrim teachings, especially the teachings on karma, explaining what is the unmistakable cause of happiness and the unmistakable cause of suffering, by introducing this

and by explaining the various powerful meditations, the various powerful methods to purify the negative karma that has been already collected, and by explaining how to create good karma, the cause for all the happiness of this life and future lives as well as liberation and enlightenment. The center especially teaches about the need for compassion and how to develop it.

When I was asked by reporters what Buddhism can offer people in the West, I said the same thing. It teaches the value of human life, how precious it is, how with this life we can achieve any happiness we wish for, for ourselves and others, for the numberless sentient beings. We can offer incredible service because we have this human body and we have buddha nature, the enlightened being's nature that is there in our mental continuum, that which is not oneness with the mistakes, the obscurations.

The most important education a center can offer is teaching compassion for all sentient beings, without discrimination of religion, nationality, race, appearance—whether ugly or beautiful—without any barrier at all. The center offers that education on the need for compassion and how to develop compassion for all sentient beings. Then, as I mentioned before, it teaches the whole path to enlightenment, which involves how to achieve all the happiness from within our mind, and how to remove all suffering, all the problems, from within our mind.

In our organization, founded by kind, compassionate Lama Yeshe, we do this by having incredibly qualified geshe and teachers who not only have intellectual knowledge, understanding of Buddhist philosophy, but also live in the practice, including the most important, most fundamental practice, protecting their karma by living in morality as fully ordained monks or nuns. Many of the Tibetan teachers have spent their whole life doing extensive study and they live in the meditation practice. Many have experience of the path, experience of bodhicitta, experience of emptiness, the fundamental experience of the common path, which is the foundation for not only practicing tantra but also having the experience of tantric realizations. Generally speaking, to even find a teacher who has an unmistakable intellectual understanding of the Dharma is very difficult.

The people who are studying with these teachers are unbelievably fortunate. Just to be able to hear the unmistakable teachings of Buddha, even if it is just an intellectual explanation, is unbelievably fortunate. Not only that, from the student's side, when you have the intelligence

and the capacity, you can learn so much about the path. You can learn any Dharma subject, sutra or tantra.

Since the centers were established, by having the lamrim explained to the students, and particularly karma, including those various preliminary practices, the means of accumulating merit and purifying negative karmas, and by listening, reflecting and meditating on the lamrim, so many students have been able to purify their negative karma accumulated from beginningless rebirths. So many causes of the lower realms have been purified, and they have been freed from so many eons of suffering. And not only that, so many of their problems experienced in the human realm, now and the future, have been purified.

They have done so much preparation, so much practice, including taking refuge, taking the eight Mahayana precepts and the lifetime precepts. All that and the other Dharma practice, the lamrim practice, helps create the cause of a deva or human body in their next life and in so many future lives. So much preparation has been done, so many causes of happiness of their future lives have been created. By teaching how to listen, reflect and meditate on the lamrim, the meditation center has helped to create so many causes in their mind and helped prepare them to be liberated forever from samsara, from the entire oceans of samsaric sufferings.

The students' minds have been brought so much closer to enlightenment by having been given teachings by the teachers as well as by all the other people helping at the center. There is the director, the secretary, the volunteers, those who help make the center capable of doing all this, capable of offering all these profound benefits, the causes of happiness, to many students, bringing them much closer to liberation by listening, reflecting and meditating on the lamrim. Not only that, they help bring the students so much closer to enlightenment, the cessation of all the mistakes and the completion of all realizations, so that each of them will be able to free all sentient beings and bring them to enlightenment.

The center helps enormously even if people come for just one day to hear teachings. By hearing a one-day lamrim teaching on renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness—how without the renunciation of samsara you cannot achieve liberation, without realizing the right view of emptiness you cannot cut the root of samsara, ignorance, and without having bodhicitta you cannot achieve full enlightenment for sentient beings—just by hearing about the three principal aspects of the path, they receive the best solution, showing them exactly what is missing and

exactly what is needed. Without having realizations of the three principal aspects of the path we cannot help ourselves. We cannot be liberated and we cannot help others. We cannot really benefit them or offer service to them.

WITHOUT TRANSFORMING THE MIND, WE NEED TO BE HEALED AGAIN AND AGAIN

The first or second time I went to Singapore and Malaysia, when I did a teaching tour there, I met quite a few people who did miracle healing. For instance, a person who had cancer was brought in supported by other people, unable to walk at all. A jar was filled with water from the altar and given to them to drink. And then, the next day, they returned without needing any support, feeling much better. There were many miracle healings like this.

