

# Bliss and Emptiness in the Gelug Tradition

By [Lati Rinpoche](#) at New York, NY October 1991 (Last Updated May 19, 2011)

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Before giving the actual teaching Rinpoche would like to say some prayers. First is a prayer to Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, and this prayer contains prostration, recitation of Sutra and dedication. The second prayer is *The Hundred Deities of Tushita* because Rinpoche is here to represent the Gelugpa tradition. The next prayer will be [The Foundation of Remarkable Qualities](#) and this short prayer contains a major outline of the Lam-rim teaching. As we recite this prayer we review the entire structure of the path. Finally will be the [Heart Sutra](#) for removing the obstacles to give and receive these teachings.

I would like to thank you for coming here to listen to the teachings and I am sure there are many other things to do but you have placed them aside and made the point that it is important to attend the teachings. I very much appreciate this.

As we all know our purpose in gathering here is to discuss the Dharma. There are various spiritual traditions in this world and I feel that each spiritual tradition has its own qualities and all have made contributions for the welfare of humanity. I feel it is important for us to cultivate respect for each other's spiritual traditions and cultivate a pure perception, appreciating the good qualities of other's traditions.

As followers of various spiritual traditions, if we properly appreciate each other and work with each other, creating harmony between us, this would contribute to world peace and stability. Instead of appreciating the good points of each other's traditions, if we go on criticizing one another, bringing out the weak points here and there, this will create disharmony and we will not make positive contributions to the world.

As follower of various spiritual traditions we have a responsibility to be kind and caring towards others, otherwise nonbelievers who do not follow any form of religion will feel that we are unnecessarily creating divisions among ourselves. Due to this we say our tradition is the best and cling to it, criticizing other's traditions and create unnecessary divisions. When we do this the religion we adopt instead of helping us calm and settle our minds, it fuels attachment and hatred. So be careful with your spiritual tradition and don't give this kind of impression to nonbelievers.

Creating unnecessary divisions has nothing to do with the spiritual traditions themselves; this is a weakness of us the followers of the traditions. We are placing our weaknesses onto our spiritual traditions so we need to be careful with what we do. The Dalai Lama has said that we should cultivate respect and pure perception towards all forms of life, especially the followers of different spiritual traditions. If we make a point to put this into practice, there will certainly be harmony between followers of the different traditions and with this harmony and cooperation, we could make a great contribution to world peace and happiness.

Of the various spiritual traditions, I am here to speak about Lord Buddha's teaching. As you know Lord Buddha's teaching has different vehicles or yanas such as the Lower Vehicle or Hinayana and the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle. Of these two vehicles I am here to speak more about the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle of Buddhism.

Perhaps one could say that Mahayana Buddhism or Greater Vehicle Buddhism flourished incomparably in Tibet. Over time it developed into different schools or traditions of what is called Tibetan Buddhism. All the teachings that the followers of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism are the teachings of the same teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha gave the teachings and all of the followers of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism are practicing this.

All four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism have flourished well but sometimes one does hear some unfortunate things, which I feel are unnecessary conflicts among the various traditions. This is misinformation, which has been given that has nothing to do with the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. All four traditions can trace their teachings back to Lord Buddha's teachings, which originated in India. Over the centuries Tibet sent a number of brilliant scholars to India to study and reproduce a number of greatly realized scholars as well as lotsawas, the translators many of whom were emanations. So one can trace back all of the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism back to the teachings of Lord Buddha.

Of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, I am here to present the teachings of the Gelugpa tradition which is also called the Wholesome Tradition or the Virtuous Tradition. I am going to touch on different points of what is the philosophical view, what is the meditation in this tradition and what is called the contact or the behavioral aspect of this tradition. Actually it would be ideal to tell you of the lineage masters of the Gelugpa tradition and when one tells the life stories of great masters; this facilitates one gaining respect, confidence and conviction in those great masters. Due to the time factor and the fact that I am incapable of relating the greatness of those past masters, I will skip this.

But I must mention a little bit about Manjusri, [Lama Tsongkhapa](#), the founder of the Gelugpa tradition. At a very young age when he was three he received a layperson's ordination or upasaka vows from Karmapa Rolpay Dorje. Later he received novice monk and full ordination from Choye Dondrup Rinchen. From the age of three until sixteen years of age, Lama Tsongkhapa studied at the feet of those two great masters and received innumerable tantric initiations, commentaries, transmissions and pith instructions. When he was sixteen years old he went to central Tibet.

In central Tibet he continued his extensive studies and practice with many great masters such as Lama Umapa (Sp?), Nyapon Kunga Pel, Lama Rendawa and so forth. A full list of his teachers would be very long so I mentioned just a few. He also studied with Potam Gyaltzen (Sp?), Tonjup Sangbo (Sp?) and other great masters receiving innumerable transmissions of scriptures. Lama Tsongkhapa was never satisfied with partial study so he studied with many great masters and the treatises or shastras of many great masters such as Maitreya, the Six Ornaments and the Two Supreme Ones. He completed a profound study of all those treatises.

Studying with great masters he learned a great deal of the scriptures so he became the holder of the treasure of scriptural teachings. He also implemented the teachings and particularly he performed retreats and practiced intensively developing high realizations. He developed the realizations of the three principal aspects of the path, which include the altruistic intention to become enlightened or bodhicitta and the wisdom that understands emptiness.

Having accomplished his intensive study of the great treatises and having actualized profound realizations, Lama Tsongkhapa did critical study of the teachings of Buddhism existent in Tibet at that time. He also composed many profound treatises and later mainly following the tradition of the great Atisha; he founded the Gelugpa tradition called the New Kadampa Tradition. This is how he made a tremendous contribution for the restoration of Buddhism in Tibet.

The point that I am making is that Lama Tsongkhapa did not found a tradition just out of his own mind without any kind of base. He studied the teachings of Buddhism present at that time in Tibet and accomplished realizations. Later he founded this new tradition. Before Lama Tsongkhapa there were three different traditions of Kadampas such as the Textual Kadampa who followed the scriptural texts, the followers of the

Pith Instruction or the Quintessential Instructions and the Lam-rim tradition or the Stages of the Path tradition. But Lama Tsongkhapa received all of these traditions from great masters and integrated the three traditions.

As for the highest tantric teachings Lama Tsongkhapa received teachings on the Guhyasamaja Tantra many according to the tradition of the great translator Marpa Lotsawa. He received the teachings on Chakrasamvara according to the tradition of the Sakya masters. He received teachings on Yamantaka according to the tradition on the translator Ralosawa. Of course it is not possible for me at this point to tell everything about the teachings, transmissions and everything Lama Tsongkhapa received. I have just given you a glimpse into the teachings of Sutra and Tantra that he received.

To experience the profundity and authenticity of Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings, if you were to study the eighteen treatises that Lama Tsongkhapa wrote which contain innumerable quotations from sutras and from the profound treatises, shastras, of the Indian masters as well as Tibetan masters who preceded him one would gain confidence in his teaching. You would see its authenticity and based on various authentic sources.

As for the philosophical or profound view, Lama Tsongkhapa relied heavily upon the works of the great Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and other great masters who followed them. Lama Tsongkhapa studied the works of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva on emptiness or the profound view and he gained a precise insight into the way in which all phenomena actually exist, that is the ultimate nature of all phenomena. He was very pleased with this realization and I quote from his text, which says, "I have been able to transcend the artificial view". Where some people might think that he found an artificial, incomplete view but he transcended those extremes he gained a precise insight into the profound, ultimate nature of phenomena. This ultimate reality of phenomena is the same for every kind of phenomena from form to the omniscient state of mind.

Perhaps the most extraordinary characteristic of his realization and his work is how dependent arising and emptiness complement each other. As one studies dependent arising and develops confidence in it, one's understanding of emptiness and confidence in that profound view also increases. In other words what I am telling you here is that Lama Tsongkhapa explained precisely how things conventionally exist and yet they are empty of intrinsic existence or existing in and of themselves. He wrote a number of commentaries such as his commentary to the *Fundamental Wisdom* and he wrote about the special insight as one finds in the Lam-rim texts. He wrote great texts like *Unraveling Thought* and others texts that deal with the profound view of emptiness.

