PERFECTION OF WISDOM
MANTRA
Gehlek Rimpoche

Perfection of Wisdom Mantra

Jewel Heart Transcript
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Jewel Heart Transcripts are lightly to moderately edited transcriptions of the teachings of Kyabje Gehlek Rinpoche and others teachers who have taught at Jewel Heart. Their purpose is to provide Rimpoche’s students, as well as all others who are interested, with these extremely valuable teachings in a way that gives one the feeling of being present at the teachings.

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This is the transcription of the Tuesday night teachings in Ann Arbor, fall 1995 through to spring 1996. The first teaching was four evenings on the Perfection of Wisdom mantra. After that Rinpoche went into the subject of the five Mahayana paths in more detail, for another ten evenings. The chart that was made as an aid to these teachings, is inserted.

Then during these teachings one evening Bakula Rinpoche gave a talk on Dharma and Politics, which fits in very well. It has been inserted as a separate chapter.

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Nijmegen, October 1998

Marianne Soeters
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I

We will talk about the mantra\(^1\) of the *Heart Sutra*

\[
\text{TAYATHA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA}
\]

*Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond, transformed into Enlightenment.*

We recited the Heart Sutra. There are a number of different translations of this sutra available, from Tibetan to English, from Sanskrit to English, from Japanese to English and from Chinese to English. We are using a Japanese translation into Tibetan. Suzuki Roshi considers it very important and blessed. Allen Ginsberg has used this and created a tune for it. That’s why we’re using it.

The *GATE* mantra is very useful and very common in all Buddhist traditions. Whether you are following the Japanese, Chinese, Sanskrit or Tibetan tradition, everybody knows the mantra. People use it all the time, and so I thought it would be good to spend a couple of weeks talking about it.

This mantra is very important and has a lot of meaning. The mantra may only consist of a few words, but in these almost the whole teaching of Buddha is available, particularly the five paths. These particular words – I will not even call it a mantra – carry a lot of qualities regarding the teacher and the Dharma.

**TAYATA**

*Quality of the teacher*

The teacher in this case is Buddha. The Tibetan tradition will say that Buddha first generated great compassion, then accumulated merit and finally attained total enlightenment. Whatever hap-
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opened, Buddha had a tremendous amount of compassion. This is one of his most important qualities. Unlike any other teacher, Buddha had compassion and wisdom. His compassion was so strong that he continuously thought about the best way to help all beings, how to free them, how to bring them to a state of joy. That was his main concern. Since he had this main focus on all sentient beings, and had the desire for freedom, he looked for the best methods.

When somebody wants to help somebody, the first question is always, ‘What can I do?’ Buddha had the same question. The answer was that he had to liberate everyone, as that would be the most helpful. His compassion forced him to try to liberate all beings.

The next point was from what to liberate them, in other words, where did their sufferings come from? Why did he have to liberate them? We need help, if we have a problem or if we need assistance to do something. Buddha recognized that all these beings needed to be liberated from suffering. A lot of Americans will tell you, ‘I have no suffering!’ It is very common. In the last summer retreat somebody said, ‘I have no suffering and I have a problem with the idea of suffering.’ It is true, some people have a problem admitting that they have a problem. In reality we all do have suffering. Let’s not kid ourselves.

We all have the sufferings of birth, illness, aging and dying. We try to make these look beautiful. There is not much we can do to dress up sickness – we know it is suffering. But death we can make look beautiful. We don’t see the actual dying process, and when people are dead, we put some make-up on them, put them in a nice coffin and you would not even know that person is dead. It is funny thing in this country – in a way it is nice to do that, but on the other hand you don’t get a tangible feeling of death. Even in the hospital, you find no smell of rotting bodies. But there is suffering involved. There is not much we can do to prevent aging, but we try to cover it up: we put make-up on, change our hairstyle and the women probably worry that their husbands may see them
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before they have put the make-up on. So the suffering of aging is there, no matter how much you want to deny it.

Everybody has suffering. If somebody claims to have no suffering, it is not true. On top of the physical sufferings we have the emotional sufferings, suffering of fear. We are afraid of losing something, and sometimes we don’t even know what we are afraid of.

Buddha tries to really help us there. It is not a matter of providing some medicine to temporarily alleviate the pain. A Buddha is an extraordinary being and can do better than that. His aim is to liberate everybody. From what? From the cause of suffering, rather than from the suffering itself. It is a matter of cause and result. If you try to work with the symptoms, you will not reach very far. If you work with the cause, you can totally cure the problem. So what is the cause of the suffering? The real causes are the delusions and among them, as the most important one Buddha found the ignorance. So the idea is to liberate everybody from ignorance. What can liberate one from ignorance? The answer is wisdom. Wisdom is the only key that can overcome ignorance. Buddha found that in order to show this wisdom to others, he had to gain it himself first. One of the most important recognitions in Buddhism is that, unless you are able to help yourself, you will not be able to help others. So for Buddha to help himself first was by far the most important thing. He had to have the experience himself, and not only that, this experience had to be perfect. And the Buddha’s experience was that the only thing that could cut through ignorance was wisdom.

What then is this wisdom? The wisdom here is the famous Buddhist wisdom of emptiness. Emptiness is the balance point between the extremes. People are falling either to the extreme of eternalism or the extreme of nihilism. You can also say, the extreme of existence and the extreme of non-existence. These extremes have to be balanced out. You have to get into the middle of them. That is the famous Middle Way or Middle Path. The Dalai Lama always says that he has proposed to the Chinese a Middle Path. He has got the idea from here. The Middle Path is
the middle between the extreme of existence and non-existence. This is the reality of ourselves, the absolute truth of our being. In other words – and this is not the actual translation – we need to look deeply into the mystery of life. What makes us human beings? How can we function? And why? What is our true, genuine reality? In Buddhism it is not important who we are, but where we are and what we are. Who we are is just a name. Everyone has been given a name, that does not matter, that is not reality. That does not mean that I become you and you become me – we still have separate identities. So we have to look deep down that Middle Path which the Buddhists call emptiness. This is confusing, because the word emptiness will give you the idea that there is absolutely nothing. When I say, ‘My cup is empty’, that means there is no water in it. So emptiness suggests that there is nothing. But if you get that idea, you become nihilist. If you go the extreme of existence and believe that you are solidly there, and that you are there forever, etc, you have gone to the extreme of existence. To achieve the balance between these two extremes, that is the Middle Path.

How do you achieve the balance within yourself? We have just read the Heart Sutra and in there it says, ‘There is no eye, there is no ear, there is no tongue’ etc. But in reality I do have eyes and ears, nose and tongue. So what is that talking about? What it is not talking about is the dependent origination. We all exist dependently. Our existence depends on a number of factors, the body, the consciousness or soul, and even the name or the label. Because of the combination of all these together, we exist. If I did not have a body, if I was just a formless ghost floating around, I would not exist for you, because you would not see me. I would not have a face to look at, a body that can be touched, a voice that can be heard. For me in order to be able to function, I depend on the body. So, the meaning of emptiness is the dependent origination. When we talk about emptiness, we are not talking about the dependent origination, but this is really the meaning of emptiness. The essence of the emptiness is the dependent origination and the essence of the dependent origination is the emptiness. And that is the only path that is able to cut through the ignorance.
Buddha experienced that and shared that with us. This is the extraordinary quality of the teacher who shared his experience, rather than just talking about something: ‘One who has seen and felt it and then shared it.’ That is why we say that Buddha is a teacher without equivalent. That is also why Buddha is a reliable teacher. The master who shares his personal experience can then be followed by others, and they can repeat the same thing. If they follow on the same path, they can repeat the same thing. It is almost like a science. No matter who the person may be, if you follow the same path, you get the same result. A number of friends, including Robert Thurman, will tell you that Buddhism is an inner science. Some may laugh at that, but it truly is the mechanism which works for one individual and that can be repeated by anybody. If you do it the same way, you get the same result. Call it science or not, that is how it works, and that is why it is considered to be reliable in Buddhism. One of the qualities of a teacher is that his teachings have to be reliable. Reliability means that whoever practices and follows this, will get the result. That is the quality of the person who shares the mantra TAYATHA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA. The word TAYATHA, if translated, means ‘like this’. It refers to what we have just talked about, the quality of the teacher.

**Quality of the teachings [Dharma]**

This has two aspects:  
- Quality of the direct teachings.  
- Quality of the indirect teachings

**Quality of the direct teachings**

What is the direct teaching? It is the absolute reality of every phenomenon and all existence. Again that refers to emptiness. What is that emptiness? I move away a little bit from Buddhapalita’s explanation of emptiness⁴ and go according to the Chittamatra or Mind-Only school’s thoughts, because it is a little easier to understand. According to the Mind-Only School the mind is the producer and creator. Everything is the reflection of only the mind. However, within that reflection, some people are better, some are worse. Some are enlightened, some are not. Why? The an-
swer is that the former are free of dualistic recognition. They control dualistic perception. That makes the difference.

What does dualistic mean here? If you go according to reality and you are free of delusions, there is no dualistic feeling. But if you go against reality, you are mistaken. Those who have mistaken perception are in trouble, those who don’t, are free. If you go according to the actual reality, you are not confused, and if what you perceive is separate from the actual reality, you are called ‘confused’. In common language – forget about dualistic perception – those who are confused get into trouble, those who are not confused don’t get into trouble. Confusion means what you perceive and understand is not reality. Those who understand reality correctly are not confused. To avoid confusion you stay on the Middle Path, free of the two extremes. Besides that, according to Buddhism, there is no other door to liberation. I am not saying that other religions do not have liberation, but here we are talking about Buddha’s experience and Buddha said, ‘This is the only door to liberation.’

What is the perfect understanding of reality? The mind may focus on and perceive the things that exist. However, what you relish and enjoy or taste within you, differs. You and me, as ordinary beings, when we look at certain things, we will perceive them as they appear. When we look at another person, we will see the person. Our perception will be that of the identity of the person only, we don’t see the inner person [or inner being]. When I am using the word inner person, that will make you understand better, however I am also giving you more confusion. Let’s say we are looking at Doug over there. We see the beard, the long pony-tail, we see that tall guy. We perceive that and call that Doug. When we see that face again, we will say, ‘Oh, this is Doug.’ We leave it there; beyond that, we don’t see anything. But if we were free from confusion, we would recognize this appearance as Doug, however we would also see the inner Doug, which is his nature of emptiness. If that happens, then we begin to get free from the confusion.
On the ordinary level, when we look around this room, we will perceive each individual person, see their identity and leave it there. That is the manifest and maximized perception, which in Tibetan we call trö je. However, when you begin to really see, when you really get into it, you see the inner being too. That is the idea of ‘same taste’. The example is honey. No matter how many beehives you pick up the honey from, you get the one taste – it is all honey. Likewise, the deeper being inside and the perception of the person are different. What we see and identify [on a deeper level] will be the same, but what we perceive are differences. Those who are not confused will perceive it in oneness. Let’s leave it there – I have confused you enough.

People talk about dualistic and non-dualistic perception. Particularly, the New Age people use that terminology a lot. But what does it really mean? Let’s take the perception of emptiness. To me, those people who have understanding of emptiness but have not had a direct encounter with it, will see the emptiness of each individual, but they have to leave it there. It is like being a watcher: I see all your emptinesses, John’s emptiness, Doug’s emptiness, etc. I see all those. I am here watching all these different emptinesses. That is the dualistic emptiness-perception, even though it is emptiness-perception.

In our case, we don’t even have any emptiness-perception, we are not even close. When you know the meaning of GATE GATE PARAGATE, then you will know where you are. When you are at the level of the first two GATE GATE of this mantra, you have no perception of emptiness. Perhaps you have a little bit of it at the second GATE, where you will have the dualistic perception of emptiness. At the level of PARAGATE you have the non-dualistic perception of emptiness. On that level it is not like you are watching a football game, but you are the one who is really playing! You are the emptiness, you are within emptiness.

This is the direct quality of the Dharma in these particular few words. I have only talked about the quality here, not about the meaning.
Quality of the indirect teaching

Why do the enlightened beings have a better life than we do? The Buddha has an answer for that. Nobody has created it that way, it is because of our own deeds. Those who are enlightened, have done good deeds, so they have a better life. We who have created bad deeds have a worse life. That tells you that you are responsible for yourself; nobody else is. Buddha said you are responsible for yourself. You are responsible for whatever condition you find yourself in. It is because of your own deeds.

At the beginning, the Buddha and ourselves were equal. The enlightened beings used their opportunity, worked hard at it and they got it. We, who are not enlightened, either did not get an opportunity, or if we did, we did not get through, we did not make it. It is like the true American spirit. You get an opportunity, you work hard, you achieve your goal and realize the American Dream. On the material level, it works that way and on the spiritual level it is like that, too. If you get the opportunity and work hard, you make it, and if you don’t, you don’t. It is as simple as that. Buddhism does not guarantee you liberation. It cannot do that, because you are responsible for yourself. Buddhism can provide the opportunity, sure. If you take it, you can get it; if not, you will not get it. Chances are we don’t take it. Why? I will tell you a little later.

Since you are responsible for yourself, can you go ahead and achieve instantaneous enlightenment? The answer is No. There is no instantaneous enlightenment. If you think some enlightened being will come down and hit you on the head or get into your body and change your internal conditions and the next day you will be a different person – if you believe that, you are totally mistaken. You are absolutely crazy if you look for that.

You may say that you have read about things like that happening to some of the mahasiddhas. That may be true, but they had worked for a number of lives before that. What is recorded is only the last moments, when the final results have been achieved. In reality it works gradually. If instantaneous enlightenment were possible, we would not be here any more.
The enlightened beings have great compassion and really want to help us. They would have taken us a long time ago. To be just taken over may not be that great anyway. The people doing all this ‘channeling’ in this country may think it is great. It may be helpful to the people who receive certain messages and it may be helpful to the mediums themselves, who make some money. But as for the personal development, there is not much to gain. You are simply renting your body to a third person taking you over and the rent is paid by your clients. So I don’t think it is that great. I don’t want to insult anybody individually who may be doing that, but it is my job as a Buddhist teacher to point out that a lot of things are not good enough. So, you are responsible for yourself, the development is gradual and there can never be instant enlightenment.

There is a story. Earlier in Tibet, somebody claimed that his master could make you enlightened within seven days. The requirement was to give him all your belongings. Then you had to go up to a big cave somewhere above the Potala and the medical college. There was a big hole nearby. What these people did was make the students meditate there for six days without any food or sleep. After six days it was very easy to just give them a kick and push them down that hole. That was called instantaneous enlightenment.

Even the earlier enlightened masters have developed gradually, they made efforts hour by hour, day by day, month by month and year by year, and that pays off. That brings perfection. The mantra we are studying here doesn’t say TAYATHA OM BODHI SVAHA, but TAYATHA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA. It is a gradual development through the five paths. That is the quality of the indirect teaching of Dharma.

Now I would like to discuss the question whether this TAYATHA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA is a mantra, or tantra or sutra. Even in the non-tantric Thai and Burmese Buddhist traditions this mantra is known. All the Mahayana traditions use it, including the Vajrayana. I will give you the answer from the Vajrayana point of view. (We are supposed to
be Vajrayana practitioners.) In reality it is mantra, however it is used everywhere as sutra. Even anti-Vajrayana Buddhists use it. What does mantra actually mean? MAN means mind and TRA means protection. So it means ‘mind protection’. You are protecting your mind from ignorance. Ignorance is the biggest obstacle. It is the eternal evil. If there is something that can be called evil, this is it. It is not only the ignorance of not knowing, but also that of wrong knowing. So the meaning of ‘mantra’ is to protect your mind from the internal evil of ignorance. That covers all mantras that you may say, OM MANI PADME HUM, OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVABA or all the wrathful mantras. What is meant by protecting from ignorance? Protecting from being influenced by ignorance and leading you to ultimate liberation and enlightenment. How? Through the direct and indirect qualities of this particular mantra.

That is the meaning of TAYATHA – ‘like this’, the direct and indirect quality of the message itself.

OM

On the next syllable of the mantra the various translations differ. Some use OM as the next syllable, others don’t, but go on instead with TAYATHA GATE GATE... It is recommended to include OM. So it becomes TAYATHA OM GATE GATE... Having OM is considered very important. Our printed version doesn’t have the OM. In the great Tibetan monasteries they don’t include OM. But the teachings tell you, it should be there. So perhaps the tradition does not exactly follow what the teachings say.

The word OM is a very important mantra. It has a lot of meanings. There is a difference between Buddhism and Hinduism regarding the use of OM. In the Hindu traditions it is maintained that just the chanting of that syllable carries a tremendous amount of power. That mantra is known across the United States, particularly among the people who are familiar with the ‘alternative’ practices. People are drawn to it and believe in the power of the sound itself. But the Buddhist teaching will tell you that just the sound of OM does not give you the full benefit of the mantra. They will insist that you should also know what OM
represents. You have to remember that. You have to know what message it gives you. Buddha insists that we focus on the OM’s message.

OM consists of three letters. There is an A, an O and an M. Without A you can say nothing, it is the basic life of all language. So in order to say OM, you need all three. In the English phonetics you can just write the letters O and M. But remember, even the letter O has the A in it. So there are three letters, for which there are a lot of reasons and a number of explanations.

OM is called the Jewel mantra. It is always at the beginning of mantras. Why is it called a jewel? There is sutra explanation and a tantra explanation. Actually, the combination of the three letters represents the body, speech and mind of enlightened beings. Normally I do explain it that way and leave it there, so that people get some understanding. What is that body, speech and mind? They are also called the three indestructible points. The enlightened beings have indestructible body, mind and speech, knowledge and qualities. They are immeasurable, unlimited. (OM, EVAM and VAJRA have common meanings sometimes, but that is not my subject today.)

If you think about the sutra path alone and ask what kind of activities can bring about the indestructible body, speech and mind of the enlightened beings, the answer is: the method part of the practice, like love and compassion, the determination to be free, the transcendental actions of generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm and concentration, everything up to that level. That is the method part. All this will achieve the Buddha’s body and the Buddha’s speech. But it cannot achieve the Buddha’s mind. For that you need the wisdom part. That is for your own achievement of buddhahood. The combination of the letter OM will give you development of body, speech and mind together. That means that all the love and compassion, everything from the guru devotional practice up to the development of concentration on the Mahayana path, i.e. the total Lam Rim structure up that level, will achieve the body and speech of a Buddha, and the last paramita, the wisdom part, will achieve for you the mind of a Buddha. So OM gives you the total message of both, method and
wisdom — actually their combination. That is the symbolism of OM just from the sutra point of view.

Tantra goes even beyond that level. Here the three parts of OM symbolize the message of base, path and result.

What is the base in Vajrayana practice? Our ordinary life, that means our ordinary body, speech and mind. So the message of OM at the base level is: death, bardo and rebirth. In other words, it is reminding you that life has three basic parts: death, intermediate state and rebirth. It is amazing to hear some of our friends say that they recognize how well the Lam Rim teachings correspond to actual life experiences, but they find it very difficult to connect their Vajrayana practice with every day life. But the main point is that the three most important stages of one’s life are death, bardo and rebirth. These even supersede things like how we deal with our emotions, our daily dealings with everybody else, etc. Why do the three stages have a higher priority? Because when you die, you have got to go, whether you are crying or laughing, whether you hold on to the chair or not, you will be taken away. And after death it is the same. Whether you had in life a strong attachment to your family or your job, your car or whatever, no matter how much you hang around the place of the previous life, nobody will be able to see you. So you have to go through that. Equally important is rebirth. When you are born, you are born. I am not saying that our emotions are not important, but the basic events of life are more powerful. They will bulldoze over other emotions. When OM consists of the three letters A - O - M, the message given here is that it corresponds with the three stages of death, bardo and rebirth at the base level.

It also has to correspond with these three stages at the path level. This is what you practice and it is extremely important — that is why I want to do it carefully. Now this is Vajrayana. On the path level, you have the illusion body. This is divided into the impure and the pure illusion body. The illusion body also has a body, speech and mind. (To those of you who are new, this may not make much sense, but the others should know.) When you are at the stage of the illusion body, your body, speech and mind have
already undergone a lot of processes and on that level you have also body, speech and mind – of the impure illusion body and then of the pure illusion body. We don’t have that yet, we are still on the base level, not on the path level. So the A - O - M of the path level relates to the body, speech and mind of the illusion body.

At the result level, the fully enlightened Buddhas also have body, speech and mind.

So the letter OM reminds you not only of the three most important events in your life at the base level, but also on the path level and the result level of a Buddha. In Buddhist practice it is very important to know what base, path and result are. If you are confused about that, it becomes very difficult. For every practice you do there is the base, path and the result. So for every practice you do you have to figure out what your base is, what is the path you are practicing and what result are you hoping to get. At every level you have that. Generally speaking you could just say, ‘The base, that’s me, the path is the practice, is Dharma, and the result is enlightenment’. But in detail, each and every type of practice has its own base, path and result. It is important to find out and work with that.