In China, I met a young Chinese boy who could give a talk and, without even touching them, could cure people in the audience from their disease. Just being there, being near him, they recovered. Or he met people on the road who relied on wheelchairs or sticks and, without touching them, just by seeing him or maybe hearing a few words from him, they became healthy and were able to stand up and walk unaided. This young man, who lived in China, seemed kind and compassionate.

Anyway, as I was touring those places, I met quite a few people who did miracle healings but the thought that came to my mind was this. These miracle healings were incredible, how they caused big changes to happen, but I was thinking, as long as they don't actualize the renunciation of samsara and realize emptiness and bodhicitta, from the patient's side this problem will return again and again, with the same sicknesses again and again, without end, because they have not changed their mind and they have not changed their actions, no matter how many times they are healed. They create negative karma, get the problem, the disease, then they take medicine and recover, and then they do the same thing again—creating the same negative karma, getting the same sickness, taking the same medicine, and so on. So, I thought that without actualizing the three principal aspects of the path, you can't really solve the problem. There is no end to the suffering of samsara.

Then, I thought, just to give one hour of lamrim teaching is of unbelievable benefit. It leaves an imprint in people's minds that definitely brings not only temporal happiness in this and future lives, but also, by leaving imprints, makes them sooner or later actualize the three principal

aspects of the path. Therefore one hour of lamrim teaching definitely leads them to the end of the entire oceans of samsaric suffering, which have continued since beginning time. In time, it will definitely bring them to liberation and definitely bring them to enlightenment. So, there is no comparison between one hour of lamrim teaching and a whole life of miracle healing. Thinking this way inspired me to continue. Even though I don't know the lamrim, even though I'm just repeating a few words, it showed me it is worthwhile to continue to teach the lamrim.

Even coming to the meditation center and receiving one mantra or one verse of Dharma leaves imprints. When we even hear one mantra, such as TADYATHA OM MUNÉ MUNÉMAHA MUNAYÉ SOHA or OM MANI PADME HUM, that mantra contains the whole Dharma: the base—conventional and absolute truth; the path—method and wisdom; and the result—the two kayas. Therefore, even just hearing one mantra leaves an imprint on our mind and that imprint in time definitely brings us to enlightenment, either in this life or in some future life. Due to that imprint, we come to understand the meaning of the mantra and from that we are able to meet Dharma and understand the teachings, and not only understand them intellectually but also actualize the path, which ceases the delusions and leads to enlightenment.

For example, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gave teachings to five hundred swans in the field, and due to the power of hearing the teachings, in their next life all those five hundred swans were born as human beings, they all became ordained and actualized the path, becoming arhats and achieving liberation. There are many stories like this, showing how just by hearing the Dharma, just by listening to the Dharma while in an animal body there is an incredible change, an incredible development in the next life. Just hearing the Dharma has unbelievable, inconceivable benefit.

This is without even practicing the teachings we have heard; this is just by hearing them, so there is no question about the benefits of practicing them. So, you can see the benefits to other sentient beings brought by everybody working at a meditation center—the teacher, the director, the volunteers and so forth. Just offering the teachings, letting sentient beings hear the Dharma, brings inconceivable benefit.

I think maybe we'd better enjoy some tea.

THE RESULTS OF THE TEN NONVIRTUES AND THE TEN VIRTUES: THE FOUR RESULTS OF LYING

I'll just try to quickly finish the part on karma.

The action of telling a lie becomes a complete negative karma when it is done out of ego, out of the self-cherishing thought, coming from one [or more] of the three poisonous minds, such as the attachment clinging to this life, that makes the action of telling a lie become negative karma.

This complete action has four suffering results: the ripening aspect result which is rebirth in the lower realms, and the other three suffering results that occur when we are born in the human realm: experiencing the result similar to the cause, creating the result similar to the cause, which is telling lies again, and the possessed result, which is to do with the place.

It is explained in the sutra teachings that when we are experiencing the result similar to the cause, we are always getting cheated by others, and other people are always lying to us. Then, we are also criticized and blamed. It doesn't specify here but it could mean that other people blame us for things that we didn't do, that kind of criticism. When we are blamed by somebody for something we didn't do, that is definitely the result of past karma of us having blamed others for mistakes they haven't made, lying to them in that way.