In his works on profound emptiness he explains precisely how understanding the conventional appearance of phenomena helps to eliminate the extreme of nihilism and how the understanding of emptiness eliminates the extreme of eternalism. This was a unique contribution that Lama Tsongkhapa made.

As for meditational practice in his works Lama Tsongkhapa presented the conducive factors for developing shamatha or calm-abiding and the conducive factors for developing penetrative insight or vipasyana. He also taught a great deal about the different objects of meditation and the criteria for judging whether or not one has attained calm-abiding or special insight. He also taught how to identify the obstacles in one's way from performing meditation such as laxity and excitement as well as how to counteract them, eliminating all faults and obstacles. In fact he mentioned about both stabilized meditation or contemplative meditation and analytical meditation. He presented where one needs more analytical meditation and when to perform single-pointed meditation or stabilized meditation. Sometimes one needs to alternate those two types of meditation and he was very clear on this point also. While dealing with these subjects he relied heavily upon the Five Treatises of Maitreya and the works of Asanga such as the *Bodhisattva Levels* and *The Stages of Meditation* by Acharya Kamalashila.

In short Lama Tsongkhapa said that if one wants to cultivate calm-abiding or shamatha then one should primarily do single-pointed meditation or stabilized meditation. If one wants to gain insight into the profound nature of phenomena then one should be primarily doing analytical meditation especially right from the

beginning. If one is interested in cultivating special insight then one should alternate between analytical meditation and stabilized meditation. Also he said that if one is to meditate on outlines such as cultivating one's relationship with the spiritual master and to gain insight into the precious nature of one's human life, how one's life is endowed with leisure and freedom and how one's life is transient then at first one should do analytical meditation. At the end of each analytical meditation one should perform single-pointed meditation. He was very clear on how to meditate on each and every point and as I have already mentioned he taught about meditation practice based on the authentic works of Maitreya, Asanga and Kamalashila.

As Lama Kuntangsang (Sp?) said that as for the behavioral pattern one should adopt, it should be in accordance with the principles of Buddha's teaching. Lama Tsongkhapa was also particularly concerned with the Vinaya or the behavioral aspect of the teachings. Whatever one finds in the Vinaya or the texts dealing with monk's, nun's or lay practitioner's ethics or ethical discipline, one should be following them accordingly.

According to Lama Tsongkhapa if one can the best thing is to follow even the minor precepts or ethical behavior that is mentioned in the Vinaya. But if one is unable to do this because of the predominance of defilements in one's mind or one is ignorant of them or due to one's lack of understanding of the precepts or carelessness or lack of conscientiousness, if one does break one's minor vows then in accordance with the Vinaya text one's should perform purification and restore one's vows. One should not let one's broken vows remain as they are, one needs to purify and restore them in accordance with Lord Buddha's teaching.

In short one should study the Vinaya or other texts dealing with ethical disciplines and learn what one can do and what one shouldn't be doing. Supposing one breaks a vow how does one restore one's vows? In the Vinaya one finds that even at the cost of one's life, one should observe one's precepts or ethical discipline.

This was an introduction. Today the main subject is as announced is the nature of mind and the union of bliss and voidness or emptiness. First I would like to speak about the nature of mind and I will do this in the context of the basis, path and the result. I will do my best to be brief, lucid and concise.

I must say that what I am going to speak about is within the framework of Lord Buddha's teaching. I cannot speak about other than what Buddha taught and you have already listened to great masters here. Sometimes you may hear the same kind of teaching but as the bodhisattva Shantideva said, "I have nothing new to say to you". What I shall be doing is to talk about those things within the Gelugpa tradition; how Gelugpa masters have understood this and how they practiced this.

Bodhisattva Shantideva also said that all of the problems one experiences and all one's fears and frustrations as well as happiness, all arise from one's mind. Mind is the basis for all of them. To continue Shantideva's quote, he also said, "The mind is the forerunner of everything". In order for one to accomplish peace and happiness while ridding oneself of problems and suffering, it is essential for one to know the workings of the mind, how the mind works. Otherwise one won't be able to accomplish happiness and get rid of one's problems. For this reason, one should study the mind and one should safeguard one's mind. One should protect it and cherish it.

Lama Tsongkhapa had said the same thing that the mind is the basis for both good and bad. As far as actions are concerned there are the three doors of body, speech and mind but body and speech are very much influenced by the mind. The mind is the primary basis; mind dictates or influences one's physical and verbal actions. All of the great masters such as Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Asanga have unanimously stated that the mind is the basis for both liberation and enlightenment and cyclic existence.

What is mind? What are the types of mind? According to the Prasangika-Madhyamika School, the highest school of thought there are six consciousnesses or six types of consciousness; the five sense consciousnesses which are eye, ear, nose, tongue and body consciousnesses along with the mental consciousness. So these are the six consciousnesses asserted in the Prasangika-Madhyamika School.

How does the eye consciousness or the visual consciousness arise? It arises based on certain conditions with the fundamental condition being the eye sense organ along with a visible form. Through the interaction of these factors the visual consciousness or eye consciousness arises.

It is the same with the other consciousnesses as say the ear consciousness relies on the ear sense organ and different types of sound. Only then can the ear consciousness arise. The nose consciousness relies on the nose sense organ and different types of smell and the taste consciousness relies on the tongue sense organ and taste. So depending on different factors different consciousnesses arise. The first five consciousnesses are the sense consciousnesses and they are considered as coarse as they rely on the physical organs. Those who do research on them feel that this is true. They are coarse consciousnesses.

When talks about mind as the basis for both cyclic existence and enlightenment or liberation, one is in fact talking about the six mental consciousnesses, not the sense consciousnesses. These mental consciousnesses also rely on certain conditions such as the mental organ and phenomena as its object. The mental consciousness again is not just one consciousness, it has different forms. There is the coarse form of mental consciousness, the subtle form and the subtlest form of mental consciousness. To give an example when one meditates on emptiness or for developing calm-abiding, one's mind becomes subtler. When one is in a meditative state one's mind has become to a certain extent subtle.

Also in the case of attachment and anger, normally when one experiences them, they arise quickly so they are coarse. One can also talk of the subtle forms of attachment and anger. There are the eighty conceptions, which are relatively speaking, are subtler.

In the context of tantra when one talks of the mind of three appearances which are radiant appearance or white appearance, radiant red appearance and black near attainment. These are subtle forms of mental consciousness but the subtlest of all is the primordial clear light mind. This is the subtlest state of mind. Towards the end I will briefly speak about the primordial clear light mind which is the subtlest mind in the context of tantra because our topic is the union of bliss and emptiness.

I have a restriction as I feel there are people here who haven't received any initiation or empowerment so to truly talk of the union of bliss and emptiness is very difficult. Both masters and disciples would be breaking their commitments and vows to go into detail and create the conditions for going to hell. Without an empowerment even if one listens to teachings on tantra and practice it, one may achieve some minor attainment but this won't help much as one will find oneself in one of the unfortunate states of rebirth. Just as one cannot expect oil to come from squeezing sand so one can't expect great wonders to happen through tantric practice without the proper initiation.

At this point, not in the context of tantra, I will explain how the mind forms the basis for the cycle of compulsive rebirth or samsara and nirvana, liberation or enlightenment. To talk about how the mind is the basis for cyclic existence one cannot help but speak about how one comes into cyclic existence, how one enters into this cycle of compulsive rebirth. I need to be very brief on this.

Acharya Chandrakirti has said that all the diversity one finds among sentient beings and their environment is the result of karmic actions that sentient beings create. Sentient being in the sense of those beings capable of feeling and thinking. Historically speaking Shakyamuni Buddha after he became completely enlightened, the first teaching he gave in the Deer Park in Varanasi was on the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths contain nothing but how the process of coming into cyclic existence works, how to break this process and go out of cyclic existence.