It does not end there. When you combine the three letters A - O - M together, the sound of OM will be produced. That is just one sound. So there is another message. That is why these teachings are called ‘hidden teachings’. If, on your own, you would try to think about the meaning of OM, you would never find it. That is why it is important to have a living teacher. Otherwise you will not get it. What message does the combination give you? The base level of death, bardo and rebirth, by processing these through the path of clear light and illusion body a number of times, every time you do that, you reproduce it. When you practice development stage according to the sadhanas, you are dealing with ordinary death, ordinary bardo and ordinary rebirth. You are trying to process them by using whatever understanding of emptiness you have. In the sadhana your basic three states arise then in your imagination as Dharmakaya, Sambogakaya and Nirmanakaya. When this process becomes actualized, it becomes comple-
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tion stage. When the understanding of emptiness which you are now just imagining, becomes better, it becomes clear light. The processing of the ordinary body through the clear light produces the impure illusion body. When you re-process that again through the clear light, the pure illusion body will be produced. When you process that again through what is by now the perfectly pure clear light, the body of an enlightened being is produced.

The syllable OM alone thus gives you the message that the ordinary body, speech and mind of the base level can be processed through certain practices – the path – to become the result – the Dharmakaya, Sambogakaya and Nirmanakaya of a Buddha. The final message of the OM is the union. If you now say OM and think about the message that it contains, then saying OM becomes worthwhile.

Introduction into the five paths

The mantra then goes Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha, which means Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond, transformed into Enlightenment. The gradual development to Enlightenment has five levels, which correspond to the five paths. These are: the path of accumulation, path of action, path of seeing, path of meditation and path of no more learning.

The first two paths are ordinary paths. The persons on these levels are called ordinary beings, like you and me. The third, fourth and fifth paths refer to extraordinary beings, or special beings, that is why ‘gone beyond, ‘gone perfectly beyond, transformed into Enlightenment’. These are the path of seeing, meditation and no more learning.

The division of the five paths has nothing to do with compassion, contemplation, or efforts. It is totally based on the wisdom path. The path of seeing means that you encounter the true reality. That’s why people are called ‘extraordinary’ from then on. This is the time when you see emptiness face to face. This is the time when you experience what is called ‘one taste’, where you
have no more dualistic perception. It is the path on which you obtain the first bhumi. You no longer have the suffering of dying, aging, rebirth. Everything you do, is done through your prayers and compassion, through your will and your wishes. You don’t have uncontrolled death, uncontrolled illness and aging any more. You are free of that. That is why you are called a special person. All these attainments do not depend on compassion, on efforts, accumulations and contemplations. They depend on the degree, sharpness and clarity of wisdom.

There is an interesting Tibetan example. Tibetans used to have this ancient fire starting kit, a match lock. You have two stones which you rub against each other. You rub until heat develops, then after some time you get smoke, and then eventually it produces fire. The fire is what you really wanted. But before you can get that, you need the smoke, which follows on the heat. In order to get heat in the first place, you have to rub the stones against each other very hard. That is the example for how you go on the path.

II

Tayatha means ‘like this’ and it refers to the direct and indirect qualities of teacher and teachings.

The qualities of the teacher refers to Buddha. Here it does not emphasize that he is enlightened, but that whatever he taught was based on his true understanding and development. That is why he is considered a great master.

The quality of the teachings deals with two aspects: the direct and indirect, or rather hidden teachings. Indirect and hidden are two different things. If the words directly convey the meaning, it is a direct teaching. In indirect teachings the words do not really convey directly the meaning, but you get the meaning through thinking and analyzing. Hidden teaching is more than that. It is hidden; so you cannot get it, neither directly nor indirectly. No matter how much you analyze, you will not get the message at all. You need a teacher who has the unbroken lineage, to can explain those hidden meanings. You find a lot them in the Tibetan tradi-
tion. (There is one type of hidden teachings, called termas, which are said to be hidden in trees or under rocks. That is a different issue altogether.) Basically hidden teachings are those who have the perfect meaning, but you will never be able to figure them out by the words of the teaching or by commentaries alone. This particular teaching has a direct meaning and also a hidden meaning.

The direct meaning is nothing but emptiness. The emptiness is the true reality of all existence, humans and non-humans, articles, etc. In reality they are emptiness. Remember, in the Yamantaka teachings, we went through some verses of praise. In these it says that the nature of phenomena is Manjushri. Manjushri is wisdom. It talks about that there is no going and no coming, it talks about the moon’s reflection in thousand different bodies of water and yet there is not a thousand different moons. That is really talking about the essence of the nature of reality. There is no difference between the essence of the enlightened beings and that of the non-enlightened beings. The essence is emptiness, one emptiness actually. That does not mean, however, that we are all one person.

Within that direct encounter with emptiness there is no physical sight, hearing, smell, touch, etc. There is no form, no sound, etc. While directly concentrating on emptiness, you don’t have that. There is no dualistic experience, there is nothing extra. It is only your focus on emptiness. It is like the sharp focus of a camera. It only gives you one image, not two unfocused ones. This is the direct quality and meaning of this mantra. It refers to the absolute reality. The true emptiness is not separate from interdependent origination. The meaning of emptiness is to be found in the interdependent relationship and the meaning of interdependent relationship is to be found through emptiness. I also made clear the difference between seeing emptiness directly and indirectly. Seeing emptiness directly means you are not seeing it as a watcher who sees it as something other than himself. It is not just an object to be focused on. I gave the example of honey for the experience of same taste. I did not yet give you the example of pouring water into water and pouring milk into milk. These are the basic examples for seeing emptiness directly.
Indirect or hidden meaning. If emptiness is the direct message, then how do I know where I am, how do I know how I am doing, what level am I on, how do I get it? So there is the presentation of the five different stages. We talked about the five components referring to the five paths: GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI. This is the hidden information in this teaching.

Any Buddhist teaching will introduce the five paths, whether it is Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana – although in Vajrayana it is slightly different. Within the Hinayana there is the Sravakayana and the Pratyekayana. When we talk about the three yanas it is really this: Sravakayana, Pratyekayana and Mahayana. In the West they often count Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. All the three yanas mention the five levels, or spiritual standards. Once you get some kind of spiritual standard, you are on one of these five stages. One depends on the other. I gave you the example of the match lock. You have to rub two stones against one another in order to produce heat. The more you rub, the more sparks come and finally, the fire will burn. This is what happens on the five paths. The way of counting the paths is the same in the Hinayana and the Mahayana. The explanation will be from the Mahayana point of view. The five paths are the hidden explanation of the GATE GATE mantra.

**GATE – path of accumulation**

GATE means gone. Gone from where to what and how, these are the questions. This GATE is the first path, that of accumulation. Why is it called path of accumulation? Here we are only talking about the wisdom of emptiness. We are not talking about bodhimind, love and compassion. On this level we only talk about emptiness. I said before we do not count compassion, etc. I did not mean that compassion has no place in our practice, but at this moment in the context of these particular words it is not mentioned. In practice of course, love and compassion, bodhimind, are very important. They are the foundation. On the first GATE level, you have no idea about the wisdom at all. However, there is the opportunity to accumulate a lot of in-
ner merit that will help to understand the emptiness. Emptiness is not something that you can understand by just studying alone. There is a big difference on that between the spiritual path and academic study. Each academic subject, whether it is science or any other material subject, you can study, work it out and get it. But here, on the spiritual level, there is one more step, beyond that. You have to have accumulated enough merit, in other words, you have to be lucky enough, otherwise you are not going to get it. So on the first path, the path of accumulation, you accumulate merit and do purification. It is the period of contemplation where you can collect merit and purify negativities, so that you will be able to see that real wisdom within the individual.

How does Buddha present that here? The first word of the mantra says GATE, which means gone. It can also mean going. There is a story. Geshe Tsültrim Gyeltsen whom we call L. A. Lama, was in London about twenty years ago. He went to Sussex and visited London from there. One day he wanted to know whether a particular bus went to Sussex. He tried to work out, whether it had gone or was going to go. He was dressed in monks’ robes at the time. There was only one lady sitting at the bus stand. He moved a little bit closer to her, in order to ask her, but she moved away. He moved closer and she moved away again. Geshe-la was thinking about past, present and future tense. Then suddenly he opened his mouth and said, ‘Bus to Sussex gone, gone, going?’ Apparently that lady ran away at that point and he had to chase her.

When we hear GATE or gone, we automatically question who is going where and how. I am going, but where am I, and where am I going, and how? So actually the first GATE gives you already the meaning of the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths and the five paths are the hidden meaning of this GATE GATE mantra. When we ask, ‘Where am I?’ the answer is that I am stuck here in the midst of this unending, continuing problem. You get the message? We are talking about samsara. The next hidden message is that Buddha tells us, ‘Keep on going’. But where to? To freedom. To freedom from all these problems. Freedom from all pains is not enough. That is just ordinary nirvana, and
that is not good for you – in this particular context. So Buddha encourages us to go beyond that, to the freedom from not only the pain, but the cause of the pain and even the imprint of the cause of the pain. That’s how the first ‘gone’ already introduces the fact that humans can achieve the ultimate enlightenment and you have to go there.

The First Noble Truth on this level is the problems we are stuck in, which are the six sufferings. No matter how many times people may say that they have no suffering, it is totally untrue. Each and every one of us, one way or another, has sufferings and problems. We are giving hardship to each other, children to parents and parents to children. You don’t even have to think of illness and dying. That’s the way we are.

What causes us to be here, in samsara? Normally we say that it is ignorance and the other delusions. That is true, no question. But here, in this particular context, we are not just introducing delusions in general, we’re introducing particularly attachment. Attachment makes you think that something is great when in reality it is actually suffering. In reality it may be true suffering, but somehow you think it is the greatest, most exciting thing in the world, or the greatest excitement that you can get. Then you do have that attachment of holding it, sticking to it, not letting it go. That very attachment is the actual glue that keeps the individual sticking to this particular point. So when we talk about the cause of suffering, here in this particular context, we focus specifically on attachment. There is attachment for money, attachment for wealth, for our body or that of others. It is attachment for samsaric joy, which gives us a problem rather than a solution. We are longing for it, holding on to it and no matter how much pain we have to go through, we are still longing, working for it, holding it. That is the attachment that makes us continue to exist in samsara.

Here, when we talk about the first gate and the Four Noble Truths and particularly the Second Noble Truth, which is the cause of suffering, it is this attachment which is specifically singled out. Look at our own lives. How much are we willing to suf-
fer for what we are attached to? No one can bear pain as much as when attachment makes us bear it. Nothing else can make you do that. Physically, mentally, emotionally, you hold on to it, no matter how great the pain. And no matter how much the pain is repeated, you could not care less. You keep on repeating the very familiar things. That is particularly emphasized here.

Then as the Fourth Noble Truth on the first GATE – and it is actually the same for all the GATE’s – only wisdom is counted. Actually, what delivers the freedom to us is only the wisdom, nothing else can. No matter how much compassion and love and even bodhicitta you may have, that cannot deliver you the freedom. We cannot say that categorically for bodhicitta actually, because if you say ultimate bodhimind or absolute bodhimind, that again is wisdom. So the only way to make the individual free is through wisdom. That is why, when we look at the Fourth Noble Truth, the path to the cessation of suffering, only wisdom and anything related to wisdom are counted. It may not exactly be that wisdom, but what goes in the same direction, aims at the same result. It is when you say wisdom, etc. All the wisdom-related things are in the etc. Otherwise, people may say, ‘I have no wisdom, I am not getting it, so I don’t have the Fourth Noble Truth at all.’ Just to avoid making us feel bad, the activities that aim in the same direction are also counted.

As the result, from the Mahayana point of view, only Buddhahood is recommended. The Arhat level is what we call ‘ordinary enlightenment’ and that is not really recommended. Mahayana will tell you, ‘Don’t settle for second best.’

Now we have to talk a little bit about this particular path. Whether or not we are in there, is a big question, each and every individual will know. People may also ask, ‘What about the great Lam Rim? All the paths mentioned in there, like ‘common with the lower level, common with the medium level, Mahayana level’, where does that fall within the context of this GATE GATE…?

In this system, the appreciation of life, the realization of impermanence – gross and subtle – etc, all these things are causes to receive, to see the true path. It is a powerful transition during
which the individual is woken up from sleep. The example given here is the prison. You are in prison and you have no idea that someone may come and torture you. You just stay there, sleeping. Then somebody comes to see you and tells you, ‘Don’t stay here asleep! If you do, you will have tremendous suffering and pain and then it will be too late to get out.’ I used to think on the lines of being in Tibet during the cultural revolution, where under the communist dictatorship people were put in jail and tortured. A lot of people were stuck in Tibet at that time, not knowing what was going to happen to them, they did not even know that they were stuck. You are in that situation and somebody comes and tells you, ‘Hey, don’t sleep. This is a terrible situation, you should run away to freedom. I will show you and help you how to do that.’ We have seen similar things in movies about the Second World War. If somebody gives you that kind of message, it is great. It wakes you up and gives you tremendous inspiration. This very message is contained in the appreciation of life, impermanence, etc. even on the refuge level. It will push you towards the powerful transition, where you can really make it: the point where you can choose freedom or stay under the dictator’s rule. Perhaps for people here this example does not make that much sense, but for us Tibetans it does. I escaped from Tibet.

So there is a way out. If you get the message, but don’t take it, if you stay in your warm bed and don’t want to get up, but sleep another ten or twenty minutes more, then no matter what message you get, it will be useless. You do have a message, you do have a powerful inspiration and a way out, but you don’t take it, because you would still like to sleep. Buddha gave an example for that. You may be thinking it is great comfort, but in reality you are going to suffer tremendously. It is like a needle point. No matter which direction you point the needle, it is not going to be comfortable. It is going to poke you. It is also like a pig sleeping in the middle of manure. You may be sleeping, but you are full of shit and you still don’t want to wake up, because you are too attached to that little bit of sleep. These are the examples of the traditional teachings.
When you take the Lam Rim stages of the common with the lower and the common with the medium level, you have a powerful technique. When a diver jumps up from the diving board, the board gives him a boost, increasing his jumping power. It is like that. The common with the lower and medium levels are a spring board for you. This has tremendous power actually, enabling you to dive into the water of the path. However, unless you meet the path of emptiness, you are not yet on the path, according to this hidden explanation of GATE GATE, etc. Even at the first GATE level, which is the first out of five paths, the path of accumulation, you are not on an actual path. You are on that level in order to generate that tremendous boost which you need. The Lam Rim should make it possible for the individual to get onto the path. The Lam Rim level gives you some idea of judging where you are, what you are doing and how to proceed. You will get some understanding, but within the path of accumulation itself, you have no way of judging. This first path, that of accumulation, is further divided into three categories, small, medium and big.

**GATE – path of action**

The second GATE is the path of action\(^{11}\). This is divided into four: Heat, Peak, Patience, Best Dharma.\(^{12}\)

This path is also called *nyingyi chö tön*. This is not seeing but something that looks like seeing. It looks like the path of seeing. Here you begin to get some understanding of what emptiness is. You begin to figure out the relationship between emptiness and dependent origination. There is some understanding on this level. It seems to be actual, but it is not. However, there is some understanding. It is the path of action, so you are able to take some action.

You begin to understand. This understanding comes only through learning. You begin to get some understanding of emptiness, but whenever you have an idea about it, you see it as something over there. You think, ‘That is this emptiness’, ‘That is his or her emptiness’. You see the emptiness as corresponding to the related being and its nature. We call that dualistic. You are
seeing separate realities. You perceive emptiness as something over there, while you are here, looking at the emptiness. That is what dualistic really means.

**PARAGATE – path of seeing**

When you come to PARAGATE, which means ‘Gone Beyond’, you do go beyond that. Beyond ‘this side’ and ‘that side’. Tibet has a lot of mountains and rivers, so the division of where something was located was always done on the basis of whether it was this side or that side of the mountain or river. You could also choose to draw the line by other means. This is not fixed, it is not permanent, but impermanent and empty and dependent. So within the distinction of ‘this side’ and ‘that side’ these two are dependent on each other. You cannot have ‘this side’ without depending on ‘that side’. You could just get a piece of chalk and draw a line and you already have created this side and that side. It shows you how flexible the whole thing is.

Gone Beyond means having gone from ordinary to extraordinary. This PARAGATE level is called extraordinary because from here there is no more illness, aging, and uncontrolled death. You are totally free from those. The line between ordinary and extraordinary is drawn on that basis. So from here on you have gone beyond that line. Until you reach beyond, you are still on this side. Here our views are limited. We may be able to scientifically see, feel and understand many things, but still we are limited. We are limited to only see this side. That is because of our karma. No one can change that. Until you get out of this, you cannot see the other side. That is where the curtain is drawn, the mystery show is coming from the other side. We can never solve the mystery of life, because the play is going on on the other side of the curtain. Actually, the show is also going on on this side. It is within you, but we don’t see it. It is off-limit, we cannot solve it.

You know, the great masters exclaim, ‘Ho, I have busted the basis of the ultimate lie’ and similar statements. All of them refer to this. The moment you reach that side, you are free of all this. I don’t mean of all negative karmas, but of dualistic delusions. That is why it is called Gone Beyond. It is the path of seeing.
The Perfection of Wisdom Mantra

You directly, totally, see emptiness. Directly means, there is no separation. It is like water in the water or milk in the milk. You are no longer just a watcher. You are part of it totally. There is no separation. That is a non-dualistic state. It might not be the union. Union is still further, beyond this level. That very perception of the true nature is the only object. There is nothing else happening. The total focus on the empty nature is the direct wisdom which cuts the root of all trouble.

Questions and Answers

Audience: Once you had the experience of non-dualistic perception, do you remain in that or do you go back to dualistic perception?
Rinpoche: This experience is not like a glimpse of a different perception that you may get from drugs, etc. It comes through meditative experience and lasts long. However, once you get up from the meditation session you lose that; but you get afterwards what is called je tob. There will be some difficulties in adjustment, like the walls move or you go through them; somehow you have to learn how to adjust. Yes, that really happens, I am not even joking. Walls move and expand, and you can go through them. But you learn to adjust after a couple of times. The experience of emptiness does stay with you, but the experience of the relative world is also there, you don’t lose that. What happens is, nothing is a big deal any more.

Audience: You said before that even though you may have directly seen emptiness, there would still be negative karma. Does not emptiness purify the negative karma?
Rinpoche: Yes, it does. And there will only be very little negative karma left. But you are not enlightened yet. That is a problem. A lot of people think and even learned professors write in books that, once you have seen emptiness, you have become enlightened. That is total bullshit. It is not true. You have seen emptiness, yes. There is no difference between the emptiness you see at the path of seeing and the emptiness of the enlightened level. However, you are not enlightened. There is an example. When a bird flies through the air, you cannot see a trace of where they have gone. However, it is possible to measure how far they have
reached. You can tell that they have now reached beyond the river, the city or the country. With the spiritual path the measurement is again done on the relative side of it. Things like compassion, etc. will pick up the qualities of the attainment. Though the emptiness is the same, the relative aspects will reflect the qualities. It’s like with the flight of a bird: although you can’t find traces in the sky, you can take measurement on the ground.

Audience: I am still unclear about where the negative karma can come from after the path of seeing. I thought the emptiness purifies even the cause of negative karmas.
Rinpoche: You are right, but there are still the imprints. There is still something left. Definitely. But not a great deal. Nothing is a big deal after that.

Audience: What is the Tibetan word for emptiness or shunyata?
Rinpoche: Tong n². Tong means empty and n² means such as or like that or suchness.

Audience: After the path of seeing, does the juxtaposition of the perception of absolute reality and relative reality go on and does even a Buddha have to adjust that?
Rinpoche: After the path of seeing, relative reality is still seen, but it is not experienced as solid as it used to be. Actually, this is the solution to all our fears, the emotional and others. Once you have come out of that direct emptiness experience, you are totally a different person. The things you have perceived before, the way you have acted and functioned before and after, to another person there may not be much difference, but to you there is a big difference. You see reality no longer as solid. You almost see things like a heap or collection of dust rather than solid, nice, little polished pieces. But you do not lose the relativity. If you lose that, you have gone too extreme.

Audience: In the case of the Sravakas and the Pratyekas, is the difference for them between the path of seeing and the path of no more learning, is that simply a matter of effort and effortlessness or is there something else?
Rinpoche: There is something else. At the end of the fourth path, the path of meditation, is the stage called vajra-like concentration\(^\text{13}\). (I don’t know if there is a Vajrayana influence.) At each of the nine levels of this path, there is an obstruction that has to be cleared by its direct opponent. These are not the imprints of the delusions, but some kind of subtle delusions that they still have to get free from. So for the Sravakas and Pratyekas the path of seeing and higher paths are not the same. The Bird in the Sky example is applicable to all three yanas.

Audience: I want to look for more information on the Heart Sutra\(^\text{14}\).

Rinpoche: I don’t think there is much of a historical treatment of the Heart Sutra. The way people in the East deal with the scriptures is different to what people in the West usually do. The Western notion is that you have to know who wrote it and when and why. That becomes an important issue. In the Eastern teachings that does not matter at all. It is more important what it means and how it effects the individual, how you meditate on it, what results you can expect to get. That is the angle from which the Eastern teachings look..