Therefore, whenever we get cheated by others or others tell us lies, we should always immediately remember that this is the result of our past karma of having told lies. That should be our practice. If we can remember karma in that way, without delay, that itself becomes the practice of patience because it helps us to not get angry with others. We can't find anything to blame on the other person, therefore it naturally becomes the practice of patience. When somebody is harming us in that way, it also becomes the cause of compassion for ourselves.

As Shantideva mentioned in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

Because my karma persuaded me,

I have received harm from this being.

If, by doing these actions, they should fall into the hole of the hells,

Haven't I done this to them?⁶

What it is saying is that this is all due to our own karma. Why does that person harm me, tell me lies, treat me badly? Why don't they love me? There is a reason; there is a cause for that, and that is because we have created the cause in the past. Either in this life or in some previous life of the person we have treated them similarly and so now they are doing this to us. Our karma has persuaded us and so we must now receive that particular harm from that person.

And because they have harmed us in that way, they have created the cause to fall into the hole of the hells, to be reincarnated into the hell realm. It's as if we have tossed that person over the precipice into the deep abyss where there is a raging fire. At present, they are a human being, but we have caused them to lose their human life; we have caused them to be reincarnated into the hell realm, into the "hole of the hells." Why are we responsible for this? Because if we had not harmed them in the past there would be no reason for them to harm us now, in this life. The evolution of this action would not be there. The harm we received from that person was caused by us.

Do you remember how some time ago I explained for a couple of days what makes others harm us? I went through all the details without bringing up the subject of karma to do with present and past lives. I said that if somebody is harming us now, this minute, that is caused by our mind, how it's our mind that makes others harm us. I went through the details like that. But here we are looking at the longer evolution of the cause and result, how we harmed that person in some previous time. If we hadn't harmed them in the first place, there would be no cause, no reason, for them to harm us back. And not harming us, there would be no cause for them, in the future, to be born in the lower realms.

So now it's clear that for this person to create the karma to be reborn in the lower realms after this human existence depends on us having harmed them in the past. That's what this verse from Shantideva means, how "my karma persuaded me" and therefore we have been harmed by that person, but only because we harmed them in the past. We caused them to do this, therefore we are responsible for making them "fall into the hole of the hells."

⁶ Shantideva, ch. 6, v. 47. Compare with Stephen Batchelor's translation: Having been instigated by my own actions, / Those who cause me harm come into being. / If by these (actions) they should fall into hell, / Surely isn't it I who am destroying them?

When we think in this way, as explained by the Buddha, the Omniscient One, and by the great bodhisattva Shantideva in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, we have no choice; there is no way to get angry with that person. Instead, they can only become an object of compassion for us.

Remembering that whatever harm we receive is due to our own karma protects us from anger, our most dangerous enemy. Anger has the power to destroy all the merit we have created and is very harmful for bodhicitta. We cannot get angry and instead it becomes the practice of patience. Not only that, by thinking that our karma has persuaded others to suffer, when we see others harming us, it becomes the cause of developing compassion for them.

The possessed result of telling lies is that we cannot be successful in our work. The teachings give the example of a farmer who cannot develop their farm work, or somebody who is transporting people by ship but is unable to develop that work. We can think of somebody who runs a hotel or restaurant. All day long they get no customers at all; the seats and the tables are empty. They have no success and are unable to develop their business. Somebody who earns money in the transportation business, such as a taxi or bus company, doesn't get any passengers; somebody who runs a shop doesn't have any customers coming to buy things. We can imagine the same lack of success in whatever work people do. When things don't happen according to our wishes, according to what we have planned, that is mainly due to us having cheated others in the past, so in this life we are cheating ourselves. The place we are living in has a lot of danger for our life, the potential to cause a lot of harm.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF ABSTAINING FROM SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

We have to not only think of the negative side but also the positive side, living in the practice of morality. For instance, by abstaining from sexual misconduct, we attain all four happinesses. The ripening aspect result is that we achieve the body of a deva or human being. Experiencing the result similar to the cause is that we have harmonious relationships and other people do exactly what we wish. Those around us always follow our wishes; there is no lack of cooperation. Instead of being annoyed and disturbed by others, we live in a harmonious environment where we are successful in what we wish.

The possessed result is always being in a clean, beautiful place, where there is always a scented smell, not a kaka smell! It is not a filthy place, full of excrement, not a depressed, unpleasant

place, but a very happy place. When we are in such a place, it makes us happy, lifting our spirits; it is very inspiring.