There are different approaches one can follow to talk about the process of entering cyclic existence and of going out of cyclic existence. One can do this speaking about the Four Noble Truths in general or in particular one can speak about the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination which explain how one has come into cyclic existence and how one can go out of cyclic existence.

The great Nagarjuna said, "So long as there is grasping at the physical and mental aggregates, there will be grasping at a self or I. Due to this there will be activity or action and due to all of them one will be in the compulsive cycle of rebirth". What Nagarjuna is saying is that so long as one has grasping for both a self and phenomena, one will grasp at a notion of a person, which is called the view of the transitory collection. Due to these graspings one will continually create karmic actions, a chain of karmic actions and these karmic actions bind one to the cycle of compulsive rebirth.

In saying that one grasps at the self of a person, one feels that as a person in and of oneself, existing in one's own right, and because of this grasping one cherishes oneself too much. Due to this grasping or self-cherishing attitude, many other inappropriate states of mind or conceptions take place in one's mind. Due to this one experiences delusions such as attachment or anger and under their influence one creates karmic actions. These karmic actions keep one within cyclic existence. As one creates karmic actions, they deposit imprints or latencies in one's mindstream or mental continuum.

At the time of death what happens is that the dependent links of craving and grasping, the eighth and ninth links activate one's karmic actions. Following these, the dependent link of existence or becoming arises. By this process when one karmic actions intensify and after one leaves this world, one has to take rebirth. So one is born through four different ways, mostly from the womb of one's mother. The other ways are to be born from eggs, born from heat and moisture and lastly to be born miraculously or spontaneously. These are the four different ways of taking birth.

At the time of death if a positive karmic action is activated by dependent links of craving and grasping, then one is able to have a fortunate rebirth. But at the time of death if a negative karmic action is activated by those factors then one will achieve an unfortunate rebirth. Suppose one is born in an unfortunate state. Until one's karma that precipitated one to be born there is exhausted, it may take eons, hundreds of years of human lifetime, for one to experience that unfortunate state of tremendous suffering.

If a positive karmic action gets activated at the time of death by the two dependent links then one achieves a fortunate rebirth either as a human being or as a celestial being, deva. Even if one is born as a human being, which is relatively speaking a fortunate rebirth, but one has to experience human problems. One cannot escape problems. Also if one is born as a god or celestial being in the Desire Realm, relatively speaking that is a very happy situation. But still one has to experience the problems that the gods of the Desire Realm experience and the same with the demigods.

Suppose one is born in the Formless Realm or Form Realm in which there isn't the suffering of suffering but wherever one is born in cyclic existence one does experience the pervasive suffering of conditioning. Wherever one is born in cyclic existence the way one has been currently reborn, one is always under the influence of contaminated karmic actions and afflictive emotions or delusions. This is why one always runs into difficulties and problems. Wherever one finds oneself in cyclic existence there are problems.

The great Nagarjuna said, "From the three arises the two. From the two, seven and from the seven arises three". The explanation given is in terms of the twelve links of dependent origination. Within the twelve links of dependent origination there are three links that are afflictive emotions or delusions come the two links that are karmic actions, karmic formation and becoming. From these karmic actions arise the succeeding seven links such as name and form, contact, feelings and etc. From these seven arise the last three dependent links. This is how when one is caught up in these twelve dependent links one continually experiences one or another form of problems. There doesn't appear to be a gap, just incessantly and continually experience forms of problems.

According to Buddhism no one has dumped one into this cyclic existence. Under the influence of karmic actions and delusions, one has been born into this problematic creation. When one's mind is conjoined with delusion or afflictive emotions, one runs into all kinds of difficulties and problems. If one is to posit a creator of everything then it is one's mind. One's mind is the creator of everything. Sometimes one hears that

contaminated karmic actions and delusions are the creator of the life one is experiencing. One could also say that one's mind is the creator. One's mind has always been joined with contaminated karmic actions and delusions.

If one goes deeper into this matter, it is one's karmic actions which have brought one into cyclic existence and if one traces further one finds that the underlying causes are the delusions and afflictive emotions. Of the different forms of afflictive emotions or delusion, at the very root there is the ignorant perception of grasping at a self. This is the root cause of all of one's problems and one's life in cyclic existence. Just because this grasping has always accompanied one's mind, so one can say that one's mind is the basis for life in cyclic existence. It is the creator of one's life in cyclic existence.

As one looks into one's present situation, one is controlled by one's mind, one's way of thinking. One's mind has been dominated by or controlled by the defilements or afflictive emotions such as attachment and anger. This is why one encounters many difficulties and problems. Because one's mind is not under one's control, one is captivated by the mind and one's mind is captivated by defilements. This is how one encounters all difficulties. This is like a child as a child who is very nice but spoiled. The defilements and afflictive emotions have spoiled one's mind so to speak. When children find themselves in bad company they learn bad manners and when we see those children we think how sad the way they behave.

In a sense the defilements and delusions have made one just like those spoiled children. One's mind has very much been spoiled by them and this is why one hears of people committing suicide. When one pauses to reflect on why someone would do that, one has no answer. This seems inconceivable to us. The fact of the matter is that one has no control over one's mind and one's mind has been ruling one. The mind in turn is dominated by the negative emotions and this is how one can go to such an extreme.

When the defilement dominate one's mind, one finds oneself doing many improper actions and somehow when a particular delusion arises in one's mind, at that moment it is as though one has gone crazy. One does not look like one's normal self and one does actions that one should not be doing. One should be ashamed to do such actions but one becomes a shameless person. The delusion is dictating one's behavior. One picks up so much courage to do certain things, one becomes very fearless and does actions one should not be doing. This is how the defilements dictate one's actions and force one to do that which one really should not do.

When delusion arises in one's mind and it dictates one's behavior, all of one's actions become negative. One cannot expect positive actions to be created under the influence of delusions. As the great Nagarjuna has said that actions which arise from attachment, anger and obscuration are negative actions. Actions that arise from non-attachment, non-anger and non-obscuration are positive actions. By what Nagarjuna is telling us if one acts under the command of delusions, one cannot expect to create peace and happiness. Peace and happiness do not come from actions created under the influence of the delusions. If one really wants genuine peace and happiness and for one's life to go smoothly, one needs to discipline one's mind, one should subdue one's mind. As one subdues one's mind life becomes much better and one experiences peace and happiness.

As we know there are people who do not believe in rebirth or life before and after the present one. But then there are people who believe in previous and future lives and among those are those who feel that Tibetans when they die will be reborn as Tibetans and so forth. This is their way of thinking and I have nothing to say about this.

As a believer in rebirth if one accepts this as fact that one's good and bad karmic actions decide the type of rebirth that one will achieve, then one cannot remain satisfied by the fact that one has enough food, clothing and shelter. One needs to examine; one needs to look within oneself and find out when one dies where will one end up. What kind of rebirth will one achieve? It is very important for one to question oneself and find the answer to this question.

In a sense the existence of previous lives has become a problem for many people and they find it hard to believe in this idea. In Buddhism, in the profound treatises and texts there are presentations of different reasonings to establish previous lives as well as future ones. In discussing these reasonings like the substantial cause of mental consciousness, the preceding moment of experience or in terms of familiarization or intimacy one has had in the past, in order to understand how these reasons establish the theory of rebirth, one needs to have acquaintance with Buddhist logic and metaphysics. Otherwise one might not grasp the idea.

I will not go into those reasonings but I want to take the opportunity to mention that there is a clear indication that there have been previous lifetimes. For instance among people of the same nationality there are some who look handsome or beautiful and those with much lesser qualities. These differences must have causes and conditions; it can not just happen without cause. So when one traces back this physical body, back to one's mother's womb. One cannot create good or bad karmic actions in that state so one cannot say that actions in the mother's womb were the cause. This indicates a previous existence and helps support the idea that there have been past lives.