III

**TAYATA**

I have already explained the meaning of TAYATHA as the basic principle of Buddha’s teaching on how one individual develops from the ordinary level where we are today, which is very much controlled by delusions, especially pride and ignorance and fear. That is basically where we are. We develop a vicious cycle in our lives because of the fear of losing something. This fear makes the individual so eager to hold on and hang on to something, not letting it go. That fear brings the attachment. The cause of suffering, the Second Noble Truth, is attachment. You may misunderstand attachment in this context as simply attraction for the body, or something else. But we must also look inwardly for the attachment to ourselves. It is the attachment to having everything the way we want. It is trying to get everything, physically, mentally and emotionally the way we want it to be. We simply cannot let go. Whatever the cause may be, we want to hold on and shape things
in the manner we want to. That is attachment. Especially we want
to shape our own mental and physical state. We want to dictate,
we want to see certain persons and we want everybody to func-
tion the way we project it. Each and every one of you wants to see
me according to your way, your projection. That is attachment.
Attachment does not only mean that somebody is attracted to
somebody else physically, mentally or emotionally. It does not
have to be the perfect Prince Charming you are looking for. This
is the very point of attachment. And when things don’t shape up
in the way you want them to, when the other person does not
want to act the way you want them to, you can’t let go. You also
cannot make other people to project you in a certain way.

And then there is the fear of losing something, which we always
have. We are always afraid of something. We don’t even know
what. The psychotherapists will probably tell you that the
bearded uncle did it. But that is not really the case. Remember, in
the summer retreat that Geshe told us about his hallucinated ex-
perience. He was suddenly grabbed by those two Nepalese con-
sul-general’s gatekeepers, two strange fellows. They brought him
into the courtyard and decided to punish him and the way they
wanted to do that was by cutting his flesh and bones. They
wanted to cut his flesh into pieces and put it into a bowl, then
grind his bones down, smashing them. He experienced the total
dismemberment of his body into pieces, until it was completely
gone. And then suddenly he found a new identity as a light. A
light suddenly appeared and he identified with that. What hap-
pens when the individual dies is like that. It is the separation of
body and mind. The separation means really losing, losing every-
thing. You are losing not only your job or a friend, but every sin-
gle thing that you ever owned, including your body and your eve-
ryday consciousness, your bank balance, even your life insurance.
That loss we have experienced so many times! If you look at that
from the psychological viewpoint, then for those of us who be-
lieve in reincarnation, the spectrum of the totality of lives is dif-
f erent from that of a person who just has the experience of read-
ing some books or even some experiential knowledge. When you
don’t have that greater perspective, naturally you have to put
down the existential fear to the bearded uncle or something. You
cannot find any other sources. But for us, the spectrum is much bigger and when you have things like the vision of the consulate-general’s henchmen grabbing you, dragging you into the courtyard and dismantling every item of your body, flesh and bones into separate pieces and throwing them inside a bowl, you have to find a new identity, where you are subtle and fragile. It is a new body, a subtle body, dream body, or mental body, or bardo body. At death we lose every single damn thing, so naturally the fear of losing is very much with us. Mind you, we lost everything we had millions of times. It is not just a matter of the bearded uncle molesting you as a three-year old kid or something. It is beyond that. That is where our fear really comes from. That is what we have been carrying over into this life time. This is the beginning of the vicious cycle, where the fear comes up and that fear will hold on to whatever identity you just now have. That’s why we have very strong attachment to our body and our life. That is the meaning contained in TAYATHA – ‘like this’ or ‘the way it is’. That is how it is at present.

Is there a way out of this present state? Again we get into the Four Nobles Truths in our daily lives, how life is functioning, where I will go, what I will do. I mentioned that earlier too. But every time I repeat it, you will hear it in a different way. Basically it is the one single point: how is our life.

**GATE – the path of accumulation**

The first path is the path of accumulation of merit. The name itself gives you a clear-cut answer. Your major job here is the accumulation of merit and purification. That is the activity of that very path.

From the Mahayana perspective, where does one enter that first path? From the moment you have developed the bodhimind within you, not from the moment you took the bodhisattva vows or learned about what the bodhimind is, nor from the moment you received a name as bodhisattva Joe Blow or something. That is the simple reason I don’t give people new names. In the Vajrayana initiations you do get a name, but there is only a choice of five names for everybody, because of the five Buddhas. So There
is no shortage of identity for us. Of course, people like those mystical names, because they don’t know their meaning. If I give you the name Mikyö Dorje, you are very happy, but you don’t know the meaning. If you translate it, it actually means ‘Nameless Vajra’. So it does not matter. There is a tremendous amount of Tibetan names carried around by Buddhist practitioners and there is a tremendous amount of Sikh tradition followers, so many Guru Dakshin, Guru Charang, Guru Chandi, Guru this and Guru that. That means ‘The one who sees the Guru’s face’, or ‘One who serves the Guru’, etc. There are millions of those different names. So there you have another name, another identity you can hold on and develop additional attachment to! Maybe it is easy for you to let go of John Smith, but you cannot let go of Guru Dakshin or something like that. So it becomes an additional problem, not a point of the establishment of emptiness. I am not criticizing these names. We talk and joke, but that does not mean criticism. But it is the reality, that is the effect on the individual. So what may sound like criticism, is a joke, but at the same time it has some meaning for the individual. There is a strong message. But it is not criticism of a particular name and the person giving those names.

We need the path of accumulation of merit because of our lack of luck. So we have to create more luck – accumulation of merit. That sounds wonderful. The point is: Why can’t we see emptiness? Because we don’t have enough luck. We are not fortunate enough. Actually we are tremendously lucky, but not lucky enough to see emptiness. So what do you do? Accumulate more merit. How is that done? Within the thirty-seven Wings of the Buddhadharma there are five powers and five consciousnesses, which are five basic things like intelligent faith, diligence, etc. All these thirty-seven aspects are things you work on during the path of accumulation.

On the path of accumulation of merit the most important activity is that of learning and analyzing. That is why those five activities, the five powers, etc, are considered most important on this path. Learning and analyzing are the main thing, meditating and devel-
oping are not so much emphasized at this level. First the emphasis is on getting to know the things you will be meditating on.

Three trouble shooters

On the level of the path of accumulation we have a lot of struggles. There are mainly three points, called the three kunjor’s, that make you feel stuck, make you think you cannot get out.

1. One has the path, but one does not want to follow it. One does not think it is a priority. That is the first thing that makes you get stuck. It is the feeling that ‘I don’t want to say it’, I don’t want to meditate, I don’t want to think about it, I don’t want to push myself, I don’t want to put efforts in’. There are people, who, when they first hear the Dharma, develop a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and say, ‘I am ready to shave my hair, I am ready to wear the yellow-red robe, I am ready to sit in the forest or in the Himalayas and to meditate there.’ This is what we call ‘hairy renunciation or hairy determination to be free.’ Last night on TV I saw an ad, where they punch a key-board with a gorilla glove and then somebody says, ‘You don’t need that’. That is the hairy renunciation. The responsibility of the person that is the guide on the path is to make sure that this individual does not get carried away by this hairy renunciation and tries to develop the real renunciation very strongly, but stable. Once you get through the ‘hairy renunciation’ phase, you will develop a period, where you feel fed up, where you don’t want to see it, hear about it, etc. That is the first point to make you stuck, the first kunti: one does not want to go on the path.

2. The second obstacle is that you want to go, but you go on to the wrong path.

3. The third obstacle is doubt. You are not only developing doubt yourself, but you cause others to doubt too. This is what non-virtuous friends do. Remember, in the Lam Rim we mentioned that the non-virtuous friends will not appear with horns on their heads and wearing animal skins. That is not how they identify themselves to you. They will appear as your friend, who cares for you and loves you. He or she will say, ‘I am in the same boat or category as you are, but I am very doubtful, I am not
sure, I am not going to do it, I am not sure where this is heading, I think it is okay, but maybe it is not okay.’ In that manner you go on in your own mind and also make others follow you.

Nagarjuna pointed these out. They make you get stuck in the same condition. They make you repeat. First you lose your old identity, find a new one, refine that, process the whole thing once again and then come these three major obstacles. This is the way samsara keeps a hold on us. On the path of accumulation this is the kind of struggle you are going to have. This is going to be your problem. It is your job to make sure that you are not getting caught in there. If that happens, you are in trouble, you will lose. If you try too much, if you are too eager for everything, it is not good. On the other hand, if you are too relaxed, looking for the easy way out, trying to be a happy-go-lucky kind of a guy, it is also not necessarily great. The point is to find the balance. A spiritual development has to be established very strongly within the individual. But you don’t have to be very conservatively spiritualistic, neither should you be extremist. You should be liberal, open-minded, however also well-grounded. So the moment you say TAYATHA GATE, that is what you should get. That very stable level you should get. It will overpower those three points of struggle.

**GATE – the path of action**

The second GATE is the second path, the path of action. There are a number of reasons why it is called path of action. The moment you are grounded on that path, you are going to experience the level of heat. You remember, there are the four levels of heat, peak, patience and best of Dharma. The three levels of heat, peak and patience are divided into three each, making that nine rounds of the path of action. I don’t want to make it more complicated than that. The fourth stage is not sub-divided. So it is nine plus one. On this path you begin to see where you are going.

**PARAGATE – path of seeing**

The third GATE is PARAGATE, Gone Beyond. Beyond what? Beyond a certain line. If you have this side of the mountain and that
side of the mountain, you have the east side of a mountain and its west side, the line in between would lead across the peak of the mountain and when you have crossed that, you have reached the other side, you have gone from one side to the other. In this case going beyond means going from a state of limitation to a state without limitation.

We are on this side. Here we don’t see reincarnation, we don’t see the nature of reality. Our views are very limited. It is like sitting in a valley between two mountains. Although you may think that your view is tremendously beautiful, all you see is simply a valley, nothing more. It is a limited view. You don’t see anything beyond that. Up to this point we are caught by the three things, we don’t want to know about it, we go on the wrong path and we have doubt. We are going round in circles. That is our view. When you go beyond that, you become an Arya, an extraordinary being. So the first two GATE’s are controlled by the three kun jo’s, which make you stuck.

On the PARAGATE level, you go beyond that. Here the line is drawn here between the lay people like us and the extraordinary people. We are not lay people in the sense of being a monk or not being a monk, but in the sense of the division between ordinary and extraordinary. On the PARAGATE level, you don’t have to worry anymore about these three kun jo’s. On the ordinary level, these three things are always active. That is not our fault. It’s because we are limited, we are stuck in that behavior and those views, and we will go on repeating that to ourselves and each other all the time. That is how samsara functions. As somebody who has gone beyond that level, you become an extraordinary or special being. The line is drawn here.

On the PARAGATE level, you have seen the emptiness, experienced it, merged with it, and your way of seeing the emptiness is not like watching a football match as a spectator, but you are participating, you are playing. There is no separation between you observing the emptiness and the emptiness itself. That is what is meant by non-dualistic. The example is water poured into water or milk poured into milk. The nature of reality and you are no longer separate, there is no two things here. That is why it says in
the Heart Sutra, ‘There is no eye, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no beard...’, you are perfectly merged with emptiness.

Still, on that level, you are not enlightened. You have to know that. In the Mahayana system you have only just reached the first out of ten bhumis! Some people get some temporary glimpses of emptiness or merging with the nature of reality and that counts, but if it is done through chemical influence, like drugs or any other physical influence, if you think you have really merged, you are misleading yourself. You always come back to the ordinary level.

On the PARAGATE level, you have just reached the first out of ten bhumis. There are ten stages to go and the eleventh is Buddhahood. We have to climb up these eleven steps. So if people think that, once they have seen emptiness, they are enlightened, they are totally fooling themselves. But if you ask, ‘Is the emptiness the enlightened beings see and the emptiness the people on the first bhumi see, the same?’, the answer is ‘Yes’. But it does not mean that you have reached the final state.

I mentioned earlier that when birds fly through the air, there is no highway built for them. They cannot say that now they are flying on highway 94, but they could say that now they have passed through Michigan. If a person sits in a satellite in space, they can say, ‘I am now passing over the United States, and beyond that I can see a hurricane developing.’ That is what satellites can tell us. There is no road map up in space, no road signs, but you can still measure that you have flown across. In the same way, there is no way of measuring directly the powerful wisdom of emptiness. You can improve its power up to the everlasting level.

The measurement can not be done on the wisdom side itself, however, it can be done on the method side. You can see the difference in the love, compassion, the development of the qualities. That is how the union of wisdom and compassion functions within the individual. If you did not have the compassion aspect, there would be no measurement. You would be lost, gone into
space, unfindable. But you can in fact measure where you are going, because of the levels of love and compassion. The five paths and ten bhumis show you where you are reaching, you are not lost in space somewhere.

**IV**

We have learnt that in the mantra **OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA**, the first GATE means the path of accumulation. What is the path of accumulation? On that path you have nothing; you have nothing to measure yet, you only have your contemplation. The Lam Rim meditations we are doing, from guru-devotional practice up to trying to generate Bodhimind is what you could call the pre-GATE level. You are heading towards that direction. The Lam Rim describes the path from the beginning to the end, but up to the level of generating the bodhimind, the Lam Rim drives the individual practitioner towards the first path, the path of accumulation. Here of course I am talking about the five paths from the Mahayana point of view. Don’t get confused about that. When you talk about Mahayana and Vajrayana, you can mix these. Not only can you mix them, you should mix them. But the Theravada and the Mahayana level are slightly different and should not be mixed.

When you actually grow the bodhimind within you, from then on all the contemplations you do will fall into the category of the first path. The practitioner is now on the path. You are no longer a lay person, you become a professional. You are specialized. You won’t know what level you are on, but you are on the path. When such a professional person on the path of accumulation takes his subject seriously, he will get some understanding of emptiness, the true reality. That is the beginning of a real understanding. At the moment, for us, we can talk a lot about emptiness and can get some vague understanding, ‘Maybe it is like that.’ That is laying the foundation for eventually getting there.

Then on the path of action, which is represented by the second GATE, you nurture this initial understanding through the four stages we already talked about. Each of these is actually not a real development, but follows from listening to teachings and think-
ing about them. Through the teachings you get an idea, and that idea is what you nurture and it becomes stronger and stronger. So this is what happens on the second path.

At the level of PARAGATE, your understanding goes beyond that which can be reached through listening or reading. The message you can get through listening is still what we call *dra gyi*. It is the understanding following through sound or description. It is not the direct encounter. On the third path, which is even called ‘path of seeing’, there is the direct encounter with emptiness. It is face to face, eye to eye. Not only do you encounter it, but on the peak level of that experience you are totally absorbed, you are inside that emptiness. You don’t see anything else, you don’t hear anything, you are totally locked into that emptiness. Perhaps only for a very short period. But when you rise from that, things are different. Your understanding is no longer an understanding following description or sound, but following a direct encounter. We call that *don gyi* as opposed to *dra gyi*. This is more powerful, more important.

**PARASAMGATE – the path of meditation**

When, on the base of this direct encounter, this unmistakable encounter, you then keep on meditating continuously, you are transported from the third path to the fourth path, the path of meditation. In terms of the mantra you have gone from the PARAGATE level to the level of PARASAMGATE. On that level you are doing direct meditation. You have to go on that path quite a while.

**BODHI – the path of no more learning**

The path of meditation is then able to further transfer you to the level of BODHI, i.e. enlightenment. For us, the Vajrayana path is available for that stage. Although the Sutra Mahayana is also capable, for us only the Vajrayana methods will work. The process is what I told you, through the development and completion stages. That process will deliver the individual to the BODHI level.
Finally, SVAHA means to lay the foundation, to make it stable and permanent. What is made stable? OM. OM’s final symbolism is the union. On that level, the syllables OM and HUM have a similar meaning. OM and HUM are not the same, but the explanation I am giving you now, refer to the OM as well as the HUM. How does union work here? The three letters of A O M combined together become one lump, one identity. The union is the union of male and female, of body and mind, of relative and absolute truth. This is important to know, particularly for those who are senior. The union of the two truths means the union of relative and absolute truth. In Vajrayana terms it means the union of the illusion body, which is called the ‘relative illusion body’ [Tib. kunzob gyume ku], and the absolute clear light. This combination is known as the union of the two truths. So the relative truth refers to the illusion body and the absolute truth to the clear light.

Another type of union is the combination of body and mind. You are talking about the physical body of the enlightened beings and their minds. In other words, body is mind, mind is body, there is no separation. We often mention that when we talk about the extraordinary qualities of the enlightened beings.

Then there is the union and bliss and void. Void refers to wisdom, which in Vajrayana terms is again the clear light and bliss is the joy which the illusion body enjoys – that particular, extraordinary joy at that level. These combined together – in other words, the feeling of joy and the recognition of emptiness no longer being separated – is called the bliss-void union. The mind observing the emptiness is in the nature of joy. The ultimate body experiencing the bliss also has the recognition of emptiness. These are combined together in the bliss-void union.

In a lower category, you have the union of appearance and emptiness. This is the union of the interdependent nature and emptiness. This is the level that we can talk about.

To lay the foundation for that to happen means to make the base stable, to make us stable for the union of bliss-void combination,
for the union of the two truths, for the union of body and mind and the union of appearance and emptiness. That message is given by SVAHA.

With that we have covered the meaning of TAYATHA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA.

Ultimately, all the teachings of Buddha are included in the Prajna-paramita sutras. The essence of these are contained in the Heart sutra. The complete essence of the meaning of the Heart Sutra, plus how to process it, how to work with that, all that is contained in this mantra. The Heart Sutra will simply show you the emptiness itself. Emptiness is developed through five different levels, however the Heart Sutra is only showing you the emptiness itself. This emptiness and how to practice it, how to utilize it, is shown through this mantra. It is only meant for extremely intelligent persons who don’t need any more teachings than this. It gives you everything, from the beginning of the guru devotion to the level of the ultimate union of body and mind. That is the whole of Buddha’s teaching contained in that one little mantra. Again, if you go deeper inside that, just the OM carries all of this message totally. That is why in the teachings it recommends to include the OM. When you do this practice individually, it would therefore be nice to also say the OM. In Jewel Heart, we could say the complete mantra too. We don’t have to follow the monastic tradition here, we can do it either way, it depends on who is leading the chant.
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**Pre-Paths**

- Common with the Initial Scope
- Common with the Intermediate Scope
- The Advanced Scope
The Five Paths of the Mahayana

I

In the Tuesday teachings we do different things. On the one hand, we try to give you a good solid practice. At other times we try to give you a lot of different information about Buddhism. A solid practice is very important and people need it, but also a lot of people are not familiar with some of the Buddhist structures and terminology. That’s why recently we talked about the mantra TAYATHA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA, which basically gave you the background of the five paths. We talked about it in simple, short terms.

This subject is part of the curriculum of studies in the Tibetan monasteries. Today I was looking for a short text on the five paths and was surprised how deeply I would have to address the subject philosophically to make sense of it. I am not even sure whether we can talk a lot about the five paths. But we have to at least mention them, otherwise you might tell others later, ‘I have studied in Jewel Heart with Gelek Rinpoche for months and years’, and if they then ask you about the five paths you have no idea. That would not be right. So I will try to make it as simple as possible. In Jewel Heart we always talk with the aim in mind to prepare for Vajrayana Buddhism. Everything is geared towards a practice of Vajrayana. We only pick up the absolutely necessary parts of the Hinayana- or Theravada teachings.

You may not be very familiar with Buddhism in general. The most popular type of Buddhism available in South-East Asia is actually what we call Theravada or Hinayana. The kind of Bud-
dhism that was available in China and in early Northern India, etc, is the Mahayana Buddhism. That is further divided into the Sutrayana and Tantrayana\textsuperscript{18}. Basically, Tibetan Buddhism is Mahayana Vajrayana Buddhism. The Chinese or also the Japanese type of Mahayana Buddhism have no Vajrayana influence.

Buddhism is very deep and has a lot of different teachings. All come from the one Buddha, without a doubt. But when Buddha taught, the teaching was only suitable for the individual people he was talking to at the time. A lot of followers of the Buddha interpret that as ‘skilful means’ or ‘wise means’. That is what he did. He taught individual people what was relevant to them, what they were capable of understanding and what they needed in order to deal with their lives. So to some people he taught Vajrayana, to others the sutra Mahayana, to yet others Hinayana. Then, after Buddha, his followers tried to sort it all out and that is why we have now all these categories like Vajrayana, Mahayana, Hinayana, etc. However, all of the different systems have some absolutely necessary things, and all of those have to be included into the Mahayana, because the Mahayana is the great vehicle. It claims to deliver the practitioners to enlightenment, not just to personal liberation, like the Hinayana. The Vajrayana is a very sophisticated, fast, supersonic vehicle. However, you have to have the necessary foundations and training to be able to make use of it. Therefore the absolutely necessary parts of the Hinayana, and also the necessary parts of the sutra Mahayana, like love and compassion, have been included into the Vajrayana framework.