When we are experiencing these good results, we have to recognize that all these four happinesses have come from our own mind. For instance, rather than creating the result similar to the cause of sexual misconduct, which is committing sexual misconduct again, we do the opposite, we abstain from sexual misconduct. When we experience this happiness, this comfort, we have to realize that this comes from our own mind, from the particular karma of practicing the morality of abstaining from sexual misconduct. When we are in a beautiful place, a garden or a nice, clean place, we should realize it didn't come from outside but from our own mind. In this way, it becomes very inspiring. It persuades us to continuously practice the Dharma. Seeing this is how such happiness occurs, we determine to put much effort into continuing to practice the Dharma. Instead of finding it hard to keep the vows such as the eight Mahayana precepts, it becomes enjoyable when we think this way, how all these happinesses come from our own mind.

So we should not only meditate on the results of negative karma but also on the opposite, the results of practicing morality and the four resultant happinesses. It's very important because in our life, from time to time there are problems, but also from time to time there is comfort, happiness and success. We have to realize that they also come from our own mind.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF SLANDERING AND OF NOT SLANDERING

For slandering to become a complete action, a complete negative karma, it depends on the action being done with self-cherishing and out of one of the three poisonous minds. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms. With experiencing the result similar to the cause, there is no unity, there is no harmony between us and the people surrounding us. They act very meanly to us!

The possessed result of this nonvirtue is that, even when we are born again as a human being, the place we live in is uneven, with many hills and bumps, highs and lows, making travel very difficult. I don't know how to put it into words, but the hills have sharp [stones] that cut us as we walk. It's difficult to walk. There are many causes of dangers in the place. All these appearances that are the possessed result of slandering come from our mind, from our past lives' karma of slandering other people.

Looking at these four suffering results, we have to think about the positive side, living in the practice of the morality of abstaining from slandering. The ripening result is that we attain the body of a happy migratory being. The possessed result is the opposite to that of slandering; we live in a very beautiful land, one that is not ugly, not rough, but very smooth, very pleasant. Then, experiencing the result similar to the cause is that we have a lot of harmony, unity. The people we are with are in accord with us; they are very kind to us.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF SPEAKING HARSH WORDS AND ABSTAINING FROM HARSH WORDS

Now, the next nonvirtue is speaking harshly. When it is a complete action it has four suffering results. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms. Experiencing the result similar to the cause is that when we speak with others we hear unpleasant things, not pleasant, beautiful, gentle words. Just as we had spoken harshly to others in the past, hurting them, now we must endure others speaking to us in a harsh way, which hurts us. What they say makes us get angry with them, becoming the cause of fights.

Each time the two results are explained in this way in these teachings. Then, creating the result similar to the cause is that we do the same action again, speaking harshly, speaking in a way that hurts other people. That is the main thing. The words can be said in a very sweet tone but with the intention of hurting the other person. If the action is done out of ego and is one of those poisonous minds, it becomes harsh speech even though the words sound very flowery, very sweet. Sometimes people speak using a very nice manner, but the intent is to hurt somebody. All these appearances of harsh speech, the negative karma ripening, come from our own mind.

On the other hand, by living in the morality of abstaining from speaking harshly, we experience the four happy results. Experiencing the result similar to the cause, we hear only beautiful, sweet words, not words that hurt us but instead respectful words that make us happy, that have a pleasant effect.

The possessed result of speaking harshly is that we live in a place where there are lots of thorn bushes, or lots of trees burned by fire. There are some places like this with a very ugly, very unpleasant atmosphere, where it is dry with lots of dead trees, where nothing grows. It's a very harsh, unpleasant environment, with nothing green, with a lot of rocks and roughness. I don't

know exactly how to translate it, but it is rough, harmful, unpleasant to touch. The teachings explain in detail the names of those bushes, but I don't know how to put it into English. The idea is that it is a very rough, dusty, barren place, not magnificent or not glorious looking. Even if there had been water before, with waterfalls or lakes and so forth, now it is dry. Even if there were those beautiful, pleasant things, now, in our time, they don't exist. It's a very difficult, very unpleasant place. There are more details explained but I'm not sure what they are. It's a place where there is a lot of negative karma ripening, killing and so forth, where many very heavy, dangerous things happen that are the cause of fear.