One also finds differences among us such as in business some are very successful, flourishing while others are struggling. They are the same businesses with the same effort and similar factories but still big differences in success. One finds similar differences in children in the same family; some are very successful and handsome while others are less handsome and less successful. So all these differences one finds must have causes and conditions as their basis. In this life, one can place the same amount of effort in the same endeavor but there are huge differences in success. As one looks into this one finds support for past lives, what one did in the past.

One can also talk about how children educated in the same way, the same school, studying under the same teacher, with the same facilities yet there is a big difference between the students. Some learn quickly while others hardly seem to learn at all. Why is there this big difference? As far as the facilities are concerned and all the things that can be done in this lifetime are concerned, they all have the same opportunity but why is there such a large difference in the students? I think this has something to do with what one did in the past.

One does find people who such personalities that they are very influential. Just by their presence they are much influence on other people. This does not seem to be an acquired quality but an inborn quality that they have and I think that this quality can be traced back to previous lifetimes. Then of course in our world we find children who can remember their past lives vividly. This also suggests that previous lives do exist, if they did not exist what are these people remembering? If there are past lives that they have remembered then it is clear that there will be future lives.

Thinking along these lines as one develops certain belief in past and future lives then the theory of karmic action makes more sense. Then one knows that one must be careful with all of one's actions otherwise one will have to experience the ripening results of all of one's actions. Lord Buddha said that one will experience different situations in accordance with one's own actions. This means that one cannot neglect one's future rebirth in future lives, one has to be careful now so that one does not suffer in one's future lives.

Of course we all cherish ourselves and want to fulfill our own interests and wishes. As one develops concern about one's future, what one wants for their future it helps to be concerned about future lifetimes. What do we want for our future lives? If one wants to have happiness in the future, in one's future lives especially what is pertinent for one to do is to train one's mind, discipline one's mind or subdue one's mind. This is the best way. To accomplish the kind of peace and happiness that one wants, material development is good but it will not insure genuine peace and happiness. The more material progress one makes, the more scattered becomes one's mind as one's mind wanders to different material things. Temptations and all those other things happen.

The only way to bring true peace and happiness to oneself is to make inner development, inner



transformation, which can only come about through spiritual practice. I don't speak English so I don't know how much the word religion carries the meaning of the Tibetan word *cho*, the Dharma. The Tibetan word *cho* tells one that one needs to make change or transformation. When talks of practicing *cho* or Dharma one is implying that one is going to make change, transforming oneself into better beings.

If one wants to make the greatest accomplishment and do the best through spiritual practice then one has to follow the gradual spiritual path. First one must study and practice the three principal aspects of the path which are renunciation or aversion to cyclic existence, bodhicitta or the altruistic intention to become enlightened and the profound view or the insight into emptiness. Having cultivated these three principal aspects of the path then one enters into tantric practice performing Highest Yoga Tantra practice. In this way one can attain enlightenment in one lifetime. If one is able to follow this process that is the best and one will make great the greatest accomplishment.

As there are different spiritual paths within Buddhism that one can follow, if one doesn't mind to take a long time to reach enlightenment, one has this kind of determination, one cultivates the enlightened attitude of the altruistic intention to become enlightened. After this it may take three great, countless eons to accumulate the merit and wisdom needed and during this process one is tremendously benefiting sentient beings, working for them. One is working for enlightenment to benefit sentient beings the most. So this is one way, the follows the way of Bodhisattvas and how they benefit sentient beings.

Then one can also follow the path of Solitary Realizers or Pratyekabuddhas. One can follow the stages of this path and attain Arhatship or the state of liberation of a Solitary Realizer. If this doesn't suit one then one can follow the stages of the path of a Hearer or Sravaka, which leads to their state of liberation. These are the different paths; one has many choices before one. One makes one's choice and follows the path to its destination.

Later I will speak very briefly about those different paths, how one can attain enlightenment in just this one lifetime. I will also speak on how to attain the realization of Solitary Realizers and how to attain the liberation of Hearers or Sravakas. I shall touch briefly on all of them. Also another important point here is how can one integrate spiritual practice into one's daily life. As one goes on in life, how can one practice the Dharma at the same time? I will also speak briefly about this.

*(Break)*

The way one integrates spiritual practice into one's daily life is within the context of what is called the five paths. Of the five paths the first one is called the power of setting forth the thought which is the power of motivation. Be it spiritual practice or a worldly activity, as one knows it is important to reflect on what one wants to do first and then make a good plan. Done this way things go much better. In terms of spiritual practice when one gets up in the morning one needs to set one's motivation that one will place much effort into the practice of Dharma in this life, this year, this month and particularly this day. One will not waste one's life just for the sake of accumulating food, clothing, shelter, being satisfied merely with those. One will work for achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, which is the highest type of motivation. This is called the power of motivation.

When one gets up in the morning one should make a point to generate the proper motivation to make one's daily activities meaningful in a spiritual sense. The second path is power of the white seed, which means the purification of negativities and the accumulation of positive energy. Those who are committed to do certain main practices have preliminary practices to perform first such as *ngondro*. Engaging in *ngondro* practice consists of this power of the white seed. Even if one is not aiming for such main practices they can still perform preliminary practices such as prostrations, circumambulation, making offerings and so forth. This constitutes the power of the white seed. The seven limb practice constitutes purification of unwholesome actions and the accumulation of positive energy. One can practice the seven limb and do purification and the accumulation of merit.

The third power is called the power of familiarization or intimacy. This means that if one takes renunciation as one's key practice, one does one's practice and afterwards one develops more intimacy with renunciation. This is the power of familiarization. If one wants to cultivate the altruistic intention to become enlightened or bodhicitta, as one performs the practice one develops more intimacy with the enlightened attitude. Or one could be meditating on deity yoga and through this meditation one develops more and more intimacy with the deity. This applies to any other kind of practice.

The fourth power is the power of applying the counteractive measures or antidotes. If one's main aim is to challenge the self-cherishing attitude or self-centeredness, as it arises in one's mind one should counteract it; one needs to challenge it. As any form of delusion like anger or attachment arises in one's mind, one does not let it be there unchallenged but face it and confront it. This is called the power of applying the antidotes.

Of course the best method is to see that any form of delusion does not arise within one's mind. This is to say that prevention is better than cure. Once the delusion has arisen in one's mind it is difficult to bring it under control. Just before attachment or anger arises in one's mind if one is mindful and notice that it might arise, just stop it and prevent it from arising in one's mind.

In case one is not able to prevent the delusions from arising within one's mind because one is being exposed to different situations and different objects, one way to as a temporary measure is to keep the objects of delusion at a distance and avoid them. So one of the methods that is practiced is to go into seclusion isolating oneself from the objects of delusion. This can be helpful temporarily. So long as one has delusions if one encounters the objects of those delusions it is difficult not to experience the delusions. So in this case try to avoid the objects of delusion.

The fifth power is the power of aspirational prayer and here one can say any kind of prayer. May I be able to direct my mind into spiritual practice. May my spiritual practice become a spiritual path. May this spiritual path be brought to the completion stage. These are all wonderful prayers. One can also pray that the Dharma, the source of benefit and happiness for all sentient beings, flourish all over the world. May all sincere practitioners and the upholders of the Dharma enjoy long lives and good health. However the best kind of prayer is, "May I never be separated from the altruistic mind of enlightenment of bodhicitta in this life and in all future lives." This is the best kind of aspirational prayer that one can make. This is the power of aspirational prayer.

In short the way one can integrate spiritual practice or those five powers that constitute spiritual practice into one's daily life is when one first gets up, set the power of motivation. In the context of Greater Vehicle Buddhism one should set the motivation that at least today one will not be selfish, one will not let selfishness dictate one. In other words this is to say that one will develop concern for others, being kind and caring for others. One then should perform the purification of negativities and the accumulation of positive energy in different ways. If one is committed to do certain spiritual practices, one should do this with a sense of delight and enthusiasm not that it is a burden placed upon one.