When you talk about the divisions, like the five paths\textsuperscript{19}, ten bhums and even the eight-fold path, you have to understand that there is a Hinayana way of counting these and a Mahayana way. Hinayana and Mahayana both, present the system of the five paths – with the same names. Though they are not completely separate, it are two paths. Even the Vajrayana has five paths, but these are totally different and are not even called ‘five paths’.
PATH OF ACCUMULATION

The first path which they both present, is called the ‘path of accumulation’. Basically, the path of accumulation is the period in which the accumulation of merit is emphasized. You can call it also luck, or fortune, and it includes purification. Unless a person is lucky enough, he or she can never practice or benefit from Buddhism at all.

How to get onto the Path

How do you get there? To begin with, you come here every Tuesday to listen to the teachings. Whether or not you meditate on those, I have no idea, but the idea is that you are supposed to do that. Whatever information you get here, you should think about it in your own time and find out if any of it is suitable for you and then make use of it. You should use the teachings as tools to make some difference in your lives. Just don’t completely forget about it. If you don’t remember anything, then it is not worthwhile. If you just want some good entertainment you are better off watching the David Letterman show. If you want a difference in your lives, remember it and think about it. Check if it is relevant to you: does it reflect something in your life, and if so, do you need to change? This teaching is trying to provide you with some kind of mirror in which you can see certain things about yourself. That is one of my expectations.

When we talk about the path of accumulation of merit, the following question may pop up in your mind, ‘Look, I have been coming here for a couple of years. I went through the complete Lam Rim teachings, I meditated a little bit – or not so much, but I did something, I also obtained certain initiations and have some commitments and practices to do. Am I now on the first path, the path of accumulation of merit?’ That question is bound to be raised by everybody. The answer to that, philosophically speaking, is ‘No’. So what are we doing here then? We are preparing to get to the first path. Even just to get onto the first path, that itself is considered a very important, very high level spiritual achievement. So therefore, we are not at that level at all.
Look into Lam Rim. Guru-yoga as the root of all development, embracing the human life, recognizing its importance and the difficulty to find it, then impermanence and the attempt to ensure a high future rebirth and to avoid a rebirth in the lower realms – up to that level we are on what call ‘common with the lower level’. That is a complete path in itself. Then you go on to ‘common with the medium level’. Here you realize that it is not good enough to be guaranteed one good future life, because after that the same unfortunate conditions will arise again, repeatedly. Therefore you want to attain complete freedom from all possible sufferings that you have repeatedly experienced. Until your practice has reached that level – until you have developed the unshakable and proper aspiration to seek total freedom, you have not touched the path at all. Once you have reached that realization, you begin to touch the path of accumulation of merit.

So when we say a few mantras or do a little bit of meditation, when we do a little bit of guru-yoga here and there, when there is a little bit of recognition of the importance of the human life, and we know a little bit about karma and about refuge, we are all still not on the path of accumulation. We may do some Vajrayana, but that much does not mean we are on the first path.

When you are actually on the first path, you’ve got a high achievement. Say you are firmly and stable on the path. Looking backwards from there, you have already passed many of the steps of the Lam Rim – you have covered at least all the subjects contained in ‘common with the lower level’. You are already on the ‘common with the medium level.’ When I say ‘you have covered them’, it is not like having attended a course at university. First you have to attend teachings and read books and listen to tapes, etc, but then you have to analyze that information and take the essence out of it. Then you have to meditate, until it becomes an unshakable part of your life. That is the difficult part: to make it part of your life. And to make it an unshakable, immovable part of your life is even more difficult. But without going through this process, you have not ‘covered’ the subjects we are talking about. Your mind must be soaked in them, they must be your way of life, your principles, your mission, your direction. Not only your
direction, it has to be part and parcel of what you want and what you are looking for. Then you are sort of getting there.

When it becomes unshakable it means that nothing can swing your mind, nothing can make you do things differently. You have really gotten into it. That requires firstly a good understanding, then a thorough analysis, and then strong concentration on it. Only then it will become part of you. Without that process, the teachings will only make sense on a few occasions. Then you will forget, until some time later something comes back to you. Then that also goes away again. In between that you will get doubts, you will read books by certain strange people and wonder if they are right. You know, all these things will come up. Then you are shaking, your mind will swing. That proves that the teachings have not really soaked in. The point is, if you can go somewhere else and get something better, something that can give you total enlightenment quicker, then it is wonderful. Go ahead! But I am very doubtful, that you will ever find that. The United States is a spiritual shopping center. India, Tibet, etc. are spiritual homes. If you go through the shopping center, or through the home, you will not find anywhere anything else that will give a solid, comprehensive path for one individual to reach full enlightenment. I am not making spiritual propaganda here, but it is true. Wherever you look, you will not find it. There are many great paths, no doubt, especially in the great religions. But none of them will even attempt to introduce a method that leads you to total enlightenment. Which spiritual path presents such a method, apart from the Buddhist tradition?

You first have to be convinced that you have found the right path and then you make that path unshakable and solid. It is not good enough to tell yourself, 'Now I am unshakably and solidly on the path'. You may pass a New Year's resolution about that, which is great, but sooner or later, circumstances will arise and overtake you. Conditions will change. The spiritual path will help the individual way beyond the level of material comfort. However, our immediate financial needs are very urgent. Bills have to be paid – that is the first priority. There are a few spoilt-rotten individuals, who do not care about earning money, nor about
paying their bills, but that is all just a form of laziness. Whether it is eastern or western laziness, or spiritual or material laziness – it is laziness. This is another obstacle that will prevent you from solidly getting on the path. You may think you are saying a lot of mantras. That may be true, but saying mantras alone will not put you on the path. Period. To get onto the path, you have to practice, to meditate, to soak your mind in it. In order to do that, first you have to receive the path, then you must analyze and thirdly, you must concentrate. If you don’t, you will never get onto it. Any wind will blow you off the horse that you think you are riding.

So, simply telling yourself will not do. Telling yourself will help. Then you will get onto the level of ‘pull and push’. That is your first struggle. Once you overcome that, you will become comfortable with it – for a while, until something goes wrong. It is still the level of ‘pull and push’. Once you have got through that, you are on a level where you half understand and half you don’t. That goes on and I think the majority of people here is on that level. That is okay, as long as you do not get off, or the wind blows you off. You have to continue to be mindful and to analyze. Even for me there are many occasions where some things I have heard or have been saying for a long time, suddenly make more sense. There is a recognition of, ‘Oh, that is what it means. That’s why!’ You get that. I even get that after almost sixty years of practice, ‘Oh, it must be that – that is the reason why’. When you get to that level, you will become stable. Now you may get worried and think, ‘My whole life will be spent just trying to get to that level.’ But don’t worry. I have to tell you how long and how difficult the path is, so that you can appreciate in which way the Vajrayana is quick and how it is the vehicle for the jet age. You won’t be able to measure it, if you don’t know how long the usual system of the five paths takes. Therefore it is very important to know that.

In other words, when you have a solid mind and totally commit yourself to total liberation, then you have touched the path. When I use the words ‘total’, I am not talking about the depths of your willingness, but about how much it has become part of
your life. No one can change your mind. When I say that, it does not mean that you have to brain-wash yourself. You have to convince yourself, to understand each point of the path. Once you have understood and are convinced, no one will be able to change your mind, unless they are able to give you something better than that.

You really need to get your Lam Rim understanding solidly grounded. There is no more time for fooling around with that. The way to get this grounding is by picking up the outlines, going through the information of each point of the outlines, and meditating on it. You have to try to build it into your life habitually, form a habitual pattern of functioning within that. That is the real essence of the practice. As long as it does not really become a habit of yours, then whatever time you spend on meditation, no matter whatever you do, it will not become part of the practice, because habitually you have not adopted it. Once you have done that, your practice has become solid. It is not that the period of daily meditation has to become part of your life, but that the subjects of these meditations be adopted by you, so that wherever you go and whatever you do, this has become your principle. Whether you go into a bar or a temple at night, or into a classroom or shopping mall in the day time, whether you are digging the ground, or cutting meat, playing with the computer, whatever you do and wherever you go, these principles should be with you. I don’t mean that the daily period of meditation has to become your habit. I have to spell that out, otherwise people only hear what they want to hear. They may think, ‘Oh, yes, I usually do half an hour a day, and this is part of my habitual pattern.’ That is not what I am talking about. I am talking about the way you think, how your mind functions: these principles have to have a lot of influence.

Overview of the Five Paths

Why is the first path called ‘path of accumulation of merit’? What kind of merit are you accumulating? You are accumulating merit to open the great wisdom eye. Not the third eye, don’t think that. I am not Lobsang Rampa, who knows how to operate the third eye. Wisdom in this case means the wisdom of emptiness, the
true nature of reality. When you know the nature of reality, all the mysteries are solved, the mystery of life, the mystery of the individual. Deep down all the mysteries are cleared. That wisdom is achieved on the third path and that is why it is called ‘path of seeing’. You are seeing the nature of reality, which solves all mysteries and solves all intrigues. Cutting through all of that and seeing the deep, naked truth, is called ‘path of seeing’. In order to be able to open that wisdom eye, you need a tremendous amount of luck or fortune – not money, but positive karma. That is why the first path is the path of accumulation of merit. Important at this level is accumulation of merit as much as possible and purification as much as possible. These two are the major activities. I am not going to talk much about the divisions of that first path. It has actually three different levels. Each one of these is further divided by three parts, small, medium and big. First you reach the small level, then you go do the medium level and then you become the big guy!

The second path is the path of action. You are taking action, so that you can open the wisdom eye. It is action-oriented.

The third path, that of seeing, has two divisions: the actual meditative level, called the ‘path of space-like wisdom’, and, after that, the yoga of illusionary aftermath. When you have seen the truth, you get disoriented and you have to adjust.

When you have adjusted to the illusion-like aftermath, you transfer to the path of meditation, the fourth path. This has nine different levels.

After the path of meditation you reach the level of ‘no more learning’, which is the total enlightenment.

We will, in the following Tuesdays, go through these five paths in some more details. We will introduce each path and its principal meditations and also the principal obstacles that you have to get rid of on each particular path.

In a way you could call this an advanced teaching. It is unlike Lam Rim which is the kindergarten-type of level, where we bring
people into the practice. When you are getting into the five paths themselves, it is a little bit advanced. Still for new students it will be beneficial to hear about that. And the people who are more familiar with the path, will actually be able to look at Lam Rim and Vajrayana and fit them into this framework. Then you can see where you are yourself. Today’s talk was a very rough orientation to what these five paths will be.

_Buddhism in everyday life_

Buddhism is very interesting. It can be condensed into something like one hand-full and yet the complete path is contained within that. It can be presented in huge detail which fills the universe and still you will not be able to comprehend. Seeing that the year is 1996, it will have to be the ‘one hand-full’ presentation. The essence of Buddhism definitely does not depend on how much you meditate, how many mantras you say, how important you are. Actually, in Buddhism, everybody is extremely important. Each and every person will make a difference, not only to themselves, but also to others. The others, that is the very person next to you – not necessarily here in the meditation room, but at home. It is your companion, your friends. That is where it begins to make a difference.

How you make a difference depends only on how you think. It does not matter how you dress or how you walk, or whether your are conservative or liberal. Your thoughts and actions should be guided by love and compassion, for yourself and for others. Compassion for others is very important, but you also cannot forget yourself. Don’t leave yourself out. If you leave yourself out, but try to develop love and compassion for all sentient beings, it won’t work. That would be idiot compassion. There is no such person called ‘all sentient beings’. If you leave your own experiences out and then say, ‘Oh, poor dog’, ‘poor cat’, or ‘poor rat’ or whatever, it becomes idiot compassion, because you are excluding so many others, including yourself. Your compassion will be just lip-service. You should never exclude yourself. In principle, in practice, even for the practice of love and compassion, ‘I myself’ is the most important object, whether you like it or not. Even for the great bodhisattvas, the ones who
are selfless and totally dedicated, when you ask them, ‘Who do you think should be totally enlightened?’, their commitment also is, ‘I would like to become a fully enlightened being, so that I can perfectly help others’. So the purpose may be to help others, but ‘I’ am the one who has got to do it, who will be enlightened. I am not driving everyone to enlightenment and wait until the end. That would be idiot compassion again – although I can’t really say that, because Avalokitesvara’s compassion is supposed to be just like that. It is said that his compassion is like a white lotus and better than any other compassion. But in practice, if you exclude yourself, then it does not become right. If you cannot do it, nobody else can. So love/compassion is your direction, your mission, your purpose. You have got to do it. You cannot exclude yourself from the objects of compassion. You have to have love and care and compassion for yourself and others.

The love-and compassion-oriented mind is very important. So when you wake up in the morning, think the way Allen Ginsberg has put it, ‘I am happy not yet to be a corpse’. Think that you are happy to be alive and that you want to set up this day to be a good day, that you want to be good and kind to all beings. You have to include yourself in that all. If you don’t, it is not all, it would be ‘all except me’. You have to do what is relevant for you. Your primary duty is to help yourself and your companions, the people dependent on you, the people who rely on you. That becomes your responsibility. That is first and foremost. You cannot sit on your cushion and saying ‘all sentient beings’, while not recognizing that your blue jeans are catching fire. You have to make up your mind every morning and determine that for the next eighteen or sixteen or fourteen hours, whatever your amount of waking hours are for that day, you will not waste that time. True, you have got to do different jobs in order to make a living, pay the bills, feed your family and yourself. But think, ‘I will do that with the principle attitude of love and compassion’. Then you can pray to the enlightened beings, ‘Help me that I will be able to do that’, or if you want, you can say, ‘Help me, God!’. That will also do. If you make up your mind in this way every morning, that will be the guiding principle for the next twenty-four hours of your life. It is better to maintain in this way a
twenty-four hour-commitment every day than trying to keep a life-long or even week-long or month-long commitment and let it become watered down. If you do it every day, that is better. It does not matter if you miss a few days. This is a helpful, easy way to function in every day life.

II

You are listening to a teaching on the five paths. These are part of Buddha’s teaching on the Four Noble Truths, the Truth of suffering, the Truth of the cause of suffering, the Truth of the cessation of suffering and the Truth of the path to the cessation of suffering. Those of you who are familiar with the teachings on the Four Noble Truths will have no problem. It is one of the most important subjects in Buddhism.

The Four Noble Truths and the Five Paths

The Four Noble Truths are based on Buddha’s experience of life, the experience of suffering which we all have, but sometimes don’t recognize. If the problems are not very strong we may not recognize them, but when they are strong we have no problem recognizing them, because we can feel them, mentally, physically, emotionally. There are some subtle ones which we don’t really recognize. The Buddha’s most important emphasis with regard to suffering is that you have to recognize it. You have to acknowledge it, not deny it. One of the most important ways for the sufferings to hide, is that they are being denied. We also tend to deny the causes of suffering. The human capacity of accepting suffering is also tremendous. Many of us will simply accept all the sufferings, saying that we have got to live with them. Human endurance is very strong. It is in both ways, being overly patient and over-accepting, and also in denying that they are there. These are the biggest problems we face. That’s why Buddha alerted us to the fact that suffering is a truth in our lives. Yet Buddha never said that we have got to live with it. Buddha thought about and looked at his experience and found the solution. There is a way out. One has to remember that Buddha did introduce the truth of suffering as the first truth and the quality that goes along with it is, that we can get rid of it. We can be free of it.
When we mention suffering, people tend to immediately project onto this the suffering of the homeless, who are cold and out there in the street, or the sick and hungry people. Many of us have that projection and it is true, these are sufferings. But I think, more importantly, we are talking here about sufferings that we ourselves have continuously. We have tremendous amounts of suffering on a physical, emotional and mental level. We, each and everyone of us, have a variety of different sufferings in our lives. In a very broad way of speaking there are the sufferings of illness, dying, separation, loneliness, the fact that things don’t shape up exactly the way we want them to. We have to compromise all the time. All these are the kinds of sufferings that we experience all the time. Often we don’t like to acknowledge them as suffering. Some people will say, ‘Don’t think of it as suffering. You have to think positively. Everything has to be shaped into a positive experience.’ True, you can think in positive ways. Tibetan Buddhism actually is extremely positive. Aura told me once, ‘Tibetan Buddhism must be the most positive religion. You are thinking that you are going to be a fully enlightened being, and you are already walking around, having the pride of the yidam. What more positive thing could you want?’ I could not add anything to that. So there is nothing wrong with thinking positively. Yet we still have to acknowledge the suffering.

All the time we will advise you to seek freedom. That is the general buddhist message. And we are not talking about political freedom. Even though we talk a lot about political freedom, we are not going to get it anyway, neither from Newt Gingrich nor from Governor Angler. (That is a joke. I better say that, otherwise some people may take it literally.) In this case we are talking about freedom from delusions, freedom from suffering and the causes of suffering, freedom from illness, freedom from aging, from sickness, from dying. These are our basic sufferings, and whether we like it or not, everybody goes through that. That is the truth of suffering.

Buddha says that there is a way out. He advises us not to deal with the symptoms but with the cause. Where are these sufferings coming from? Who made them? Who gave them to us?
Why do we have them and what went wrong? Buddha, asking these questions, traced the sufferings back to our delusional thoughts, like anger, hatred, jealousy, and particularly ignorance. So Buddha said that the solution is not to give in to those emotions that cause pain. It is as simple as that. He told us not to give in to anger, to attachment, to jealousy and to ignorance. These are the causes of our pains, the continuations of our sufferings. So Buddha really showed a way to overcome the problems by dealing with their causes.

Since I talked about illnesses, death, etc, you will probably think, ‘Oh, does freedom from death mean that I can get some kind of immortality?’ We are not talking about that. We are talking about death which is controlled by negative karmic forces. Basically, even if we did not have negative karmic forces, we have to die, because our physical condition is such, that it cannot last forever. But we can have a death with choice. We can have a rebirth with choice. That is what Buddha means when he says that we can have freedom from death, freedom from birth, freedom from negative emotions, freedom from illnesses. It does not mean that we do not get sick. Our bodies are conditioned such that we have to get sick. But that sickness will not bother the individual. There is a big difference. When the sickness really bothers you, when it really gets you, mentally, emotionally, then that is different from having an illness that does not bother you much. I think that is what we are talking about.

We know very well that we have delusions. We know that anger arises, definitely. We also know how much trouble it causes. Anyway, Buddha said that it is better to deal with the causes than with the results. That’s why he gave us the Second Noble Truth, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering. The Third Noble Truth is the Truth of the Cessation of suffering. How can that be achieved? The answer for that is contained in the Fourth Noble Truth, the Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering. And that is what we are talking about here, that is where the five paths fit in. I am just trying to give you some basic Buddhist knowledge.
Motivation – sandwich your day!

I also mentioned that it comes down to our own efforts, starting with generating a good motivation every morning. It is a bit funny for me to say this. When I was young, in Tibet, I used to get up approximately at 4.00 a.m. to 4.30 a.m. in the morning. That was done as a general rule. I don’t think there was anybody who slept later than 6.00 a.m. or 6.30 a.m. If I did not get up on time, my teacher would hit me with a little stick on my knees. I remember that. I must have been sleeping with my knees pulled up! So the first thing when you wake up is this pain in your knees. Now I don’t get up early at all. I get up very late. So when I tell you that it is good to get up early in the morning, it is embarrassing for me. You know, when you travel around a lot, and when you have to switch the time back and forth, it really confuses everything and then you don’t get up at the right time. But it is bad. Normally, in old Tibet, there were rules for when you had to get up. The deadline was ‘When the sun hits your butt and the dawn is on your face’. If you did not get up on time, it was a punishable crime under the monastic rules. The reason is that, by getting up early in the morning, you can achieve tremendous things – whatever you want to do. There is a lot of quality in that. It gives you the opportunity to develop a good motivation, to go through all the six preliminaries, such as cleaning your place, setting up offerings, developing the motivation, etc, and it gives you the opportunity to take refuge, to practice – all that even before you even get out and do anything. That is one of the very important points. It is an extremely important opportunity, at a time where you can think and function far better than during the day time, like later in the afternoon.

But in order to get up early in the morning, you have to go to bed earlier too. You don’t have to squeeze your sleeping period, it is simply a matter of changing the time. It is wrong to sit around until 2.00 a.m. or 3.00 a.m. or even 5.00 a.m., and get to bed that late. The whole thing gets upside down. I saw an ad on television, from some insurance company called ‘New York Life’ and they showed that last year a lot of people had turned their lives upside down and they showed everything happening upside down. Then somebody came, pressed a few buttons on the
computer and everything turned back to normal and then he said, ‘This is New York Life’. In any case, when you stay up late and get up late, your whole life is turned upside down – as far as your spiritual life is concerned. It is very important to get up early in the morning. That goes for everybody. I don’t want to pinpoint any particular people. Getting up early in the morning will make a difference in your life and give you an opportunity to practice and do a lot of things, particularly to set up a good motivation, because otherwise you have to rush. Usually you people have to get out of the door by seven or eight o’clock, unless you are one of those lazy bugs like me, who don’t have to get out.