By living in the practice of the morality of abstaining from speaking harshly, we experience the complete opposite. The environment is very beautiful, very pleasant, having all those waterfalls, ponds and so forth.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF GOSSIPING AND ABSTAINING FROM GOSSIPING

The next nonvirtue is gossiping. When the complete action of gossiping, the negative karma, is done out of ego with one of those poisonous minds, it has four suffering results. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms. Experiencing the result similar to the cause is that when we are born as a human being, our speech has two results, two problems. Our words don't have power when we talk to other people. People don't listen or follow what we say, so our words have no power. And there is no discipline in our speech, in our words.

The possessed result of the negative karma of gossiping is that, even when we are born as a human being, the trees in the place where we live don't bear fruit. It might be the same thing that even if we plant crops, they don't take fruit. And even if there is fruit, it remains unripe. On the outside it might appear ripe, but because it does not have a firm root, it doesn't last long. The place is unpleasant, with very dirty water, such as filthy ponds. There are unpleasant forests and so forth that are the cause of danger to our life. Even if the crops or the fruit happen, they don't happen at the right time, not at the time we need them.

Creating the result similar to the cause means that we gossip again.

Now, practicing the morality of abstaining from gossiping, we experience the four happy results. The ripening aspect result is that we are born in a deva or human body. And then, the opposite

to the possessed result of gossiping, our crops and fruit trees all grow well, and we live in a place where there is no danger to our life. Experiencing the result similar to the cause means that our speech is pure and very disciplined. We never just say anything that comes, and whatever we say has much power. Other people listen to us and follow what we say.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF COVETOUSNESS AND ABSTAINING FROM COVETOUSNESS

The complete negative karma of covetousness has four suffering results. The possessed result is that even when we are born as a human being, in the place we live the crops, the materials, the enjoyments, are all decreasing. What we have does not increase but continually decreases, year by year, month by month, day by day. For example, our food becomes more and more scarce, we have more and more financial problems, things like that.

Where we live is very harmful, with many contagious diseases, epidemics, earthquakes, and harm from all four elements—fire, water, earth, wind—such as tornadoes, dust storms, cyclones and so forth. There is harm from humans—fighting, wars and so forth—and harm from animals like poisonous snakes and insects. We get bitten by those tiny insects, such as mosquitoes or ants. There is also harm from spirits, and there are lots of thieves and robbers.

Experiencing the result similar to the cause means we have a mind of very strong desires, one that is never satisfied. And rather than seeking to benefit other sentient beings, we seek to harm them, as well as ourselves. Creating the cause similar to the result is [that we are covetous again].

With the practice of living in the morality of abstaining from covetousness, we have to think that all the four happy results are the complete opposite of that.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF ILL WILL AND ABSTAINING FROM ILL WILL

The complete action of ill will, that which becomes a negative karma, has four suffering results. The ripening aspect result is rebirth in the lower realms. I am not sure what I said before about the possessed result but, for this, everything become harmful. Experiencing the result similar to the cause is that other sentient beings harm us and we receive harm from the four elements. Even insects and animals harm us. There are wars, fighting and so forth, and people harm us by

various means, including black magic. These are the results of our past negative karma of ill will. Then, creating the result similar to the cause means that we do the action of ill will again.

On the other hand, by living in the morality of abstaining from ill will, we experience the four happy results, which are the complete opposite of those of ill will. The possessed result is that we live in a place where there is no danger to life. We don't receive harm from earthquakes, water, fire and so forth. When our house catches fire and we die, that danger of fire comes from the negative karma of ill will. Living in the morality of abstaining from ill will, we don't receive those harms—from earthquakes or even from insects. Mosquitoes don't bite us; we don't have bugs, lice or worms on our body. We don't receive harm from people, from black magic, and all those things. Instead, we receive protection and we can live without fear, with no danger to our life. This is from practicing the morality of abstaining from ill will.

THE FOUR RESULTS OF HERESY AND ABSTAINING FROM HERESY

When heresy becomes a complete action, it has four suffering results. Experiencing the result similar to the cause means that, even when we are born as a human being, because we have wrong views, we act with cunning and hide our mistakes, even small ones. I don't remember this so well. These are experiencing the result similar to the cause. Creating the result similar to the cause means that again we will have heresy.

The possessed result is to do with the place. We will live in a place where there is no guide, where there is no refuge. It is a place where suffering appears pleasure; it is a dirty, unclean place, where dirty things appear as clean. Before we lived there, it was a place where there were a lot of jewels, a lot of wealth or oil, but now that we live there, those rich things have stopped. They don't happen anymore. Not finding a guide, a helper, is the possessed result of heresy. We need help but there is nobody able to help us, no guide. Being in such a place is the possessed result.