In fact selfishness is the main obstacle in the context of Greater Vehicle Buddhism to practice. At the end one does aspirational prayers and dedication. One can pray for a long and healthy life but that is just an ordinary prayer. One instead should pray for the peace, happiness and prosperity of all sentient beings and that one may engender this enlightened attitude in all of one's future lives. If one does this in one's daily life then one's life will be very well integrated with spiritual practice.

Lord Buddha's teachings consists of are called the 84,000 bundles or sections. These 84,000 bundles of teaching are contained within the twelve scriptural divisions or the nine scriptural divisions, which are different ways of classifying his teachings placing them into different baskets. One could also say that Buddha's teachings are all included within the Three Baskets or Tripitaka, Sutra, Abhidharma and Vinaya. The subject matter of these three baskets are brought together or summarized in their essence by the great Atisha in his *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. [See His Holiness the Dalai Lama's book [Illuminating the Path to](#)

[Enlightenment](#) for a copy of Atisha's text and a commentary on it.]

Even ordinary things can be learned by observing what others are doing. One cannot learn each and every thing unless one goes to study with professional teachers. If this is true for ordinary things it is especially true of the spiritual journey one wants to undertake. It is like going to an unknown land or destination but with an inner transformation there is nothing to see or hear with one's ears. Here it is very important for one to cultivate a relationship with a qualified spiritual guide. At this time one has achieved such a precious human rebirth free of the main obstacles to the practice of the Dharma and also possesses the enriching factors to accomplish realization. If one is to make the best use of one's life and accomplish not only temporary purposes for this life but also reach the ultimate spiritual goal; one cannot be lazy and use this life properly. One has the potential to accomplish one's goals.

As for this precious human life it is very hard to attain, as the causes needed to attain this kind of life are hard to create. At this time one does have this precious human life but this life will not remain forever. It has a transient nature so it is very unstable. If one does not make the best use of it now, the time will come when one must leave this life and go empty-handed. So when the time comes for one to leave this world and one reflects on what one has accomplished during one's life, all the worldly activities one thought were so meaningful, do not make much sense at the time of death. If only one had created positive energy and practiced the Dharma then that would stand with one at the crucial time of death. Otherwise one will be helpless in the face of death; only the Dharma can help one at that time. One should reflect and meditate on all of these important points.

As one meditates on those points serially, first one performs analytical meditation where one brings up all the reasons to establish each point and ascertain each point. At the end of each analytical meditation one switches to single-pointed or stabilized meditation on each point. The purpose of meditating on the points I mentioned is for one to be able to eliminate clinging to this life. One is so attached to this life and the things associated with this life which firmly binds one to samsara. One has to get rid of this clinging to just this lifetime and meditating on those points will help one with this.

If one continues to cling to this life one can do practice but one's Dharma practice will not be that effective. One may have the feeling that one has been practicing for a long time without much benefit. This is telling one that one has not been practicing the Dharma properly in its pure form. Doing the practice just for this life is not a Dharma practice. One is only confusing oneself and will not be able to achieve one's higher goals, spiritual goals. So this is why the first thing one should try to do is to work on getting rid of clinging to this life. Otherwise one will not be able to get rid of clinging to material prosperity and the like all this and future lives.

One should also meditate on different aspects of the law of karma or karmic action. Its major characteristics or aspects are the certainty of karmic action. This means if one creates a positive karmic action that it will definitely bring a positive result. There is no way that it will bring about problems or difficulties. If one creates a negative karmic action it will bring a negative result. This is a law of nature. So this is the certainty of karmic action.

The second point is the increasing nature of karma. This means that one could create a small positive action and with the passage of time it can intensify and bring a great result. The same is with a slight negative action; with the passage of time it intensifies and can bring great problems to one.

The third characteristic of karma is whatever karmic action one has not created or accumulated one will not experience the results. One is only responsible for one's own actions and of the actions one creates, one experiences the results. Actions one has never created one does not need to worry about, one will not experience those results.

The fourth characteristic of karma is that whatever karmic action one has created, good or bad, provided they are not destroyed by certain factors, they never are wasted. It may take eons and eons but one's karmic

actions will definitely bring their respective results. For instance if one creates a positive karmic action and it is never destroyed by one's anger, it may take many eons to bring its result but it will definitely bring its result. Similarly one could perform a negative karmic action and if one does not apply the Four Antidotes to purify those karmic actions with the passage of time given the proper conditions it will ripen into its negative result. So this is how karmic actions work.

By meditating on these different aspects of karma one develops confidence in the infallible workings of karmic action. One also needs to contemplate of the different aspects of the suffering in cyclic existence, the general sufferings of cyclic existence and the particular sufferings of cyclic existence. The purpose of meditating on the different forms of suffering along with the working of karmic action is to help one cut off clinging to material prosperity and the ordinary pleasures of life in cyclic existence.

What one needs to be like a sick person, who is nauseated at the sight of food, in that one should have a similar aversion to the sufferings of cyclic existence. At the present as soon as one sees prosperity as someone who owns a magnificent house, one becomes attached to it wishing to have the same type house. Or one sees the automobiles of others so one desires one for oneself. There is nothing wrong with appreciating a beautiful thing but when one develops attachment that is a different matter. One needs to work with one's own mind and the attachments towards material things in cyclic existence. If one is able to generate the same kind of attitude that a prisoner develops whom really wants out of the prison, who is tired of spending one more day in prison. If one starts to generate that kind of aversion and renunciation towards life in cyclic existence then one is starting to develop the proper aversion towards cyclic existence which is a very important spiritual quality.

It is the same for all three types of practitioners. First one must develop an aversion to life in cyclic existence. One should not get attached even to the best of material prosperity or things of cyclic existence. Once one has developed renunciation then if one decides to follow the path of the sravaka or Hearers then one needs to develop the genuine aspiration seeking the liberation of sravakas. As one develops that genuine aspiration, one is already on the path of accumulation of a sravaka and the main practice consists of the Three High Trainings, training in higher ethical discipline, higher concentration and higher wisdom.

By performing the Three Higher Trainings one progresses on the stages of the path such as the paths of preparation, seeing, meditation and no more learning. As one attains the path of no more learning one achieves the liberation of the Hearers.

Having generated renunciation if one is interested in following the path leading to liberation of the pratyekabuddhas or Solitary Realizers first one needs to cultivate a genuine aspiration seeking that liberation. As one experiences that aspiration genuinely one is already on the path of accumulation of the Solitary Realizer's Vehicle. Again the practice is the same, the practice of the Three Higher Trainings. Through this practice one progresses on the remaining paths such as the paths of preparation, seeing, meditation and no more learning. The major difference between Solitary Realizers and Hearers is that the Solitary Realizers have to accumulate much more positive energy or merit. This they accomplish mostly on the path of accumulation.

Generally speaking all sentient beings have the great potentiality to become a completely enlightened person eventually which is called the Buddhature. But one does speak of those who are temporarily inclined towards the Hearer's Path or inclined towards the Solitary Realizer's. What they need to do first is according to their inclinations they need to follow the respective paths leading to their respective states of liberation. Having attained those states of liberation then they move on to the path of the Greater Vehicle working for supreme enlightenment.

To substantiate this point that all of us have the Buddhature, as Rinpoche has quoted the nature of the mind is clear light and it has never been defiled. The defilements are just temporarily in one's mind; they are just adventitious. They have not contaminated the pure nature of one's mind so this is why one has the great

potentiality to grow.

Each of us, in fact all sentient beings have the Buddhanature which is of two types, the naturally-abiding Buddhanature which is the main cause for one to attain the Truth Body or Dharmakaya and the developmental Buddhanature that is the main cause for one to attain the Rupakaya or the Form Body. As Maitreya has stated that if one makes effort consistently one will be able to experience one's Buddhanature and attain one's spiritual goals. Even if an insect were to do this positive development that insect would attain supreme enlightenment. This means we all share in this Buddhanature.