Setting up the motivation is extremely important. It is one of the ways how to combine spiritual life and the every day, breadwinning life. It is the key point. It is so important to set up a perfect motivation, and if it is not perfect, at least a good motivation, dedicated to the benefit of all beings, including ourselves. If you don’t have love and compassion for yourself, you are never going to be capable of giving love and compassion to others. Period. So set up a good motivation in the morning, dedicate any positive karma to benefiting all beings, for the sixteen or eighteen hours that you are going to be active. Think, ‘All my daily chores, including going to the bathroom, dealing with people, doing my work, I am going to set all these up for the benefit of all beings.’ All beings means in particular the beings that you live with, who are close to you, who depend on you, who you are responsible for. So make that your principle and then do whatever work you normally do.

Do your business as usual. That is very important. A lot of people may think, ‘Now that I am a spiritually oriented person, I cannot be a hard person, I cannot do certain things.’ That is a completely wrong attitude. You can read the stories about Buddha’s previous lives. In some of his previous lives he had to do amazing things. In one life he gave his body to a starving family of tigers. That was one extreme case. In another case he had to execute some people, in order to benefit others. So motivation is very important. After setting up your motivation, you have to go and function in your business as usual and even be harder. If you
read about how some of the early masters have dealt with people, it is sometimes terrifying. Look at Milarepa, how much he had to work. Marpa was always very firm and strong and never had any hesitation in hitting Milarepa. We all know very well that Marpa did not need a thirteen story-building as his residence. If you see drawings of the building Milarepa had to build, it shows that it was not the kind of building that you could live in. It looks like some kind of light house. Inside there were probably only staircases with just a few steps to walk on each floor. But Marpa forced Milarepa to build it. Not only that, he told him to build strange triangular shapes into this building and when it was completed, he shouted at Milarepa, saying, ‘Who told you to build it this way? Tear it down and start again!’

So one has to be very strict and very hard. Weakness in your profession is also weakness in your spiritual practice. This is something one has to be aware of. You are working for people who depend on you, who rely on you. This is why spiritual persons should not be soft-hearted in their dealings. If you do so – remember, there is something called ‘idiot compassion’; this sort of attitude is never an advantage, but always a disadvantage. So it is very important to set up your motivation. And then be very strong and hard in your profession. At the end of the day, rejoice in and dedicate your positive work, the positive karma that you have generated. Sandwich your daily life between the motivation and the dedication. Be strong on both points; these are the true ways of combining spiritual and material life.

Tibetans keep on telling you proudly that they have a system of religion and politics combined together. I never understood that. But all our ancestors, whether they were political or spiritual leaders, whether they were Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya or Gelug, were very proud of that. They would write books and poetry about it and praise it. I used to think that in the case of the Dalai Lama it was true, because he is the temporal and spiritual leader of all Tibetans, so naturally in his case it is combined. But I failed to understand the pride in it. Then I understood what they mean with it: the combination of spiritual practice and the work we do in our daily lives. The political aspect refers actually to the mate-
rial, non-Dharma work that we have to do. In that way we can combine all our activities over the twenty-four hours of the day together, materially and spiritually. That’s what they were proud of. It may be wrong to say things like that here, because America is the country where church and politics have to be separate! (That is a joke again.) But it is true, if you combine the two, both will be strong and if you fail in one, you fail in both. That is the reality, unless you choose not to deal with ordinary life at all, but to walk around with the begging bowl in hand and sit under trees, whether it is cold or hot. That is also okay, it is acceptable and great. But as long as you cannot do that, as long as you have to do both, you might as well do it in a nice way. Half-heartedness will never work well. The traditional Tibetan example tells us, ‘You cannot stitch with a two-pronged needle.’ If you are half-hearted and think, ‘I cannot be that mean, maybe it is not right spiritually’, you are looking the for the ‘love and light’ life. And that is neither great on the spiritual nor on the material side. So, this is what you have to be like, particularly in the 1990s. You cannot afford to act differently.

You don’t have to worry about whether acting tough is spiritually all right, because you are carried through by your previously developed motivation. If your job is negative by nature, like if you work in a factory making B2 bombers or something like that, then you have to change your job. But apart from that, every job is right livelihood. If you are a butcher, have a meat shop, maybe it is okay, but being a slaughterer is not okay. You should not be somebody who kills the animals. By nature, most jobs are not negative. If you work for a company, you are servicing the people in that company. Don’t think with twisted wisdom that you are only working for the owner of the company. If you don’t work properly, others will not get their pay-check either. You are contributing to this and you are contributing to the economy of the whole country. Think in that direction. Don’t think with a narrow view in a negative way. Keep on thinking that through your work you are contributing to the whole economy of the United States and then your work will be great, even though you may be working for Mr. Joe Blow, who is going to pocket all the profits. Focus on the fact that you get paid and can look after your family.
Anyway, you have the motivation and the dedication and you sandwich your day between these. That is how you combine your daily life with the spiritual practice. If you are a health-care oriented person, it is even better. Keep on thinking that you are making a contribution to the members of the human society, and to society in general. The responsibility that you have is your share, your contribution. And of course you look at the money side – why not? If you work, you have to get paid. That is not non-spiritual, unless you are a monk or a nun who is not supposed to do that. Many years ago in Malaysia I met a couple of Thai monks. Traditionally they were not supposed to touch gold and silver. So they said they were not allowed to touch money. However they then said, ‘But you can give us a cheque!’

So our daily life is also part of the Fourth Noble Truth, the Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering.

Things that we do at our level, at the preliminary level, are meditating, saying mantras, accumulating merits through a number of ways, like saying the *tsoh*. Saying the *tsoh* thirty-two times is actually not a big deal. We used to do hundreds of them. Particularly, I remember one day in Dharamsala, His Holiness was there and wanted to be involved personally. He called all of us. Both, Kyabje Ling Rinpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche were there, and we all had to go. It was 6 am in the morning. We did a very brief *Lama Chöpa* and then started the actual tsoh with the verses *Ho, ting dzin nga tang chak gye jin lab pai…* This went from 6.00 a.m. until about 10.00 am. Then we had half an hour break and continued the tsoh until 12.30 p.m. Then we had another hour’s break, and started back at 1.45 p.m. We had another hour-long break, started back at 7.00 p.m. and that session went until 9.00 p.m. This whole procedure then continued for twenty-one days without a single day off! Just the few verses of the tsoh, again and again! And you had to be very seriously doing it. But I was clever. I came quite early and saw how the seats of His Holiness and the two tutors had been arranged. So I quickly took a seat at the back. Those that came later had to take the seats right at the front. The people in the front line had to do all the offerings and mudras, especially Serkong Rinpoche. The people in the row be-
hind had to try and copy him. Then the people next to them and behind them, who saw the efforts at copying, started giggling. That was on the first day. His Holiness who had seen that called two or three of them during the break: ‘Wait, don’t go! What you think we are doing here? We are not playing!’ So from the second day on, everybody tried to rush and grab a seat at the back. So saying thirty-two of the tsoh verses is not a big deal.

Accumulation of merit, Lam Rim meditations, etc. are preliminary to the path of accumulation. When you grow the perfect mind of seeking freedom – traditionally called ‘renunciation’- in other words, when you see the faults of samsara, and the positive nature of nirvana, and with that you develop the totally unshakable mind of seeking freedom, then you enter the first path, the path of accumulation. The person with that sort of development is said to be on the path. I am talking here about the Hinayana path of accumulation, not about the Mahayana path. The system of Stream Enterer, Once Returner, Never Returner, etc, this system of eight stages, only begins at the path of seeing.

The real path of accumulation of merit is the basic mind of the person who has developed the unshakable wish for freedom. Not every part of the mind of such a person is part of the accumulation of merit, because such minds have still a lot of negativities. There is anger, attachment, etc; every single emotion is still there. So these are not considered to be part of the path – only the main stream of their consciousness is.

That very path of accumulation is divided into three: small, medium and big. On what basis is this division made? How do I know if I am on the small, medium or big level? At the lowest level my understanding of wisdom, particularly in dealing with the wisdom that recognizes emptiness, is only the type of wisdom that follows from learning – nothing more. It arises from listening to teachings, reading books, etc. That is called ‘small level’. Your erudition could be great, but all your knowledge is only gained from learning, from taking in information. That is the small level.
When that understanding increases, you put it through the analytical process and when the knowledge from learning mixes with the results from the analysis, then you have reached the medium level. You learn and analyze together.

Through this analysis you gain some kind of understanding. It is the understanding following analysis. That is why in the Gelugpa tradition debating is emphasized so much. The debate is the analytical meditation. It gives you the opportunity to analyze. Your understanding will be better than by just picking up information. If you then focus and concentrate on the essence of that analysis, you will gain shamatha. Shamatha is a stable level of concentration. There are detailed teachings on the stages of shamatha. It is a very stable, smooth mind. It can focus on any chosen object without any interruption for days at a time. If with such strong concentration you focus on the resultant essence of your analysis of emptiness, you have reached the big level of the path of accumulation. Even if you don’t have actual shamatha, but a shamatha-like level of concentration, it is still considered to be part of this level.

Towards the path of action

From then on, every meditation you will do will be a combination of shamatha [Tib. zhinay] and vipasyana [Tib. lhagtong]. This is concentration and analysis combined together. Up to this level, it is alternation of concentration and analysis, until each of them becomes better and better, and from then on you will practice them in combination. You can concentrate and analyze together. That is called the union of analysis and concentration\(^{21}\). When you can do this, you are getting quite close to seeing the real wisdom. As a sign of this happening, heat will develop. That is why the first level of the path of action is called ‘heat’. When you get close to the fire, you can feel the heat. In the same way, you are now getting closer to wisdom, and therefore that level is called ‘heat’.

When I talk about heat, that does not refer to physical heat. It goes with the example we gave earlier about the process of making a fire\(^{22}\), which begins by rubbing two stones or two sticks to-
gether, until heat develops. What are you focusing on at that time? The subject you are really meditating on is the Four Noble Truths, particularly the wisdom part. You are now taking action to encounter the emptiness directly. That is why this path is called 'path of action'. There are actually four levels of this path: heat, peak, patience, best of Dharma.

This much I would like to say for now. Let me conclude. We have so far covered the first path, that of accumulation. It has three divisions, small, medium and big. On the small level, your understanding of wisdom arises only from learning. When you intensify that knowledge through analysis, you are on the medium level. When you either gain the perfect shamatha or a shamatha-like concentration on the results of the analysis, you have reached the big level of the path of accumulation. Thereafter all your meditations will be the combination of concentration and analysis together. This will push you to the level of heat, which is the first level of the second path, the path of action.

Questions and Answers

Audience: Did I understand correctly that only at the point of being able to practice the combination of shamatha and vipasyana, one can enter the path of action?

Rinpoche: That is right. And with that as a guide-line, if someone claims to be a spiritually highly developed person, you can find out where that person really is. It is very clearly marked. With that, the possibility for fraud on the spiritual path is limited tremendously. Even for ourselves it’s useful. We otherwise would not even know where we ourselves are. We would act and do all sorts of things, not knowing where we are.

Audience: Earlier, you were saying that any kind of work is really okay.

Rinpoche: Basically yes, provided it is not negative by nature. You can do anything. When you get a new job, you will enjoy it for a while, because it is new. It may give you more money, too. After a little while it will get boring and problems will arise. That is natural. There may be some cases where a job becomes a really big problem. In the majority of cases, the problems are not that
serious, but we tend to make them very serious ourselves. That is because of our emotions. Generally I am saying that you can look at any type of work as contributing to society in general, and particularly to the group that you are associated with. Even if your job is not labeled ‘service-oriented’, you can make it service-oriented, by your way of thinking, by your own approach. You always have the freedom to do that, nobody can take that away from you. In that way your job can always be something worthwhile. A lot people tend to think, ‘I am doing something useless, I am doing nothing. It is just a job, only to pass the time and pay the bills. It means nothing.’ If you look from that angle, it naturally becomes more and more boring and more and more difficult. Whatever you do is your contribution, it is your in-put into society, and if you look at it in that manner, even a small job becomes significant. This is not just what I am saying, but it is the message that comes down all the way from Buddha. This is what traditionally is called ‘combination of politics and religion.’ Actually it is good policy too. What it boils down to is, that every work you do, can be combined with the spiritual path. Dedication and all these things can function because of that.

Audience: How does debate take place in the monasteries?
Rinpoche: It is like this: You say ‘Yes’, I say ‘No’! You give zillions of reasons why it should be, and I give zillions reasons why it should not be. But there is one important point. Both sides have to have an open mind and should never be stubborn and hard-headed. That would not work. That is why there are rules. You can only answer with four or five words, no more. You can also only challenge by using four or five words. You have to give your opponent time to think. The debate may be done from student to student, in front of a group or individually. When your opponent asks you questions, you can only answer with yes or no. Until the opponent asks ‘Why?’ you are not allowed to explain a difference. You are only allowed to state ‘Difference’. Then, even your explanation has to limit itself to very few words. The reason why half-page explanations are not allowed is not to cut the conversation short, but to be on the point and precise. And if you fail to convince the other party, you have failed, you
have lost. These days Indian lawyers are learning this technique, I don’t know why, but they are learning it.

III

From the Hinayana point of view you enter the path of accumulation as soon as you develop the very strong determination to be free which in Mahayana is taught in the ‘common with the medium level.’ From the Mahayana point of view in order to reach the first path, you must have developed the bodhimind. Without the bodhimind there is no way you can get onto the Mahayana path. Everything we are doing now is therefore not an activity of the path level, but preliminary to it. However, we have to present the five paths at some time. You need that knowledge, it would not be right to study Buddhism for years and not know that. The other reason is that, if by chance you do reach the path, you know where you are. These are the two reasons why we are doing this teaching.

On the path of accumulation we collect positive karma in order to break the ice and free ourselves of samsara. Right now we only think we are seeking liberation. Truly, 90% of us will have some kind of interest in the subject, but basically – I am sorry to say that – it is not the real thing.

What spirituality is and what it is not

I was watching ‘Good morning, America’ at around about 6 30 a.m. There was a show on about Colorado, about ice-skating. The people that were interviewed said how great it was. It was amazing that the sky was so blue, the air was so fresh and the snow so great and if you don’t see the spirituality in that, you must be dead. That is the indication of what level of spirituality we are looking at. I am not saying that the feeling is not good. But if you take that kind of feeling to be spiritual, it is pathetic. I am not saying that ‘Good morning, America’ is pathetic, but that what was said there, must be a very low level of spirituality. For me spirituality must go way beyond that. It must be GATE GATE PARAGATE … gone, gone, gone beyond. It has to be, otherwise we are losing all values. We are not looking for some wonderful
feeling here – that is the ‘love and light’ business. For those people it may be fine. But spirituality must have two purposes: cutting the negativity within the individual and delivering the individual to a higher level. And with that I do not mean higher altitudes in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, but the levels where you cut the uncontrolled power of the delusions that we experience day after day, hour after hour, week after week, year after year, life after life. We have the opportunity to cut that. That should be the least to aim for and if possible, one should aim for the ultimate state which a Buddha reaches. That is a spiritual path. This is not something that you can reach at a higher level of altitude, where is the air is a little different, or where you see some beautiful things. Last weekend we went to Chicago and by the time we drove past Lake Michigan, you could see that beautiful mist coming from Lake Michigan. The temperature in Chicago was minus 10, and one side of the lake was frozen, while the other side was not. So you could see blue mist going up, and after a while white steam. It was really a beautiful thing. You could call that spiritual too, but it is some kind of mystical type of thing. The spirituality we are talking about is something else. We need a spiritual path that makes a difference to the individual once and for all. We are not looking for some nice little thing. You could go up to Tibet and sit in front of Mt. Kailash for a year. You will definitely get a lot of different feelings there. There is cold air, it is very dry, if you want mystical feelings, you can get them there. But that is not going to liberate the individual at all. We need some kind of benefit for ourselves. We are not looking for any temporary physical, emotional or mental benefit, but for something that really liberates the individual, so that the physical, emotional and mental aspects are taken care of by themselves. In plain Christian language, we are looking for the liberation of the soul; in Buddhism I can’t say soul-liberation, because theoretically it would not be right.

Liberation means liberating the individual from the control of the delusions. These are obstacles to mental development. If you clear them out, you are in the awakened state. You are liberated, or awakened. That’s why Buddha is called sang-gye. The clearing
away of the delusions will automatically lead the individual to the awakened state. Therefore ‘love and light’ does not work in Buddhism, nor does the Colorado spirituality of fresh mountain air. It is no doubt beautiful, but not necessarily spiritual, and there is beauty within samsara too. Samsara also has beauty and if you sit there too long admiring it, you will get problems too. The beautiful feeling will change. If you put ‘Good morning, America’ up into these mountains for two weeks, they will know it. They will lose that beautiful feeling completely. The samsaric beauty is changeable suffering. It is nice and pleasant, no doubt, but it is also suffering of change. Do not make a mistake. Don’t confuse spirituality with this sort of thing.

Unfortunately, the level on which the American people treat spirituality is extremely low. Not only low, it is a very pathetic situation. We have to realize that. The word ‘spirituality’ is a very rich word. Its scope is tremendous and it has a tremendous amount of benefit for the individual. Americans have the saying, ‘Do not settle for second-best’. Well, here is a great opportunity. Right in front of you, there is this tremendous opportunity. While having that enormous capacity to understand and move yourself and make a difference, if you settle for less than best, then it is very unfortunate. But the majority of people do, because they don’t get it, they don’t know what spirituality is. And in between that, half cooked and half raw, a million different teachers come around and everything will be called spiritual. If you burn some incense, it smells different, and people will call that spiritual. Some people will have fifteen different types of incense that they can put around. So you can have fifteen different types of spirituality! If you beat a drum, it becomes spiritual. Anything non-mechanical will be made into something spiritual. This really goes too low and too far. It really does not pick up the value contained in the name. This is important to understand.

According to the Buddha’s experience, you should not recognize anything less than perfect freedom as spiritual at all. Anything below that is considered to be just lucky karma. If you do something nice, it will create causes for another beautiful, comfortable life in samsara. Negative karmas will give you negative results.
Positive karma can be divided into three categories: real positive karma, unshakable positive karma, lucky karma.

Buddha never accepts anything as spiritual, unless it is capable of delivering the individual to the total liberation from delusions. That is spirituality. We have to be very careful, especially those of us who have the chance to tap into the extremely rich experience that Buddha left with us, whether it be Theravada, Mahayana or Vajrayana. First you have to know it yourself. Then you can help another person and through that another four or ten people will find out. That is how we have to let people know what spirituality is really all about. Otherwise every single damn thing will become something spiritual.

I used to know a guy in New York. It was an agent for somebody who used to come to New York once a month to give a workshop for two days on weekends. They would teach you there how to cross a street that is on fire. They would put burning charcoals on the street and let you walk across. It cost you $200 and the money was collected three months in advance. They used to get between seven hundred and fourteen hundred people regularly. At the end of the workshop half the people could walk across the fire. They did not get many blisters, actually. But they could not walk the distance back. Once was enough. They called that ‘Spiritual fire walking workshop’ or something. Things like that mean nothing. All they will teach you is a little concentration and they teach you to tell yourself that through your mind power you could regard that fire as water and that water would not burn you at all. So they work with very strong mental suggestions which effect the reaction of the body. That is the bottom line. Of course they also had beautiful decorations and they chanted mantras and you spend twenty-four hours doing that, so naturally that makes you feel different, it makes you charged up and then you walk across. That is what you can get for $200 – walking across the street!

Anyway, all that is not a spiritual path – at least not something that Buddha accepted as spiritual path. You can’t say it is not spiritual, because then all the New Age people get worked up.
What Buddha accepted as spiritual path will make a difference to you life after life. It should control your delusions. Even in the case of very devoted people who say millions of mantras from morning till evening – if these activities don’t make a difference to your anger, attachment, hatred, jealousy, etc, then the best you will get out of that will be lucky karma, nothing else. You may be saying Highest Yoga Tantra mantras for twenty-four hours a day three hundred and sixty-five days per year, but even then you are simply creating lucky karma, nothing else.

What a spiritual development has to do, is to make a difference to your whole life once and for all and beyond that, life after life. I am using that terminology, because I come from there, and that is my title. That is a joke. But the truth is, that is my background and that is why I am talking to you about that. Accept it or not, when you die, it is not the end. For sure, it is not the snuffing out of a candle light. We are going to continue; no matter whatever may happen, good or bad, we will continue. There is absolutely no question. The clear sign that we will continue is the kids of today. If you look at today’s kids, how they perceive, how they act, how they function differently, you’ll see that some kids are extremely gentle, while others are extremely rough. They may be from the same parents, but still the kids have different characters. Even twins will have different characters. The simple reason is, they are bringing that with them through the experiences from their previous lives. It are previous experiences and habitual patterns and addictions. They have forgotten how it used to function exactly, but it is all there. The moment the external conditions arise, they know how to get angry, how to fall in love, how to get attached, how to play games. They will know how to be good, they don’t have to be told. That is the clear signal for us. We will be repeating the same thing again and again and again. It is not like blowing out a candle. We will be back. We will be functioning. That’s why the spiritual value is a karmic value, and not only an ordinary karmic value, but one that makes a difference to the experience of samsara.