By living in the morality of abstaining from heresy, we have the four happy results. The ripening aspect result is that we obtain a deva or human body. Then, we live in a place where there is a guide, a helper, and where there are lots of treasures, oil or jewels. Many precious things come from that place. So, everything is the opposite to the results of the nonvirtue of heresy.

Experiencing the result similar to the cause means having the right view instead of the wrong view. When we are born as a human being, we have the right view; we are truthful and sincere.

These are some basic examples of how to meditate on the shortcomings of negative karma and the benefits of good karma, practicing the ten virtues. The conclusion is that because all happiness and problems come from our mind, we have complete freedom. By transforming our mind, we can change our actions, and in this way we can achieve any happiness we wish. So, the conclusion is that by understanding karma, we can see more clearly how to abandon suffering and have great freedom, which includes peerless happiness, full enlightenment.

So, I'll stop here.

As there will be some initiations, the plan is that before the initiation, we will continue the teachings as much as possible as a motivation. Then, those who are not taking the initiation can leave.

So, tonight I'll stop here.

Lecture 15

December 16, 1993

VAJRASATTVA INITIATION MOTIVATION: THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS

The four opponent powers are the power of dependence, the power of regret, the power of the remedy and the power of resolve. Reflecting on the shortcomings of creating negative karma is the power of regret, and the remedy that purifies that negative karma is creating virtue, such as reciting the Vajrasattva mantra, doing meditation and so forth—but generally any virtue. The power of resolve is [to determine] not to create that negative karma again. That is a very important one.

Among these four powers, by feeling regret at having accumulated negative karma, the stronger the regret we can generate by reflecting on the shortcomings of negative karma, the thinner our negative karma becomes. Just feeling regret so strongly makes the negative karma that much thinner, so that's the most important one. How much negative karma gets purified depends so much on this—the power of feeling regret for having created negative karma by reflecting on its shortcomings.

The power of resolve means we determine to abstain from the negative karma, but just saying we will never commit the nonvirtue again is difficult for most of us, because our mind is under the control of karma and delusions. It means we can never do the act again, so that would be telling a lie. A good way to use the power of resolve is this: we remember that the guru on our crown is inseparable from Vajrasattva, and we make the vow that from now on we won't commit those nonvirtues that we can refrain from committing. For the ones that are difficult to keep, the subtle ones, we vow to abstain from committing them for a certain time, for a day, an hour, a minute, or even for just a few seconds. If we make a commitment like this, it becomes more sincere; it protects us from telling a lie. This is what the lineage lamas of the past advised.

[Rinpoche gives the Vajrasattva initiation]

DEDICATIONS

In emptiness, there is no I creator, there is no action creating, there is no negative karma that is created.

[Long pause]

Intensely meditate on emptiness.

[Long pause]

With the continuation of this mindfulness, dedicate the merits.

“In emptiness there is no I, there is no action, dedicating, there is no merit to be dedicated. In emptiness there is no enlightenment, in emptiness there are no sentient beings to dedicate the merits for. All these are completely empty of existing from their own side. What they are is nothing except what is merely labeled by the mind. They all exist, but what they are is just mere name.”

While practicing this mindfulness, think that we label all this.

“Due to all the three-time merits accumulated by me and by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, due to all this, may I achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment and lead all sentient beings to that enlightenment as quickly as possible by myself alone.”

Then, dedicate the merit thinking that from now on and in all our future lives, we will never transgress the samaya vows, the commitment of Vajradhara, and, in this way, we will achieve enlightenment quickly.

“Due to all the three-time merits accumulated by me, by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, from now on may any action I do with my body, speech and mind never bring the slightest harm for other sentient beings, but instead may it only be the cause of the greatest benefit, which is for all sentient beings to become enlightened as quickly as possible.

“Due to all the three-time merits accumulated by me, and by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, may I and everybody who is here, all the students, be able to actualize the pure sutra and tantra teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa in this very lifetime. May the general organization and individual meditation centers work for the benefit of all sentient beings and for the teachings of the Buddha. May all the centers succeed immediately and receive all the necessary conditions immediately. May all the members, the students, who have sacrificed their lives to benefit others and the teachings of the Buddha through this organization have a long and healthy life, and may all their actions become Dharma. May all their actions become most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend, and in all their future lives may they be guided by the perfectly qualified Mahayana virtuous friend, with the pleased holy mind. May all the students have a long and healthy life, and may all their wishes succeed according to the holy Dharma.