As we have Buddhanature, this is why all of us can become Buddhas provided we make consistent efforts. Another reason for one to be able to become a Buddha eventually is as I have already quoted that the nature of the mind is clear light, pure and never defiled. The defilements that one has in one's mind do not form the nature of the mind. They have not contaminated the purity of one's mind so to speak. The naturally-abiding Buddhanature, which is the emptiness of one's mind, the ultimate nature of one's mind has remained pure right from the beginning and has never been contaminated. So all of the delusions and defilements that one has in one's mind are just temporary and if one makes a point to apply the antidotes to them, they are removable. They can be eliminated, can be gotten rid of.

Just as the nature of fire is heat and burning so is the clarity and stillness is the nature of the mind. So the clarity and calmative power of the mind has never been defiled by the delusions. The defilements, as I already have said are just temporary. By temporary I mean that they can be separated from the mind. One can eliminate the defilements for one's mind and experience the purity of one's mind. Because one can do this, this is the great possibility for us to become an enlightened person.

In the case of a Mahayana practitioner, having generated renunciation, if one is of sharp faculties one should straight away meditate on emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena. Having gained insight into emptiness one then cultivates the conventional mind of enlightenment, which is bodhicitta. In the case of a Mahayana practitioner of lower faculties having generated renunciation, one first cultivates the altruistic mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta. One then studies emptiness and develops insight into the ultimate nature of things.

As for the cultivation of the altruistic mind of enlightenment there are two different techniques or lineages. One is called the Six Causes and the One Result Quintessential Instructions for Developing the Mind of Enlightenment and the practitioners of lower faculties normally start with this practice. Practitioners of sharp faculties develop the altruistic mind of enlightenment by practicing the other lineage; the instructions called Equalizing and Exchanging Self with Others.

It doesn't matter which of the two lineages of instructions one practices. With either one is able to experience the altruistic intention to become enlightened. As soon as one experiences genuinely the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta, one finds oneself on the path of accumulation of Greater Vehicle Buddhism. This is the entryway into Mahayana Buddhism and as it has been said that for someone wishing to become a completely enlightened person, they must cultivate the mind of enlightenment, which is the source of enlightenment. It should be stabilized and made firm as Mount Meru, the King of Mountains.

Without cultivating the mind of enlightenment there is no other way to reach enlightenment. If one wants to attain enlightenment one has to cultivate the altruistic mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta. With the mind of enlightenment, whatever one does especially if practicing generosity, morality or ethical discipline, patience or tolerance and so on, all of one's actions will become the deeds of a bodhisattva and one's practice becomes perfections.

As soon as one generates meditative stabilization integrating calm-abiding with special insight, one finds oneself on the path of preparation of Greater Vehicle Buddhism. Then as one continues one's practice and cultivates greater intimacy with these insights, one progresses on the remaining paths. When one develops

direct insight and experience emptiness, one is then on the path of seeing of Greater Vehicle Buddhism. As one develops even greater intimacy with this direct insight along with skillful means, one progresses on the path of meditation and the path of no-more learning.

This is all within the context of Sutrayana or the Greater Vehicle of Buddhism. This is to say that one must accumulate merit for three countless eons. On the paths of accumulation and preparation one is able to accumulate the merit for one countless eon. The seven spiritual grounds from the first, Joyous to the seventh ground account for one countless eon of the accumulation of merit or positive energy. On the last three spiritual grounds, the eighth through tenth bhūmis account for the final countless eon of the accumulation of merit then becoming a fully enlightened being. This finishes my discussion of the Three Vehicles having created the context to speak a little bit about tantric practice.

There are two entrances into the Tantric Vehicle or Path. One can enter from the path of accumulation of the Greater Vehicle Buddhism or one can enter the Tantric Path from the tenth bhūmi. Actually the formal entryways are those two ways from which one can enter the Tantric Path. We are an exception as we enter into tantra from all kinds of entrances. The reason why one enters from either the path of accumulation of the Mahayana or the tenth bhūmi is because to perform tantric practice one has to first do the common practices, one must first cultivate the common path which are the Three Principal Aspects of the Path, renunciation, bodhicitta and the wisdom realizing emptiness. Having cultivated those paths first then one can enter into the tantric practice and one is qualified to engage in tantric practices.

One then seeks a qualified Vajra master, receives the standard empowerments and then enters into the tantric practices. The tantric path is considered a very profound and swift, it can take one to the final destination the most quickly. But its profundity and swiftness also depends upon the Lam-rim or the Stages of the Path, especially the [Three Principal Aspects of the Path](#) as I already mentioned. There is a saying in Tibetan that the reason why butter cheesecake is so delicious is because of the butter; without the butter it is just a dry cheese ball. So the profundity and swiftness of the tantra is due to the Lam-rim, the common path. Without the common path tantra is just full of ritual noises (*hum hum* and *phat phat*).

If one wants to be a qualified practitioner of tantra then one has to cultivate the altruistic mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta. When bodhicitta is genuinely present within one's mindstream, one is already on the path of accumulation of Greater Vehicle Buddhism. One then can enter into tantric practice. In this context it is not enough to only cultivate relative bodhicitta, one has to cultivate the extraordinary altruistic mind of enlightenment. This extraordinary mind of enlightenment gives one a push so that when one sees others suffering one is unable to tolerate it. One cannot sit idly by but must do everything possible. This kind of push, this kind of inside drive is needed.

Having cultivated this extraordinary altruistic mind of enlightenment, if one wants to practice the three lower tantras one needs to receive the standard initiations into the mandalas of the respective tantras from a qualified Vajra master. One must also receive the commentary on the tantra. If one wants to practice Highest Yoga Tantra, Mahanuttarayoga Tantra it is the same. One needs to find a qualified Vajra master and receive all four of the initiations. One then can engage in tantric practice. In fact it is said that *abhisheka* or empowerment is the door to enter into tantra.

Suppose one wishes to practice the Guhyasamaja Tantra which is a Buddhist Highest Yoga Tantra. In fact the Guhyasamaja Tantra has two traditions. One could receive the initiation according to the Jñānapada tradition or according to the Arya Nagarjuna tradition. According to the Arya Nagarjuna tradition one must receive the Guhyasamaja empowerment called Akshobhya Vajra Empowerment receiving these four empowerments. Having received them then one can practice the two stages, the generation stage and the completion stage. For a beginner one has to follow this order, there is no other way. Without practicing the generation stage one cannot practice the completion stage because it is said that these two stages are like rungs in a ladder, one must go step-by-step. In a special case like someone who already generated an understanding of the generation stage in a previous lifetime, that practitioner can straightaway practice the

completion stage. This is an exceptional case.

Having received the proper initiation or empowerment one then has to practice first the generation stage. According to the Jnanapada tradition of Guhyasamaja one has to practice what are called the Four Drops or *bindu* for the completion stage. According to the extensive mandala of Vajrapani one has to practice the four types of blessing. According to Yamantaka practice one has to do the Four Yogas which constitute the completion stage practice. According to the Ghantapa tradition one has to practice five levels and these five levels are the completion stage but are not the same five levels as the completion stage practice of the Guhyasamaja Tantra. According to the Kalachakra Tantra one has to practice the Six Preparatory Yogas. What is common to all of these completion stage practices is the Six Yogas of Naropa.

So those are the different classifications and there are eight of them, which are referred to as the eight great commentaries according to the tradition of Lower Tantric College.

To give you a little more insight into the five levels of the completion stage of Guhyasamaja, according to the Arya Nagarjuna tradition the five levels are the Isolated Body level and Isolated Speech level as one level, Isolated Mind level, the Illusory Body level, the Clear Light level and the Level of Unification. Sometimes one talks of six levels of the completion stage of Guhyasamaja, sometimes five but it is just a matter of classification, there is no conflict.