That’s why even the Hinayana will not accept that anybody is on the path, unless the person develops the total and strong deter-
mination to be free. That means to see the faults of samsara life after life, knowing that the individual will be repeating life after life. Knowing that and wanting to be free from the control of samsara, that is the determination to be free. And that has to be developed with unshakable conviction. It is easy to say, ‘I am interested. I do want to get out of samsara’. Saying that does not make the difference. We could even brainwash ourselves to think that way, but even then it won’t work. The only thing that works is knowing it clearly; first knowing it intellectually, then meditatively experiencing it and then building up the unshakable commitment on the basis of the combined knowledge and meditative experience. Once you have done that, every positive karma you create will be that of the first path, even in the Hinayana, where you don’t even have the bodhimind.

That’s why to get on the path is not a joke. It is something very hard and difficult, and very strong. Each one of us can sit down and meditate. That does not mean we are on the path. We only joined the path which leads towards the path.

The first path is called path of accumulation, because in there you don’t accumulate just any good karma, but positive karma that will go towards liberating you from the cycle of existence.

I just remember something funny. In 1977 I was in Texas. A very dear friend of mine, a woman, was teaching there how to get into the cycle of existence. She used to give workshops there and we did a number of things together. I was of course teaching how to get out of the cycle of existence. My point is, that we are already in the cycle of existence. We don’t have to learn how to function there. We have attachment, which will glue us to the samsara and will not let us get out. No matter who or what it may be, it is attachment. The beautiful part of the attachment will draw you in. There is pleasure, it is wonderful and you don’t want to separate from the experience. At the same time, that will glue you to samsara. It doesn’t take much time. It happens in a minute or so, and you will be glued tight.

I often share a story about one of my late masters, Kyabje Gomo Rinpoche, from whom most of my Vajrayogini teachings come.
He was a funny person. He did not act like a rinpoche. He was also known as the ‘father of Home No. 15’. For a long time people did not know at all that he was a big incarnate lama. He had a small number of very solid students. Two of them were officials of the former Dalai Lama. They left from Tibet in about 1955 or 1956 and went to India. After Gomo Rinpoche came out of Tibet, they followed him to Northern India. They were all Vajrayogini practitioners. At some point they decided on dates at which the individual practitioners would die and they set everything up. These Tibetan officials had a cook-servant, whom they sent back to Kalimpong ten days ahead of their scheduled day of death. That is quite a long train journey. Traveling by train in India is not easy. Those of you who have been there, will know it. You have to make your reservation a month ahead and even then you can lose it. The conductors will play tricks on you. They will even eat your train-ticket up, when they ask you to show it. Then you have to pay them extra money so that they will let you go.

Anyway, those two officials were supposed to die almost the same day. One of them did die on schedule. Gomo Rinpoche was at home, doing his usual thing like looking after the kids, when somebody came and told him that so and so had died and would he please say some prayers. Nobody came and told him about the death of the other official though. He was supposed to die at about 10.00 a.m. that morning. Rinpoche started to get nervous. Finally he got up and went to that person’s house, to see what had happened. The people in that house told him, ‘Oh, this morning he got sick and they had to take him to hospital.’ Rinpoche found out that he was at the American Hospital and he decided that he had to see this guy by hook or by crook. He was in the Intensive Care Unit and somehow Rinpoche was able to sneak in. He asked his student, ‘What happened?’ and the guy said, ‘I started to get all the signs of death, but then all of a sudden they reversed back, and it was so painful and I was screaming and yelling so much, that the people found me and took me to hospital and now I am here.’ Rinpoche could not figure out what could have gone wrong. The only thing he noticed however, was that his student was wearing a brand new, nice-looking shirt. He asked him, ‘Oh, where did you get this shirt from?’
student then said, ‘Oh, it is a nice one, isn’t it. Do you like it? A friend of mine gave it to me the day before yesterday, so I put it on this morning’. So Rinpoche said, ‘Yes, I do like that shirt, please give it to me.’ Now his student hesitated, ‘Yes, but I really, really like it.’ Rinpoche kept on insisting, ‘I really want that shirt, and if you don’t give it to me, you are terrible and we will have nothing to do with each other any more.’ So finally he took it off and gave it to him, and Rinpoche tore it apart in front of him that same moment. After that, this student could go very easily. So a simple, little attachment for a shirt can hold you back.

There is another interesting example. It was during the period of Guntang Tenpai Drömei in the 1700s in the Amdo area. He was a great, learned master. There was an old monk, who was very attached to the butter that is used for butter tea. He got very sick, but still he went to the monks’ meeting every morning, where butter tea was served. After some time he could not even carry his cup any more. Instead he used a huge cooking utensil, kept that in a bag and hung the bag around his neck. Then he had two younger monks holding him upright, while he went to the monks’ meeting to get his butter tea, so he could save some tea butter. A simple, crazy attachment. Everybody thought that he was a crazy guy and something was wrong with him. The most famous spiritual master at that time was Gungtang Jampelyang. He heard about that story and he happened to know that monk. So he decided to go and see him. All the monastery officials, as well as the Gungtang labrang staff, were deadly against the famous Gungtang Jampelyang visiting that crazy old monk who had such strong attachment for butter tea and who could not die for years because of his attachment to butter tea. But Guntang Jampelyang went anyway and asked him, ‘How are you feeling, Gen?’ – that means ‘elder master’. He said, ‘Well, I am sick, but I don’t want to miss the monks’ meetings, because I like this tea. I never miss it, even though it starts at 5.30 in the morning. After the tea is served, I can’t stay very long, because I am sick, so I leave. But I never missed a single day.’ ‘Oh, that’s very nice!’ said Gungtang Jampelyang, ‘And did you collect a lot of tea butter?’ and the monk enthusiastically said, ‘Yes! I have collected a lot of butter lumps.’ Then Gungtang Jampelyang said, ‘Did you hear
the rumors from Tushita Pure Land, that their butter is far better than ours? I heard about this, and also the amount of butter you get there is far bigger than here.’ The monk got a bit curious and asked, ‘Are you sure?’ Gungtang Jampelyang said, ‘Yes, I heard that from my teachers and I think it is true.’ Then the old monk said, ‘I would not believe it, but since it comes from Gungtang Jampelyang, it must be true.’ That old monk died two days later, believing that he could get more and superior butter in Tushita Pure Land.

That is how even a simple, little attachment works. So it is the glue of samsara. We know that and use that also in our lives. Sometimes we tell people, ‘Hang in there, help is on the way.’ So we appeal to the will power of the attachment to be able to hang on. Attachment is nothing but an emotion and so is anger. These little emotions make that much difference in one’s life. In the spiritual path, attachment, etc, obstruct us. That is why they are labeled ‘delusions’ and ‘obstacles’. As long as we have attachment to something that we think is wonderful, we are in trouble, whether it is the beauty of Colorado’s Rocky Mountain atmosphere, or whatever, it will hold us back. As long as you have any attachment, you are not really seeking freedom. Even if you know intellectually, in practice you won’t have it, because attachment stops you.

In order to get onto the path, you have to move from guru devotion to embracing the human life, to impermanence, to the knowledge of samsara in general and from there to the determination of liberating yourself from all ignorance.

Some people say it is the delusion of dualism, that you think there is something beautiful, but there is nothing beautiful. That is wrong. There is beauty. But the beauty is beauty because of collectivity. It is not beauty by nature. I am not talking about nature as in our physical environment. That also just exists collectively. The beauty of the Colorado mountains is also collective beauty. The same goes for the beauty of Lake Michigan. It depends on the cold air, the water, etc. Combined together, it produces that beautiful steam you can see. The collective beauty of
the Colorado mountains depends on the cold, the clear weather, the snow, dry air, the breeze, etc. There is nothing wrong with that beauty. The mind perceiving that as beautiful is not a mistaken mind. Some people go too extreme, saying, ‘There is no beauty, it is just our delusions telling us that it is beautiful.’ That is wrong. If you think like that, you are losing the relative truth. In relativity, it is beauty.

But getting attached to that is stupid, because it is impermanent. It changes. Enjoying it is great, appreciating it is wonderful. If you fall in love with that atmosphere it is fine. That’s okay. Love is okay, attachment is not okay. If you appreciate and enjoy something, it is okay, it is love. But if you go one step beyond that and you want it, and you want it for your eyes only – as they say in the James Bond movie ‘Golden Eye’ – then it becomes possessiveness. It becomes messy, it becomes attachment. Attachment is no good; love is good, very good. The samsaric problems we have today all come from attachment, hatred, jealousy, or all of those together. And ultimately they all come from ignorance, from not knowing reality, not knowing about collective existence.

You have every right to enjoy, to appreciate. You don’t have to shy away from it. You don’t have to feel guilty about enjoying or appreciating something. It is your absolute right. You don’t have to shut yourself away from that. If you do so, you are a fool. A lot of people tell themselves, ‘I can’t do it. I am a spiritual person, if I do it, I take it away from somebody else, I take it away from nature.’ That is stupid compassion. It is idiot compassion. Openness, an open mind is: you get it, you worked for it, you deserve it, you enjoy it. Like Allen Ginsberg says in a poem about rich, fatty food in developed nations. But you have to know in yourself which emotions are at play – attachment, anger, jealousy. You have to know what is love and what is attachment, what is anger and what is patience, what is hatred and what is compassion. The bridge in between is recognition, appreciation. You see beauty. You want to fall in love? Fine. But don’t have attachment.
Attachment goes to the extreme. Sometimes, when people say, ‘I love you’, they mean ‘I want to control you, you are mine, I own you’. All this is extreme attachment. See the signs of attachment. They are only known to yourself. To have a free spirit is a wonderful thing to live with. Appreciate everything, but do not fall into attachment. Be patient with everything, do not get angry. Don’t be jealous, but be appreciative. That’s how you should live your life. You need self-appreciation too. If you have that, you will take care of yourself. If you don’t have it, you will probably stand without shoes outside in the cold. On top of that, understand the difficulties of samsara. Don’t try to solve your problems one by one. Try to solve them together. Some of them may be very powerful, you may have to deal with these one by one. But the majority, try to solve them together. Try to challenge ignorance. Try to gain some wisdom. Put all your positive efforts, of purification and accumulation of merit, towards that. That’s how you catch the path.

Once you have caught the first path, it is a matter of going through the small, medium and big levels of that path. The small level is wisdom only following from learning, listening, from picking up information. That learning, followed by your own analysis of it will become the medium level and after a while you will be able to meditate and some kind of semi-shamatha will be able to concentrate strongly on the results of your analysis, which is the big level of the path of accumulation of merit.

**PATH OF ACTION**

Now we want to go on to the path of action. When you move from the third level of the first path to the lowest level of the second path, it is the first time that you feel the heat of the wisdom. That is why the first level is called ‘heat’. The example I gave during the teachings on the GATE GATE mantra was that of making fire by rubbing two stones together. This is a traditional example. You have to think like the native Americans. When you want to make a fire that way, before you can get a spark, you have to create a little heat by rubbing the stones together. Once you have heat and you keep on hitting the match lock – or flint – you can get sparks and these will start the fire.
Similarly, when you try to generate wisdom within you, first you have to get to the heat level. So the first level of the path of action is called ‘heat’.

Even at the level of heat, anger can sometimes arise. When you lose control, say someone is really bugging you all the time, when you lose your temper, it is all right, it is normal. If you do not occasionally lose your temper, you must be either a bodhisattva or some strange fellow who does not even know what good or bad is. So that can happen even on that level. There are points where you can lose your virtues totally due to anger.

The second level of the path of action is called ‘peak’. Why? Because the virtues that we have created, will continue. There is no more point where you could lose your virtues. You don’t give in to anger any more, you don’t submit yourself to attachment, not even for a moment. There is a totally positive karmic continuation at that level. That is why it is called ‘peak’. There are no interruptions through negative emotions any more. Until you reach that level, your emotions will continue, you will lose to anger, to attachment, to jealousy. But don’t worry. Don’t give up! The key is not to give up, but to continue. No matter how many times you fall, get up and walk. That is how the babies learn to walk. We have to do the same thing. We are like babies. We are trying to learn how to function in our lives without negative emotions. So we fall all the time, three hundred times a minute. But we should be able to get up three hundred times a minutes too. That is the key.

The next level is called ‘patience’. Your patience has built up so much, that you will never again have to go to the lower realms.

*Sö tub yang dro yang me tong*—patience obtained, no lower rebirth.

This is where the immune system develops. On the third level of the second path you perfect your immune system against falling into the lower realms.

Whether you fall into the lower realms in future depends on your emotions. If you are interrupted by anger or hatred in your mind-stream, that means you have not yet reached the level of ‘peak’.
And if you have not reached that, you will also not reach the level of ‘patience’. Therefore you have not yet developed the immune system against falling into the lower realms.

That is how you can watch yourself, how you can check your own spiritual development. It is like a war. On one side are the negative emotions, on the other side the positive forces. At stake is your own freedom from the negative emotions. You can win that freedom or give up and fall down. This war is what you have to fight within yourself, between your negative emotions and positive virtues. Gurus, the Dharma and the Sangha, are only there to support. The real work has got to be done by yourself, because you are responsible for yourself, no one else is. If the responsibility for you could be taken by others, the Buddhas would have done so a long time ago. They would have liberated all of us millions of years ago. But we are not liberated. That is the clear sign that we are responsible for ourselves. To get liberated, this human life is the best opportunity, because of its capacity, because of the positive conditions. We have that opportunity right now. That’s why I said, ‘If we settle for second best in the spiritual path, it is really a pity.’

I did not go into detail about what the levels of peak, patience and best of Dharma are, but I did tell you the symptoms, how you can find out what level you are on.

**Questions and Answers**

Audience: What do you mean by your statement, not to work with our problems one by one, but to solve them all together?

Rinpoche: If we try to solve problems one by one, we will not have enough time to deal with our negative emotions at all. All our negative emotions are rooted in ignorance. So the real challenge needs to be thrown at the ignorance. Cutting ignorance is like cutting a tree at the root. Once you have cut a tree at the root, it will not so easily grow again. Otherwise, if you chop away at the branches, and cut branch by branch, they will just grow back in the next spring. But still, there are certain pressing problems, depending on the individual. Some people have a tremendous problem with attachment. They cannot let go. They have to
hold it under any circumstances. People do that very often. If you have such strong attachment, it is bound to bring also the hatred, the anger, the jealousy. Therefore, under such circumstances, you may have to deal with hatred and anger first, and tackle attachment and jealousy later. This depends on circumstances and situations. You may have to do that. But the main idea is to deal with the root rather than the branches. People often say to me, ‘At least it was a good learning experience.’ Once is okay, twice is also okay and even three times is still acceptable. But no more than three times. Otherwise you keep on learning for the rest of your life. You have to tackle all of them together. That does not mean to throw punches and knives in all directions at the same time; you have to aim at the root. When you have cut the root, the whole thing will die. That is actually Buddha’s message. That’s why wisdom is important and that is why all the levels along the path are measured against wisdom rather than against love and compassion.

Audience: You have said that it is okay to enjoy beautiful experiences. But when very strong positive feelings arise, I have the tendency to put the brakes on a bit, otherwise I am afraid I get carried away.

Rinpoche: The idea is, if you have the chance to appreciate something beautiful, go ahead, no need to put the brakes on – as long as you simply appreciate. But if you go beyond appreciation and start hanging on to the experience, try to own it and mess it up, then you have to put the brakes on. Your appreciation will be lost and you are under the influence of attachment.

Audience: So at what point exactly do you have to put the brakes on?

Rinpoche: When you are running at 65 miles per hour, it is okay, 75 miles is also okay, but if running at more than 80 miles, you are bound to get a speeding ticket. If you really only have appreciation, thinking how wonderful it is and if you are enjoying that, it is fine, go ahead. But when you start thinking, ‘I wish I could own it. I wish it belonged to me.’ the moment that thought comes up, you are going over 80 miles an hour. That’s how you can watch your speedometer. If you go over that point, then you
start playing funny games and tricks and you have gone way beyond appreciation. You will probably go over 100 miles. If it comes to that, run away as far as you can and don’t even look back. Really true. Unfortunately, that is our human nature. We do that all the time. We play this game between friends, between husband and wife, between girl-friend and boy-friend, between companions, between yourself and your ex-wife, between employer and employee, between psychologist and client, and between everybody. When it comes to the level of playing games, it is time to give it away.

Audience: If there is no difference between the self and the other, how do you keep from becoming the void?
Rinpoche: Because there is no difference, there is void.

Audience: Is it true that when you control karma, you find liberation?
Rinpoche: I don’t really know whether you control karma or not. But what really happens is, when the negative karmas are exhausted, you are only left with positive karmas. When you have only positive karmas left, there will be no negative karmic results. Therefore, when you have reached the third level of the second path, you have developed an immune system against falling into the lower realms. The reason is that there is no more creation of negative karma.

Audience: You said once that attachment arises in relation to the five senses. What about a relationship between mother and daughter? How do you separate love from attachment?
Rinpoche: As long as there is appreciation without wanting to control and own the other person, it is fine, it is pure, it is enjoyable, it is love. The stronger the love, the better it is. The stronger the compassion is the better it is. The stronger the appreciation and the caring is, the better it is. But as soon as it becomes a control issue, an authority issue, and an ownership issue, it becomes messy. Once it has become messy, you are moving from appreciation and love to attachment and emotional garbage.

Audience: Sometimes, we try to create good karma, but somewhere in the chain of events that well-meant action creates negative consequences. How do you explain that?
The Perfection of Wisdom Mantra

Rinpoche: That happens all the time, because there is individual and collective karma. Each individual in the United States tries to do the best whatever they can, but Newt Gingrich goes on and creates a collective bad karma. So individually, we may create good karma, but then collectively, we may create bad karma, like in the case of the Gulf War.

Audience: So we are stuck with that negative collective karma then?
Rinpoche: No, you are never stuck. There is always ways and means to purify any negative karma. You cannot purify the collective karma of all Americans, but you can purify the effects of the collective karma on yourself by your own actions. Let Newt Gingrich use our tax dollars for whatever he wants to. Let the dollars go. We can still create pure, positive karma. So we don’t have to worry about it.

IV

On the three levels of the path of accumulation we are trying to get wisdom, but we have no signal of wisdom at all. On the first stage of the path of action we begin to get some kind of heat of wisdom. So before the wisdom-fire burns there is the development of heat. The second level is the level of peak. Heat is not enough. When you rub two stones or two pieces of wood, you get heat and when you keep on rubbing it gets hotter still. If you don’t continue rubbing, the heat will disappear. In the same way, if you don’t continue to work on the wisdom, the heat of wisdom will disappear. Constant effort is absolutely necessary.

The effort at this point is still on the Lam Rim level. People may think that they have done Lam Rim already. But far from it. You may have understood something. What a few of you may have, is some understanding of the Lam Rim points, following from listening to the teachings or from reading. That does not constitute having done the Lam Rim – not even a single point. That is not Lam Rim development. You have to analyze that more and get some better understanding. You have to come to the realization that ‘Oh, that is what is really meant. That is what it means in my life, now it makes sense’. When you have got this insight, the
second level of understanding is reached. Then you have to meditate more, concentrate on the results of your analysis, until you get meditative experience. All this you have to do with every stage of the Lam Rim, point by point. These are the sorts of efforts you are expected to put in, even at the level of heat of the second path of action. At the moment, in this teaching, we are mainly focusing on the path you are taking, and how you transfer from one level to the next. But the effort you are supposed to put in to sustain this development, is still practicing the same old sutra Lam Rim and tantra Ngagrim. Those are the stages you have to follow.

By putting in constant efforts, we will get some signs of development. Usually, when people get some sign of development, they get very excited and there is no danger of withdrawing from the practice. Up to this level of heat however, the problem is that there is not much encouragement and inspiration. Efforts are mainly sustained by people pushing each other. But by the time you reach the level of heat, the inspiration is there. You get signs of the wisdom fire to be burnt. Up to this level, your positive efforts are not continuous. There are many interruptions by negative actions, emotions and thoughts. Your anger, hatred, jealousy and attachment will come up. All the issues that you normally have will still come up here. If you see the negative emotions arising at the level of heat, it is nothing unusual.

The next level is that of ‘peak’. The peak of a mountain is its highest point. In this case it means that from then on every action that you undertake will be a positive action. According to the Buddhist terminology there is no more negative movement. It has become stable and grounded. That is the best level, the peak level. No more interruptions, no more anger, attachment, jealousy, etc. All these are gone at this level. But still the imprints are there. The negative emotions may not be there directly, but their influence still continues. The gross anger, hatred and even the gross ignorance are gone. Therefore you don’t create any more negative karma at all. Because of that you have developed an immune system against falling into the lower realms. That is guaranteed. No negative emotions means no negative actions.
Without those, no negative karma is created. Without that, there can be no result. The old karma is being purified and you don’t create any new karma. Some people say there is no more karma at all. That is bullshit. Even the enlightened beings have karma – positive karma. You can either create positive or negative karma, nothing else. So from the level of peak onwards, since you don’t create any more negative karma, you are only left with positive karma. Therefore you will get positive results constantly. Very simple and grounded. Don’t look for some kind of mystical revelation, where something hits you and you have gone beyond karma. That is not true. Some Tibetan teachers may even tell you that you can go beyond karma, but that is mistaken. They may be thinking something else when they make that statement, but in itself it is mistaken.

In Pabongka’s *Liberation the palm of your hands* is a mention of people who believe that they have gone beyond karma. They think they can sit on Buddha’s books, put them under their bed, etc. They try to prove to people that karma does not affect them. But that is an act of complete ignorance. They don’t know what they are doing and they are misleading others too. Nobody goes beyond karma, not even Buddha.

Once, during Buddha’s life time, a war broke out between his own caste, the Sakyas and another group. This is 2500 years ago and must have looked like what we watch in some movies today, perhaps like some native American tribes fighting each other. Buddha and some of his disciples were able to see the results of the war before it started. They knew that many of the Sakyas were going to be killed. So Shariputra or Maudgalyana, one of them, said to Buddha, ‘I could pick up one of my hair pores, and with that pick up all the soldiers that are coming to fight the Sakyas and throw them far away to the other side of the ocean. Should I do that?’ But Buddha said, ‘No. They are going to suffer and they are going to die today. That is their karma. You cannot intervene.’ His disciples could not believe it. So Buddha said, ‘All right, I show you.’ So with his magical power he picked up three kids. One he placed in the samsaric god realms, another one he kept near to himself and the last one he put somewhere else.
Even Buddha himself had a terrible back ache that day and he said, ‘This is the left-over karma.’ The caste of the Sakyas had created the karma collectively and had to experience the results that day. By the evening, the battle was over and a lot of the Sakyas had died. The three kids Buddha had removed from the battle area had also died. No soldiers had come to slaughter them, but somehow, something happened. All three of them had accidents and died.

My point is, nobody is above the law, even not Buddha. Even if you are enlightened, you are not above the law, because karma is a natural law. The simple reason why you have escaped the lower realms on the peak level of the path of action, is that you do not have any more negative emotions and therefore don’t create any negative karma. Therefore no negative results. That is how you develop your immune system. That is better than a scientific explanation. I am joking. But it is all very grounded, logical and it makes sense. That is true Buddhism. You may try to explain things with mystical events, but even those can only occur if the karma for them to happen has been created. That is the key even for mystical things to function. It is so important to be grounded. There are no surprises. Clairvoyance can be developed, either karmically or through concentration. The karmically based clairvoyance is temporary. The moment that karma is exhausted, the person will lose that clairvoyance. It can happen in the individual’s life. Yesterday’s great clairvoyant may know nothing tomorrow. It happens. That person then has to pretend to be seeing something. Spiritually developed clairvoyance does not disappear, because you apply constant efforts to push it further. You keep on adding up on that karma. That is why it continues.

At the level of patience you can no longer fall back, because you constantly put in efforts. You don’t get tired, you don’t get burnt out, you don’t lose it, you don’t freak out, you don’t get fed up, you don’t get upset, you don’t get abrupt, etc. That is why it is called ‘patience’. You don’t get negative emotions. Whatever happens, you can take it. Without negative emotions you don’t create negative results. So therefore you have the immune system.
In addition to that, you are not afraid any more. You will not be afraid even of the subtle emptiness. You know, we are always afraid of losing something – everybody is. We all have fears. Sometimes we don’t even know what we are afraid of. But the fears that we have, are fears of losing: losing ourselves, our identity, our friends, our near and dear ones, fear of losing our good name, our prestige, wealth, fear of losing life, fear of getting hurt. We constantly have fears. Our fears will continue up to this level. This is the level where there are no more fears. The reason is, you know you have nothing to fear. You are not going to lose your attainments. You know you have no more negative emotions left. Without any negative karma to be created, we don’t have to be afraid of anything. We are not even afraid of subtle emptiness. People have a fear of emptiness, because they can’t understand the difference between nothingness and emptiness. Before you get to this level you can really get afraid of emptiness, thinking you will be annihilated. Sometimes you see in science-fiction movies that people go back and forth in time, and they get suddenly thrown into some different life and are totally lost. It is like they are going through a curtain and come out somewhere else. The fear of emptiness at the level of the second path corresponds so such an experience. At the moment, we don’t have that problem, because we only have knowledge of emptiness intellectually, and we rely on theoretical explanations of what selflessness and emptiness is. We don’t have anything more than that.

When you reach the level of heat on the second path, you really get a feeling for the depth of emptiness. That is where you get close to that curtain, through which only a few brave individuals can go, not so many. At the level of patience, you lose all your fears, because you know what is going on. You really become a hero, a brave person with a big heart. You are not going to be afraid of being generous, of being moral, of being patient, of being diligent, of meditating and you are not afraid of wisdom, nor are you afraid of ignorance. We at our level, are afraid of wisdom as well as of ignorance. We think that wisdom is great and ignorance is bad, but we have no way of knowing, so we are afraid of everything. We are afraid of God and we are afraid of evil. It is true, because we don’t know either one of them. It is as simple as
that. We can talk about them and label them, but these are only words for us. What we know of God is what we have heard others say about him. That is our best reason and beyond that we don’t have anything. But at the level of patience of the second path, our reasons will change. We know why God is good and evil is bad. That is why this level is called ‘patience’. When you lose your patience, you are losing it to negative emotions. That is very true. So nervousness is bad, because the individual will lose.

Patience really has a lot of good qualities. It is one the most difficult things to accomplish. Buddha said, ‘There is no hardship like patience. There is no negativity as heavy as anger.’ It is very hard to be patient. We would find it hard to watch a stick of incense burn down from beginning to end without moving. We would probably scream. That is how we know what level of patience we are on.

From the level of patience, then, you are automatically transferred to the level of ‘Best Dharma’. That level you are on at that point is the best you can get in samsara. There is nothing that could be better than that on an ordinary path. That is why it is called ‘best of Dharma’. On the level above that, you will immediately enter the third path.

The Hinayana system says that you only remain on the level of Best Dharma for the period of time it takes to snip your finger. You obtained it and at the same time there is no longer a reason why you have to continue, because your own interest in self-liberation will not let you stay long. You want to move on.

In the Mahayana system it is different. The purpose of the Mahayanist is to be of service to others. So even having reached that level, a Mahayana practitioner will remain for a number of lives, in order to carry out services and help other beings. As soon as you have secured the immune system for yourself, you go out and begin to help others.

Until then, it is not recommended to go out and help others. Because if you don’t know what is good for yourself and others, it is not worth getting yourself into trouble. It would be worse than
idiot compassion. Our mind also tricks us. Sometimes we feel compelled to do something bad, something we should not be doing. Then we even use compassion as an excuse. This is the worst excuse you can ever use, but people do it very often. It is worse than idiot compassion. Idiot compassion, while being idiotic, has at least some compassion. But this is even worse. Our intention is totally self-oriented, but we go and use compassion to get what we want. We will say, ‘Oh, these people really need help and nobody is helping them, so I will do it.’ What you really want is something else, but you do it under the cover of helping others. On top of that, you yourself are not immune, plus you will pick up negative habits. So what you are doing is, you are destroying your own development, your own stability, everything. You are throwing yourself and everybody else in the water, together.

You know, it is like this monkey story. There is a monkey hanging from a branch above a lake and another monkey is hanging down from his arms and a few more like that, trying to take the moon out of the lake. It is this traditional Indian story: The monkeys saw the reflection of the moon in the lake. They talked to each other, ‘Hey, did you see, the moon has fallen into the lake!’ So they decided, ‘We are the monkeys, the most intelligent animals, we must go and pick up the moon. We must save the world.’ So they wondered how to do that and came up with the idea that one monkey would hang from a branch of a tree that reached over the lake. Another monkey would be held by this monkey and so on, until there was a chain of monkeys reaching down to the lake. The last one was supposed to pick up the moon. However, the weight of all these monkeys hanging down from the one branch was so great, that the branch snapped and all the monkeys fell into the water.

That is exactly what you are going to get, if you try, without having secured the immune system for yourself, to go out and do all sorts of things. Everybody is going to land in the lake. So in the Mahayana system, the time when you go and help others, is at this level. There is no more fear, because your immune system will protect you. You can go out and do for others what needs to be done. That is not crazy wisdom, but still it is okay.
PATH OF SEEING

In the Hinayana system you automatically transfer to the path of seeing, the third path. Here you become an extraordinary person. You meditate on emptiness and totally eradicate the dualistic view. That means that at this time the emptiness and yourself, the observer of the emptiness, are like water in water. It is not somebody projecting emptiness and trying to see it. It is like water poured into water. You cannot separate them, or divide. So it is non-dual. If you pour milk into water, or water into milk, that can still be separated. The Indian milk suppliers know how to do this. They will swear to you that they did not put any water into the milk. But what they do is they put milk into the water! In the traditional Indian teachings they will tell you, that when you pour water into milk, or milk into water, the turtles can separate them. But water poured into water, no one can separate. That non-dualistic perception happens on the path of seeing.

The path of seeing is so-called, because you are seeing the nature of reality directly, face to face, without any interruptions. It is an experience of oneness, no separation of perceiver and the object being perceived. The perceiver and the object, everything becomes oneness. That is called par chen mi lamba – there is no obstruction at all. You become an extraordinary being. Until then, you are an ordinary person; even though you may be able to fly in the air like a bird, or remain under the ground like a worm, or under water like a fish, even then you are ordinary. On the level of the path of seeing, whatever you may be, man, woman or child, you are an extraordinary person. There is complete absorption. It is so strong, that to that particular person at that time, nothing else exists. Everything is absorbed into that moment, gone, oneness. That does not mean that there is nothing else outside of that, but to that person nothing else exists. That is why there is no obstruction. In the Mahayana system you also reach the first bhumi.

At that moment there are no more obstacles, all opponent forces to the realization of emptiness are overcome. When you rise from that state, when you relax, you may have some difficulties in the aftermath. However, all obstacles to achieving that reali-
zation are completely and once and for all overcome. The example for that is: not only have you thrown the thief out of your house, but you have also shut the door. So on the level of direct perception of emptiness you throw the thief out the door, and at the level of the aftermath, you shut the door.

At the level of the aftermath, you are not completely absorbed. You wake up from the meditative state, and you function normally. However, you have a little difficulty adjusting. The walls will move away. At this level, you can walk across the water and through the walls. So sometimes, when you go near a wall, the wall moves away. Sometimes you walk through. The door maybe shut, but suddenly you are in the next room and someone shouts, ‘What’s happening?’ That is the difficulty of the aftermath. It takes some adjustment. After all, you are not enlightened. You have just encountered the nature of the reality, the truth.

**Questions and answers**

Audience: What is the difference between the levels of patience and best of Dharma on the path of action?

Rinpoche: Best of Dharma is like a gate you go through, or rather, zoom through. For the Hinayana level that is true. Their practitioners have not interest to enjoy or waste time at that level. Therefore they just zoom through. On the Mahayana level, however, the bodhisattvas are now quite active, because they are the young-blood bodhisattvas, that are keen to go out and help. They are more active than the older ones. For bodhisattvas that is a long period. Some remain for lives. How it works with these stages, is that when one stage has been perfected, you transfer to the next. So the perfection of the patience level becomes the best of Dharma. It is not like entering into a different building.

Audience: The difference between levels is then a matter of subtlety. What about the difference between the level of peak and patience?

Rinpoche: The peak-level is the level where negative emotions no longer arise within the individual. The perfection of this level will then become the level of patience, because the immune system against the lower realms has been developed by then. On
that basis it is now identified as being on the level of patience. But it is true, the difference is the subtlety. It is not a difference of black and white, it is grey among grey. You can gauge it from the level of results that you have achieved, like from when on the immune system has been achieved, or how strong the concentration is now. Due to such differences the levels are changing.

Audience: So it is not like you see a sudden flash and you know you are on the next level, or you pass a test and graduate.
Rinpoche: Take for example these glasses of mine. When you look from one angle, you can see that they have three different sections, but from another angle, you just see glass. They are called ‘progressives glasses’. There is no executive cut in the middle. That is exactly how the progress works during the stages of the path.

Audience: Regarding these young-blood bodhisattvas on the level of best of Dharma on the path of action. What is the benefit of delaying their achievement of directly seeing emptiness, when they are so close to it and could help sentient beings so much better then?
Rinpoche: There will be a number of people who go on to perceive emptiness directly first. But a lot of them will want to help people then and there. You could call that semi-idiot compassion. But it is not really idiot compassion, because now you can look after yourself. You are not in the situation of the monkeys that fall from the tree, trying to pick up the moon out of the lake. Also, even though you may delay your achievement of wisdom, the method part develops very well. Your love and compassion become much stronger, your efforts at purification become stronger, your efforts at helping others become stronger. Actually, when bodhisattvas help others, their own development moves faster. So the situation is double-sided. By helping others, you benefit yourself. It is like when you are in a service-oriented job. You do something for somebody and when they thank you for it, you say, ‘Don’t thank me, this is my job. I get paid for it.’ Likewise, the bodhisattvas are getting paid for their efforts in a spiritual sense. The more they go out of their way to help, the more their bonus of accumulation of merit increases. They move
faster towards the final enlightenment. Their achievement of wisdom may be somewhat delayed. But you have two paths to watch. There are always these two things. It is always a personal choice. Some people always want to do the best. In my personal case, I don’t want to be among the last ones, nor do always want to be the first. I want to be in the middle, where everybody is moving. It is personal choice.

Audience: But when you go on to develop your wisdom of emptiness, that does not hinder or inhibit your ability to help others? Rinpoche: Not at all.

Audience: Wisdom is the direct opponent to ignorance. On the levels of heat, peak, patience and best of Dharma you have not encountered the wisdom of emptiness yet. How come then, that there is no more ignorance?
Rinpoche: The negative emotions are not there any more in their gross form. They are not functioning. Yet you are not free of them. The imprints and roots are left. They just do not function. This is not like the example of the garlic and the smell of the garlic which I use very often.29 It is more like the spring garden which has hyacinths and tulips and so on, but they have already bloomed and are gone. The flowers have been cut, but the roots and bulbs have been left, because somebody hopes that they will grow again next year in the wild garden of somebody’s house. That is exactly what is happening here. The flowers have been cut, the roots are still there. There is a possibility that they will bloom again next year. At the level of the path of seeing, the flower-pot has been thrown away too, so there is no more possibility of the flower blooming again the next year. But even then, the smell [the imprints] is still left.

Audience: In that case, should not the bodhisattva at that level be very determined to go on the path of seeing, rather than to slow down at the level of best of Dharma?
Rinpoche: Yes and no. For example, the Tibetans believe that Dharma books represent Dharma, so they are part of being an object of refuge. Therefore you don’t play with them, you leave them on the altar. At one time, the founder of the Drukpa Kagyu
tradition, Drukpa Kunleg, was walking through the streets of Lhasa, carrying a bundle with scriptures strapped over his shoulder. He was chased by a dog. So he took the book from his shoulder, hit the dog and said, ‘The objection to doing that is very strong, but my need to do it is even stronger, so I have the auspiciousness of whacking the book on the dog’s head.’ Just like that, here the objection may be strong, but the need is even stronger.

Audience: What was the Tibetan phrase you used when you described the path of seeing which has no obstructions?
Rinpoche: Par che me lam. That means ‘path free of cuts’. Our problem normally is that our positive efforts are cut, or obstructed, by obstacles. Here there are no more obstacles.

Audience: I read in an introduction to Tibetan Buddhism that there are no separate souls, but only one large soul. Is that right?
Rinpoche: ‘Soul’ is the terminology used by Christians. Buddhists always refer to ‘consciousness’. I do not know what the difference is between these. But there is individual consciousness. You cannot deny that. It is very much there. When you become enlightened, when you become free of everything, at your final enlightenment, you may be joining a huge sea of enlightened consciousness. You will become part of this, yet you still do not lose your individual identity. I believe that is how it functions. You have to accept individual identity, otherwise you would not be responsible for yourself. Either the author’s information on this subject was wrong, or you interpreted it wrong.

Audience: Is there a name for that great collective consciousness? Is that called ‘Buddha’?
Rinpoche: If you want a name, you can call it ‘enlightened mind’.

V
Review
To talk about the five paths is not as easy as talking about the Lam Rim or the Three principles of the path, because all the different vehicles, Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, have their own set of five paths. What happens on these five paths, becomes differ-
The Perfection of Wisdom Mantra

ent for each vehicle. So it is a bit complicated. The names of the paths are the same in all the vehicles, even the spelling.

To re-cap what we have talked about so far, let me say that on the Hinayana path of accumulation the main goal of the individual is no longer to satisfy the needs of this life and future lives, but his interest has gone beyond that level. He wants to end once and for all the suffering and pains that otherwise go on for lives after lives, and therefore seeks total freedom. The Tibetans have the habit to say at this point that the individual is no longer interested in the affairs of this and future lives. I can’t say that the person on this level is no longer interested in the pleasures of this and future lives. That would send the wrong message – especially in the English language. It is not that you have no interest in your life, or that you have no interest in the pleasures of life, it is not that you don’t want joy in your life, or in future lives, but the difference is that this is no longer your main goal. Buddha refused to admit people who did not have the wish to seek that freedom into the spiritual path. According to Buddha, a spiritual path has to be capable of delivering the individual to total freedom.

Some friends have mentioned that we in Jewel Heart live from event to event. We don’t have any long term planning, like normal organizations. We mind our own business and learn whatever we can and study and practice and don’t bother with the rest. That is what people complain about. And it is true. In our life we do the same. Whenever a particular problem comes up, we try to challenge it. We say that we take things as they come. So we also use our knowledge of the spiritual path to challenge just one difficulty after another, as they come up. A lot of people do that. It looks like living from event to event.

Buddha is not interested in that approach. His path is capable of cutting the difficulties once and for all. Anybody who would settle for less than that is not considered to be someone who is interested in the spiritual path. It is not a pain relief measure, some kind of aspirin to be used for the constant sufferings that we get one after another, like the waves of the ocean. Every time a wave comes, we try to sit behind a ‘spiritual’ rock and try to challenge
it. That is not considered a spiritual practice according to Bud-
dha. Unless and until you have the firm desire to free yourself
once and for all from all sufferings, dealing with the problems
that we face life after life, you are not considered to be on the
path. The path of accumulation does not begin until you have
this firm determination.

It is not good enough to be interested. There will be nobody who
says not to be interested in solving all problems of this and future
lives. But do we really have a strong desire? We don’t. This is be-
cause we have some kind of soft spot, or attachment, for the
samsaric joys, whatever they may be. This depends on the indi-
vidual. Some seek comfort in life. This could be success in a ca-
reer, or in making money, or anything. We use the word ‘suc-
cess’. If you try to translate that word into action, it seems to me
that everybody has a different reading of it. This is because we
have different attachments. To some people success means a big
name, popularity. To some it means a lot of money. To others it
means meeting lots of women – or boys, depending on your sex-
ual preferences. That indicates the different attachments that we
carry with us. All those attachments obstructs us from going be-
yond that level. Nobody is interested in having problems, every-
body wants to be free of problems. It also depends what you call
a problem. Attachment in a way will help you to succeed in
whatever you are looking for. But it will also hold you back from
cutting through it and going beyond that level and to be free of
attachment and seeking total freedom from all problems from all
different angles.

We are all interested, however we don’t have a firm commitment.
There is a problem, there is a solution and these are our difficul-
ties. These are the reasons stopping us from getting to the first
path. We may not even perceive our attachment as attachment,
but because of it we have lots of troubles in our lives. There are
difficulties with ourselves, our companions, with society. The
major difficulties we have – apart from perhaps financial prob-
lems –, particularly emotional difficulties, like relationship prob-
lems, are there because of attachment. It does not seem to work
like that. To us it appears as if attachment supports our wishes,
but in reality it is the real cause of our difficulties. When psychologists and therapists say that they want to get to the bottom of the problem, then this really is the bottom of the problem. It goes beyond what has happened in your childhood, beyond what the bearded uncle did to you. I am not criticizing anybody, but this is the bottom line. This is the cause why people sit in a corner and say, ‘I don’t want to talk about it’ – all because of this, even extreme, powerful anger, so strong that you physically shake. We all know that people do that. If you did not have that bottom line problem, you would not have that anger.

So attachment is not only obstructing the individual from moving along the spiritual path, but is also obstructing him or her from having a good time. That is really true. And it is very hard to even see it as a problem, because we love it so much, we are attached to that. And it is very painful to even be ready to look at the problem and admit that one is oneself the creator of the problem. Don’t try, unless you are ready! Otherwise you will make the psychologists very busy. True, if you are ready, then you tackle it. You need enough wisdom to first of all see, then to pinpoint it and then do some surgical work on it.