Now we are getting to the main topic the union of bliss and voidness. The Isolated Body practice where a practitioner who has completed both the coarse and subtle yogas of the generation stage and is meditating on the subtle drop at the lower end of the central channel or secret space, is able to bring all of the winds into the central channel. There are the three phases of entering, abiding and the dissolution of the winds in the central channel or *nadi*. Just before this happens with the two levels of the generation stage up to this level where a certain exalted wisdom is generated is called the Isolated Body level.

On the Isolated Body level of the completion stage of The Guhyasamaja according to the Arya Nagarjuna tradition, in the state of meditative equipoise one is meditating on the wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness or emptiness. This is the primary experience at this level of practice. As one comes out of that meditative state in the post-meditational period one tries to see every appearance of whatever object one experiences as the nature of non-dual bliss and voidness. Also during the post-meditational period on this level one experiences this non-dual union of bliss and voidness in the form of deities.

What does the Isolated Body mean? The body of course refers to one's body, which is composed of different constituents like the Five Psychophysical aggregates. These constitute the basis of isolation and it is the ordinary appearance along with the ordinary clinging attitude from which the practitioner's body is isolated from ordinary appearance and the ordinary cling attitude. This is done through deity yoga practice so one arises in the form of a deity or deities and sees oneself as the deity, not as an ordinary being. This is the etymological explanation of the term isolated body.

Next is the Isolated Speech level and at the practitioner's heart one visualizes the mantra drop or circle trying to bring the winds of the upper and lower body into the central channel. There one realizes the wisdom of appearance. When one experiences this wisdom and when one is able to dissolve the winds into the indestructible drop within one's heart, up to this point is the boundary of the Isolated Speech level.

The etymological explanation of the term isolated speech, from what is speech isolated, is in fact the ordinary perception and clinging to speech. On this level the arising, abiding and flow of the breath is not perceived as the ordinary flow but in the sound of the Three Syllables [OM AH HUM]. The flow of the breath or speech is not just seen as ordinary but as if it resounds naturally as the Three Syllables. The main practice here is the Vajra Recitation also the two ways of dissolving the winds into the central channel. There is the gradual dissolution and the spontaneous dissolution. One can also rely on external concert.

Through these techniques or methods one brings the winds into the central channel at the heart and they dissolve into the indestructible drop where one experiences the wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness. From this point on to where one attains the Impure Illusory Body this whole level is of Isolated Speech.

In order to experience the exemplary Clear Light of the Isolated Mind level one has to bring all of the wind energies into the indestructible drop. For this one has needs to rely on a qualified consort. By qualified consort it is meant is a consort who has also received the standard tantric empowerments and who has also cultivated the three aspects of the common path. Through relying on the consort's help one brings the totality of the winds into the indestructible drop and experiences the exemplary Clear Light of the Isolated Mind.

If both practitioners who are helping each other in this way are not qualified then the result is ordinary sexual activity, nothing Dharmic will happen. The exemplary Clear Light will not arise so both practitioners need to be qualified. If one practices in the way I have just described and through one of the two ways of dissolving the wind energies of the body, one goes through all of the stages of the dissolution processes that occurs at the time of death. One also sees eight different indicative signs of the dissolution of the elements, constituents and so forth.

As these happen, this is the internal practice, one also experiences four types of joy due to the flow of the drop at the crown of the head down to the tip of the secret organ. When the drop reaches the tip of the secret organ, one experiences spontaneous bliss and this blissful mind is used to penetrate and experience emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena. This is how one experiences the non-dual bliss and voidness. As the drop comes to the tip of the secret organ one needs to retain it there and this is an important point of the practice.

At the end of that dissolution one experiences the Clear Light mind which is the primordial, subtle Clear Light mind. This blissful Clear Light mind is used to penetrate and experience emptiness. This Clear light mind is also called the Exemplary Clear Light mind of the Isolated Mind Level. As one continues on with the practice one experiences emptiness directly, the primordial, subtle Clear Light mind experiences emptiness directly and at that point the Clear Light becomes the Meaning Clear Light.

In the case of ordinary people it is at the time of death that there is a chance for one to experience the primordial, subtle Clear Light mind as it manifests at death. But in the case of yogis or meditators through the power of their yoga or meditations are able to experience the primordial Clear Light mind, which is an exceptional case. So through the practices I just mentioned when one experiences the Exemplary Clear Light mind of the Isolated Mind Level, at that point one is still not experiencing emptiness directly or nakedly, still there is what is called the image of emptiness, a generic image. Through a combination of the practice where that generic image is removed and one has a direct experience, this experience is called the spontaneous wisdom experiencing emptiness directly or the Meaning Clear Light.

Having reached this state, the Exemplary Clear Light Mind of the Isolated Mind, one is still in a meditative state. As one rises from that meditation one attains the Impure Illusory Body. As one continues one's practice and re-enters the meditative state when one is able to gain a direct experience of emptiness, the subtle primordial Clear Light Mind, experiencing emptiness directly, one achieves the Meaning Clear Light. When one arises from that meditative state one achieves the Pure Illusory Body. So the unification of the Impure Illusory Body with the primordial Clear Light mind in union with the Pure Illusory Body with the Meaning Clear Light mind is called the unification of mind and body or the Extraordinary Thing, the *ugonnata*.

I would like to stop here. We will have a short meditation period before the question and answer session. One great Tibetan master has said although there is meditation on the generation stage but meditation on the Guru Yoga is unsurpassable. There is no greater meditation than that. Though there are many forms of recitation that one can do, making supplication to one's guru is the best recitation.

I will tell you a little anecdote. Once a lama told his disciple to meditate on his teacher but the disciple got the



information confused. He thought the lama told him to visualize himself sitting on his lama's head. His lama had a bald head and the student kept slipping off of his hat. The disciple approached his master and said that he did not know how to sit on his bald head as he kept falling off. The lama was very skilled and instead of scolding his disciple said for him to try meditating with his lama on his head.

Meditation on one's guru or master is the supreme meditation. Many masters in the past have agreed with this. I feel this would be a great opportunity for us to meditate on His Holiness the Dalai Lama, our root guru, as we are about to receive the Kalachakra Empowerment from him. I feel this would be an appropriate meditation for us to do. He has won the Nobel Peace Prize as well being the embodiment of great compassion and has so much to do with peace and happiness in the world. Let us meditate on His Holiness either sitting on the crown of our heads, in the space in front or in our heart. However if you are bald His Holiness might slip!

Rays of light emanate from the body of His Holiness, which enters our bodies and these rays purify all of our defilements and negative thoughts. As we become purified reflect that rays of light emit from you to all other sentient beings which purify their negative states of mind. All experience peace, harmony and happiness. Also reflect that as the rays of light enter our bodies, they also lengthen our life spans, provide good health, aiding one's practice.

**Question:** How does one cultivate proper motivation?

**Answer:** Of course the best motivation is the motivation of the altruistic mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta. One can also cultivate other proper motivations. For bodhicitta one purposely cultivates the thought to benefit all sentient beings by repeating the thought "I wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings". Generally constant reflection on this thought helps generate a feeling within one.

**Question:** Of the two aspects of either distancing oneself from the delusions or taking difficulties on to the path which is the better practice?

**Answer:** For beginners if one is not able to take the difficulties of troubling situations as an opportunity to transform them into one's practice then it would be better to keep the situations at a distance.

**Question:** His Holiness has stated that there is no difference in the attainment between the Sutra and Tantra Vehicles but as the mind realizing emptiness in tantra is more subtle and profound, why are they considered equal? What difference does it make in helping sentient beings escape cyclic existence?

**Answer:** As far as the ultimate goal of enlightenment is concerned there is no difference at all whether one achieves it through the Sutrayana practice or Tantrayana practice. In the case of the state of the mind of enlightenment, the bodhicitta developed through tantric techniques is more profound and swift so thus one is more determined and has more strength to work towards enlightenment. It has more to do with technique than the mind realizing enlightenment.

As we see in daily life people who are more determined to do something, they get it accomplished quicker whereas others are not capable of that intensity.

**Question:** In general must karma always come to fruition or can the result be avoided through purification or realization?

**Answer:** This was already addressed earlier. Yes, through purification one purifies one's karma and can avoid experiencing the results or through realization it is possible that one does not have to experience the results of certain karma.

An example is that if one is a keen practitioner of cultivating Guru Yoga it is possible for one to see in one's

dreams one's master scolding one and certain negativities are purified.

**Question:** Is there any way to help a friend who has died?

**Answer:** Normally one recites prayers for them of purification and also makes offerings on their behalf. This can help the deceased.

**Question:** How can one deal with an inability to visualize appropriately when practicing the generation stage?

**Answer:** One has to take into consideration one's own abilities and one can't expect one's visualization to be perfect at the beginning. In accordance with one's own abilities perform the visualization and as time goes by one's abilities will grow and one will see progress. With patience if one continues one's practice of visualization of the generation stage a time will come when one is able to perform the visualization very well.

For example when one first learns how to write one does not do it very well. With practice writing one gains the skill of writing and later one can write well. The same can be said of visualization practice.

**Question:** One often hears of the suffering of samsara but very little about the joys of samsara. Even though both suffering and joy are impermanent, if the nature of samsara is suffering why would we have come into being?

**Answer:** If one talks about all of the nice things of samsara then one would never develop an aversion for cyclic existence and one would want to stay here. Let me talk about the problems one faces if one stays in samsara and help develop the aversion. What brings all of one's problems and how can one avoid those causes? Through understanding suffering and its causes one is able to generate compassion towards other sentient beings. When one knows one's own situation that will also help one to bring down one's pride and arrogance.

We are all very attached to life in cyclic existence. If we talk of all of the nice aspects of cyclic existence, it will only intensify our attachment. We will not think of leaving cyclic existence.

**Question:** I wonder of the appropriateness of Indian or Tibetan deities in the West.

**Answer:** Anyone who wants to attain enlightenment has to create causes for attaining the Rupakaya of an enlightened being and the Dharmakaya. The main cause for obtaining the Form Body of an enlightened being is generating oneself as a deity, deity yoga. The main cause for attaining the Truth Body of an enlightened being is meditating on emptiness. These causes need to be created to attain enlightened bodies.

The Kadampa masters used to say that everyone had a deity to meditate upon and a mantra recitation to be performed but I don't find many persons whom have a real Dharma state of mind. So what I feel is that for beginners it is more important to cultivate the altruistic mind of enlightenment, bodhicitta.

**Question:** If negative karma creates future suffering isn't there a tendency to feel less compassion for those with an unhappy childhood like child abuse?

**Answer:** Whatever actions one does not just negative, decides one's future life. In the case of those who have unhappy lives especially child abuse, one needs to understand the situation and cultivate compassion for them. There is no way that the theory of karma should obstruct one from generating compassion to them.

**Question:** Given the law of karma since the Tibetan people have generated so much merit over the centuries how can you explain the terrible atrocities committed against the Tibetans by the Chinese?

**Answer:** The Tibetans generated tremendous positive energy as well as many negative actions. At this time

the negative karmic actions has ripened and the Tibetan people are experiencing atrocities. Whatever positive karmic actions have been accumulated will bring their results in the future.

**Question:** With each subsequent lifetime must one start over again the process of learning non-attachment or does it get easier?

**Answer:** If one is able to overcome attachment in this lifetime then one will not need to do it again in any future lifetime. If one has worked hard in this life and to a great extent has overcome attachment, in future lifetimes it will be easier for one to generate detachment. This is the same for any other form of delusion and spiritual practice becomes easier in future lifetimes.

**Question:** What is the difference between the union of great bliss and emptiness and Mahamudra?

**Answer:** One can talk of this in the context of the Sutrayana practice or Tantrayana practice. In the Sutrayana practice the wisdom that understands emptiness is referred to as Mahamudra or the Great Seal. In the context of tantra the Exemplary Clear Light and the Meaning Clear Light Mind, where the experience of bliss and emptiness has become non-dual, are referred to as Mahamudra or the Great Seal.

**Question:** What is the difference between attachment in wanting a new car and the attachment for wanting to leave cyclic existence?

**Answer:** When one talks of the aspiration to leave cyclic existence, that is not a form of attachment. In the case of wanting a new car, that also is not necessarily attachment. Just the wish for a new car does not mean that one is attached to the car. Attachment can become involved in the situation. The aspiration to leave cyclic existence is not a form of attachment.

**Question:** What is the difference between resisting anger and suppressing it?

**Answer:** The best method for one is not to become angry in the first place. Prevention is the best technique but when anger arises one should apply the antidotes to overcome one's anger. One needs to work with one's mind and lower the intensity of one's anger.

**Question:** What kind of existence is there after cyclic existence ends? What is left of the individual and how can one help others?

**Answer:** When one attains freedom from cyclic existence one is free from all of the problems of cyclic existence and one has great capability to help other sentient beings. It is not the case that when one attains freedom from cyclic existence that everything ends and nothing remains. What remains is the state of liberation, as one knows. Being in the state of liberation one has the capability to help other beings otherwise right now one is being carried away by the current of the delusions. Two people stuck in a raging river cannot help each other to get out of the river, only someone on the shore can help. So being in the state of liberation is something like that as now that oneself has no problems one can help others effectively.

As I have already mentioned to achieve states of liberation one has to follow the path of either of the Hearers or Solitary Realizers. If one wants full enlightenment or Buddhahood then one must cultivate the mind of enlightenment.

**Question:** How can animals do any good works in order to obtain a human rebirth?

**Answer:** Animals are in a difficult situation but they do have the chance to obtain a human rebirth. If in their past lives they had accumulated positive actions then they have the positive karma to be reborn as a human being. However it is difficult for them as animals to create the causes for a human rebirth.

**Question:** I was born Catholic and have been brought up to respect a Christian God. Is it appropriate to transfer this reverence to Lord Buddha?

**Answer:** Yes, you can do that.

**Question:** Why does ignorance arise?

**Answer:** From time immemorial until now ignorance has been with us. I have already discussed our grasping at the self as well as a self of phenomena, which are different forms of ignorance. From these two forms of ignorance arise attachment, hatred and all of the other forms of delusion. These other forms of delusion strengthen ignorance and ignorance strengthens the other delusions. It is like the chicken or the egg argument; it is difficult to say which came first.

**Question:** Is meditation on emptiness the same as Clear Light meditation?

**Answer:** Sometimes emptiness is referred to as objective Clear Light and the wisdom understanding emptiness as the subjective Clear Light. In this sense meditation on emptiness can be said to be Clear Light meditation. The term Clear Light is used in different ways and one must learn in which context the term is being used.

**Question:** What is the special importance of guru yoga?

**Answer:** The guru or one's spiritual guide is the source of all spiritual attainment. It is through the blessings and inspiration of one's gurus that one progresses along the path and stages. This is why guru yoga or the practice of cultivating the spiritual guide is very important.

**Question:** Is the practice of Dzogchen enough or do we need to practice other things before Dzogchen?

**Answer:** I have not studied Dzogchen so I am not the right person to answer this question.

**Question:** Could you explain the image of the mind being the sky with clouds relates to applying the antidotes to the afflictions such as anger, not just letting it drift away but confronting it?

**Answer:** The defilements one has within one's mind will not go away on their own. One must supply the antidotes and one has to practice. This is how one purifies the mind of negativities and the defilements. If the defilements could go away on their own by now everyone would be free from all defilements, as it has been an immeasurable long time already. If one does not apply any of the antidotes to one's defilements and leave them as they are, one will only develop more intimacy with the defilements and they will become stronger and more powerful. The best antidote to all of one's defilements, to completely uproot the defilements is the meditation on emptiness.

**Question:** Could you say more about the Illusory Body?

**Answer:** As there are those who have not received the empowerments, I am not free to talk more about the Illusory Body. Maybe if you are interested you will find an opportunity later to find out more about the Illusory Body.