On the Mahayana level it is different. When the bodhimind grows with you, you become a bodhisattva and that is the point where you enter the first path. Growing the bodhimind is not easy either. Everybody has some love and compassion – everybody. Some have idiot compassion, some have good compassion. But that is not enough to get bodhimind. Bodhimind is ultimate, unlimited, unconditioned love and compassion. All our idiot compassion is limited. The feelings of the ‘love and light’ seeking people are all conditioned and limited. Compassion without feeling and understanding the pain is not good enough to be compassion. You have to feel the pain that other people are going through. You don’t have to physically feel it, you don’t have to sit there and try to experience the same pain as somebody else. The feeling of sharing pain is to truly understand what the other person is going through and what they are trying to express. Even in the normal American language we say, ‘I am familiar with that.’ ‘I know how you feel’, etc., If you do know, then that is compas-
sion. To presume that you know is not good enough. When you really look closely you can see what problems people have. You can see that they are feeling bad and that they want to express that. They want to get better, but they just sit there, digging in. Some people will try to escape by doing something else, perhaps drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, sniffing cocaine, or whatever. People try to get away from the problem by doing something else. Not many people actually investigate the problem. They don’t ask, ‘What is this pain and where is it coming from and what exactly is it? Who is the one having the pain? How does it affect me? How do I perceive that?’ Not many people do that. We are either in the habit of escaping from it or just bearing it. We may just sit on it and wait for the time to heal it. If we do question the reason for our pain, we come up with quick and simplistic answers. We will say, ‘So and so did this to me’, or ‘I don’t know.’ If you dig down and look, you may not find a good reason why you should feel that way.

The Buddhist logical system of bringing about the wisdom of emptiness may be a useful point to apply here. But don’t overdo it, otherwise you will get into trouble. When you start looking for reasons, you will find various people you can put blame on, either yourself or others. But if you further analyze, for each one of these points of blame, finally you are not going to find any valid reason why you have to feel that way. Then you will begin to convince yourself that there is really no problem there. It is just delusion. I am not saying you don’t have pain. It is there, it is real, you feel pain. But it is real to ourselves, because it is relative truth. Absolutely it is not there. Relative truth serves all the purposes. Normally I say,

If you exist relatively, it is good enough to exist.
If you don’t exist absolutely, it is not good enough not to exist.

I have not said that for a long time. It sounds funny, right? But it is true. So relatively, if you feel the pain, it is good enough. It is real. However, it is dualistic. It is a delusion. If you look from the angle of wisdom, it is not there. It takes a lot of effort of analyzing and thinking to cut through. If you do, then you become sort
of a happy-go-lucky type of person. I don’t know if you want to be such a person. I do not mean it in a bad way.

I hope I have not done you a disservice, because if the individual is not ready and capable enough, then to say that it is all delusion can create misunderstanding. That is why normally we try not to talk about it. It is said,

If you do not know how to catch a poisonous snake, and you catch it in the wrong way, it can bite you.

So, things are real, but they are dualistic. That is the honest truth. If you look in that manner, if you really use your wisdom and search for the cause of your problems, rather than waiting for the time to heal them, or escaping and running away from them, take a step towards Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and take refuge. Don’t wait for the time to pass, but analyze and look carefully. Ask who experiences the suffering, what is it and where is it coming from. When I say that it is not real, that it is dualistic, I don’t mean to say that it is just a mental fabrication. I have to clarify that. I am not saying, ‘You just made it up in your mind’, that would be the wrong thought, the wrong perception. I am not saying that your pain is only a mental fabrication and that in reality there is no pain. I am not saying that at all. You are feeling bad, that is real. However, when you look deeply and analyze, you can cut through. You cannot come to the point where you can pin-point it and say, ‘This is it!’ You cannot pin-point it, because ultimately it is not there. It is real, you feel it, but in absolute reality – no.

[Everything] is just a combination of collected karmas, as well as circumstances – all of them jumbled together, and when the conditions become right, you experience that. The solution is to separate the conditions, trace the original one and find out the why and the where. You will not really find it. I don’t expect anybody to understand emptiness with regard to your emotional problems, however that is what I myself am looking for, when I have a mentally disturbed situation. Everybody will get abrupt sometimes, because we are not fully enlightened. We get that for short periods. It does not last long – in my case. I don’t want to
blow my own trumpet. I am quite a happy-go-lucky guy, so those conditions don’t last long for me at all – I just get over them. When it stays with me for longer than an hour or so, I try to analyze it straight away. Then I find that there is nothing, and I am convinced it is not there. Then I tell myself, ‘Why am I cheating myself?’ and from then on it does not bother me. When it comes up next time, I will say, ‘I found out last time, it is not there. Why am I digging in here? All right, okay then, forget it.’ That is fortunate enough.

You may consider such a person to be a bad human being, to be a happy-go-lucky person. But it does not mean that one does not take things seriously. You have got to take things seriously. You need the balance. As a balance you have to be abrupt and yelling and screaming, and love and compassion has to be there. Without it is ‘love and light’. The balance to ‘love and light’ is the compassion, caring for yourself and others. That will make your jaws a little longer and make you come up with funny statements, something that you have to do. That’s how you go about life, I believe. Thereafter, whatever the problem may be, it will not bother you much, it will prick you a little bit, like for a couple of minutes or an hour. You may be worried what to do, but after a while it does not haunt you any more. What surprises me is that people carry such things with them day after day, month after month, even year after year. It is totally stupid to me. I can’t really say it is stupid, because people are experiencing it. I better don’t say it. That is not my job.

So in Mahayana, when you become a bodhisattva, you enter the path of accumulation. (In Vajrayana, it is different, but we will talk about that at the Vajrayana weekends.) From that moment on, anything you do will be part of the path of accumulation. Until then it will not, because of your mental limitations. It shows you where you are on the path. Earlier I have said that people should generate a nice, strong, good motivation in the morning, compassion-oriented, love-oriented. Then, by eight o’clock, go into your office, business as usual, sharp, crude, whatever you have to be. And in the evening, you to dedicate it. The mind makes the difference. This is exactly what happens on the path of
accumulation. Your mental capacity of looking for total freedom makes everything you do part of the path of accumulation. If you don’t have that, you may do a million more things, but they still are not part of the path of accumulation. That is the difference.

One of the Tibetan teachers used to use snuff. It is the same as smoking cigarettes, it is the same tobacco, whether you snuff it with your nose or inhale it through the mouth. Somehow in the Tibetan culture, there is no big objection to snuffing tobacco, but still it is considered bad. People will hide. If you are in the presence of your teacher, or any respectable person, you go somewhere in a corner and take the snuff there. So one of the lamas started using it and someone saw it and said, ‘Ah, you are using tobacco, right?’ And the lama said, ‘The way you use tobacco and the way I use it is two different things. When I snuff in, I snuff in the sufferings of all the sentient beings. When I blow out, I blow out all my positive karmas. I am using tong len, while I am snuffing tobacco.’ Maybe he was just blowing his own horn, but maybe the mind of the individual makes it possible to do that.

One of the previous incarnations of my father, not the last recent one, was in the habit of hunting wild animals. Many people thought that it was terrible to go and shoot these poor, little animals, who were minding their own business up in the high mountains, especially when a well-known incarnate lama did that. They thought it was disgraceful. So the lama said, ‘All right, let me be disgraced.’ He went out shooting and got a deer. He had it brought to him and instructed the helpers, ‘You can use any flesh, but you must keep the skin and bones intact.’ So they did that and then the deer was completely eaten up. The lama then gave instructions to put the bones back into the skin, stretched the skin and then he put his mala inside that deer. He snapped his fingers and suddenly the deer got up and ran away. It was alive. Things like that happen. It can happen, when you cut through the basic form of attachment. When you cut through that, a lot of things can happen.

It is not necessarily the case, that bodhimind is developed before wisdom. It is also not necessarily the other way round. It depends
on the individual. It is said that it depends on the luck of the individual rather than on the intellectual capacity. It does depend on intelligence and luck both, but mainly on luck. If you are not lucky, then no matter how intelligent you may be, you will not break through. And if you are lucky, even limited intelligence can cut through. You need both. With intelligence I don’t mean the intellectual kind of intelligence which follows from education. I am talking about some kind of naturally-born wisdom plus wisdom developed through study. The naturally-born wisdom could be called ‘God-given’ in English. Actually we have brought that with us from our previous life, so it is in-born. Then you also need the developed intelligence. So we need both types. Developed intelligence can only do limited things. The naturally-born intelligence makes a big difference. Both of them depend on luck. If you are not lucky, you cannot make it. But if you are lucky, even though your intelligence may be mediocre, you will make it.

This in turn depends on the related efforts you put in: purification and accumulation of merit. These are the causes of this particular luck. Because of that, the whole practice is structured the way it is. It is simply directed to developing that luck. That is why the Vajrayana self-generation sadhanas are dealing with the physical and mental aspects of enlightened beings and your own individual physical and mental aspects. In your practice you try to bring these together, merge them, regard them as inseparable. This brings about tremendous amounts of luck and that’s why we are doing this. If you are not lucky, you will not make it. That is why spiritual practice has to be balanced. If you lose one side of the balance, you will not make it. That is the simple reason.

When you see the reality directly, you enter the path of seeing. In case you have developed the path of seeing first and then develop the bodhimind later, what happens to that bodhisattva? That bodhisattva will automatically join the third path, that of seeing and by-pass the first and second paths, the path of accumulation and the path of action. This is because the wisdom was developed before the bodhimind. So you get a helicopter lift, rather than driving through. That’s how it works on the bodhi-
sattva path. There are a couple of verses in Nagarjuna’s *Precious Garland of Good Fortune* which refer to that. It says that certain bodhisattvas will develop the wisdom before developing the bodhimind. It then says that in that case the bodhisattva will directly join the path of seeing.

*Questions and Answers*

Audience: You were talking about analyzing one’s causes of sufferings, emotional states, delusions, etc. It is also taught that when one sees that delusions cause suffering, to develop regret. Should one, after that, continue to analyze the feelings associated with the regret as well?

Rinpoche: The purpose of the regret is not to repeat the negative action. When that has registered with you, then you don’t have to do anything else. I make a big difference between regret and feelings of guilt. Regret is a nice, wonderful thing. It will contribute to making you a nice person. It will help you to improve. Guilt does not do that. It makes you miserable, hopeless and helpless. That is totally useless. There is no such a thing as hopeless and helpless. The simple reason is that all things are impermanent. Bad situations are impermanent. Bad conditions are impermanent. They change. We all know that. We have all had experiences of joy, we have all gone through difficulties. Nothing lasts, it goes away, because the nature of reality is impermanent. The situation may look like it is hopeless and helpless, but it will change, because it is impermanent. So guilt is something that I don’t buy at all. People like to lay a guilt trip on others, trying to make them feel bad. That is a very bad, mean thing to do. If you succeed in that, you are unfortunate. If you don’t succeed, you are lucky. Guilt feeling does not mean anything to me. If I made a mistake, it is bad, sure. I have caused suffering to someone, I regret it, I will not do it again. I try to change my character. It is not easy; we do repeat certain actions a number of times, because it is habitual. But it does not matter, try to change. Recognize that the action causes suffering for others, have a mind that wants to change. That is good enough. The purpose of the regret is served and there is nothing beyond that. It is impermanent. Just say ‘Good-bye’ to the guilt and move on. And if you want to get
yourself stuck, then that is your choice. It is like the pigs who think that the slums of Calcutta are a wonderful place to be. It is your choice. And with your intelligence you have to tell yourself, ‘If I am not stupid, who else is?’ I welcome regret and reject guilt.

Audience: Which type of bodhimind is required to get onto the first Mahayana path? The aspiring bodhimind or the actual bodhimind?

Rinpoche: You need the actual bodhimind. The bodhimind is the doorway to the Mahayana, and taking refuge makes you a buddhist. When bodhimind develops, you become a bodhisattva. Taking vows and doing the bodhimind in prayer form and doing inspirational practices are nice things, but I don’t think that makes you a bodhisattva. (Technically I am not supposed to say this, because we lose our bodhisattva vow business. It is bad business tactics. Just joking).

Audience: But you said at one point that certain bodhisattvas can develop the wisdom of emptiness before developing bodhimind.

Rinpoche: Oh, I see what you are getting at. You are right. I should have said, ‘There are certain persons who can develop the wisdom of emptiness before developing bodhimind. They will, when they develop the bodhimind, become bodhisattvas and join the path of seeing straight away.’ You are right, I surrender. You caught me, right?

Audience: I want to develop spiritually, and I am interested in Buddhism as a path. But I have a certain personal resistance to following a program dogmatically.

Rinpoche: It might even be true. What I do, I don’t look at the program and whether it is dogmatic. I look at the spiritual path as some kind of struggle between the negative and positive. It is a fight on the battlefield of my own mind. Who is going to win? The negative or the positive? So far, the negative has been winning. What we are today is clearly telling us that the negative side has been winning. So we want to change that and let the positive side win. Simply look from that angle. Which direction am I going? Which influences me more? The negative or the positive actions? I don’t think there is a different presentation of negative...
and positive actions by the different religions and traditions, I mean the great, well-established religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, etc. They seem to have a very similar viewpoint of negative and positive. How to deal with that is different. You don’t have to depend on the doctrine that much at all. Go beyond the doctrine, nakedly deal with the positive and negative thoughts and emotions. Analyze their influence. See yourself responding to them. That is what I do. You don’t need to rely on doctrine for that, unless you come to a point where you are confused about whether an emotion is positive or negative. But that is a subtle level. On the gross level we don’t have that problem. On the gross level the action seen by the naked eye is enough to make your own judgement. That might be a solution. At least that is what I try to do. The other thing that may be helping me is that I really don’t know anything about Judeo-Christian doctrine or Hinduism for that matter. I know only one thing.

Audience: When you were talking about searching for the cause of our negative emotions and not being able to find them, I assume this points to the non-inherent existence of them. That means in the big picture there is nothing there, but in the little picture there is?

Rinpoche: Even in the little picture it is impossible to point out, ‘This is it.’ It is all collective, interdependent existence. It is a simple, straightforward search and if you keep going, you won’t find it. There are two ways of not finding it. One is by not looking properly, and the other is by looking properly and thoroughly and then not finding it. What you need is the second one. You have to get convinced that it is not there. When you are really convinced that the condition causing you pain is not there, then all the problems and pains you are experiencing are just like that too – they are gone. Just like that. You turn around and they are gone.

Audience: So in the end there is nothing there in itself, it is all just conditions coming together.

Rinpoche: Yes, and then you work on those conditions. You cut the ears off, you cut the nose off, and you will not recognize the person. That is called ‘laser beam surgery.’ I think only fortunate
people can do that, not everybody. Firstly, people think you are crazy and secondly, if they tried they would not succeed. Unless you are fortunate enough, you will not succeed. You have to seriously look for the object of negation and not just pretend you are looking and quickly conclude that you did not find it. That is easy to do, but won’t get you the results. It is like Trungpa said, ‘If you don’t know how to meditate, you may try to copy the person next to you. You can quite easily copy their physical posture, but the mental aspect you can’t.’

VI

The path of seeing is divided into two categories: actual seeing itself and aftermath. Actual seeing is seeing the true reality. You already begin to see the true reality on the path of action. This is divided into four levels, called: heat, peak, patience and best of Dharma.

This last one is called ‘best of Dharma’ because that is the best level you can achieve as an ordinary being. It is not the best you can achieve in samsara, because the path of seeing and the path of meditation themselves are still within samsara. According to the Hinayana system, you only escape samsara on the path of no more learning, that is when you become an arhat. Whether you are an arhat with remainder or an arhat without remainder is a different issue. Even the arhat with remainder has still something to do with samsara. On the path of seeing you become an extraordinary being, an Arya. So the dividing line between the path of action and path of seeing is whether you are an ordinary being or an extraordinary being.

The level of best of Dharma is serving as the preliminary level for the path of seeing. It brings you closer to the truth. As an ordinary being you are on the level of best of Dharma and when you really see the emptiness, you become an extraordinary being. Seeing the reality means seeing it directly, face to face. It is the direct encounter with reality. Because of that, you also have the direct encounter with yourself, and with consciousness, and there is no more mystery left. Is that the best possible achievement? No, but still, basically the mystery is solved. That is why it is
called path of seeing. During that meditative level you are completely absorbed in emptiness or the true reality. Nothing else exists for that mind at that moment. You do not perceive anything, you do not conceive or conceptualize anything else. You are completely and directly absorbed in emptiness, that is why this state is called ‘like water poured into water.’ This meditative state is non-dual, because there is nothing else that exists for that perception. That does not mean that nothing exists outside of that mind. But in that meditative state, when you are completely absorbed in the nature of reality, you see nothing else. So the actual path of seeing is total absorption in the nature of reality. This has no obstacle, no dualistic mind, no delusion. You don’t even see anything else. Because of that the Heart Sutra says, ‘There is no eye, no ear, no nose, etc.’ It is not saying that the person does not have eyes, ears and nose, but one does not see one’s own nose, because of total absorption in reality.

As a result of that, in the period of aftermath, the person does have some difficulty adjusting. The walls move away, and you walk through them; the doors may be locked, but you can walk in; nothing physical can block you. You have seen the nature of reality, therefore the ordinary expressions are no longer working for you. But you have to learn to adapt to the normal behavior of human beings. That is why the aftermath is another difficulty. In the *Lama Chöpa* it says:

> Outer and inner phenomena are like illusions, like dreams, like reflections of the moon in a clear lake, for though they appear, they do not truly exist.

In the aftermath, you begin to see everything like the reflection of the moon in a lake, rather than like the moon itself. You see things like a magician’s show or like a dream. Since you have cut through the true existence, you have seen that everything does not truly exist, therefore it exists like a reflection of the moon in a lake, etc. So in the aftermath, everything appears as unreal, as not true. That is why the individual can walk through walls, the walls will not block the individual, nothing will stop you. If you let it fly, you will probably lose everything. You may not lose yourself, but you may become a crazy guy. So the aftermath is the time, in
which you have to train yourself to adapt. That is why the verse says that though phenomena appear, they do not truly exist. You realize that things do not truly exist, but exist like an illusion. But now you have to build up the relativity within that, so that you can function like a normal human being. That is why the path of seeing is divided into two: the direct absorption and the aftermath. The aftermath is the time to adapt to the new reality you have encountered.

Sometimes, when you go into retreat for a while, and then come out, you get disoriented. I had to do that once. I went to Lake St. Claire, where Ruby has a cottage, to do a retreat. It was just for a very short time. I had to get out before the lake completely froze over or stay until winter was over. I chose to get out before Matthew came to pick me up and I was sitting with him in a restaurant at the other side of the lake and I was completely lost. I could not put things together. That is the little time you need to adjust to the aftermath of a small retreat – just a little disorientation. But at the level of aftermath of the path of seeing you get a very strong disorientation.

I will use now some terminology that is not usually used. You need to hear it expressed differently sometimes, because it is about an unusual state. The true reality of existence is really shy towards you, because all this time we have been lied to by existence, we have been cheated, we have been taken in by delusions. But the ultimate lie can no longer remain, it has been busted at this moment. Because of that, all existence is shy, therefore things do no longer appear in the same way as before. Therefore, if you want to, you can walk through the walls, the walls move. You can do all sorts of things. Without the help of architects and engineers you can expand and shrink your whole house. All this becomes possible at that level, because the ultimate lie has been busted and is shy towards the individual. The relative existence is shy towards the individual, it can no longer face that individual. Now that individual will have some difficulty to adjust. You cannot walk around and tell people, ‘Hey, I am an extraordinary being now.’ It is not going to work like that.
It is also possible to do what Milarepa did. He once entered a yak horn, without shrinking his body or expanding the yak horn. He was sitting right in the tiny point of the yak horn. It used to be very difficult to explain to people, but since we now have computers, you can see it: a tiny, little window can open up a whole universe; it is all there. The only issue is whether the individual is capable enough to open that window. It is there, it is reality. If the individual is capable of finding his way in, the window will open and the whole world will open to you. There is a whole different reality in there, with everything in it. Within the small, little atoms of a single universe you can see the whole universe existing, because that is the reality. The only thing blocking it is the un-truth. When you really see the truth, the lie is busted. When it is busted, it is shy towards you, and it can no longer block you. During the concentrated level of the path of seeing, you are in total absorption. At that level you see nothing, you hear nothing, you smell nothing, you touch nothing, you feel nothing – you are totally absorbed in emptiness. In the aftermath, everything functions, but differently.

Then, learning to adapt to the aftermath situation and entering again and deeper into the concentrated phase of meditating on emptiness – the combination of these is done on the path of meditation, which is divided into nine different levels, which in turn have a lot of subdivisions. It is almost like computer software. You open one window and there is another program within that. You open another window in that program and you get another program, and so on. That is how the nine different levels work.

So when the big lie is busted, the relative reality feels shy, embarrassed, because it lied to you all this time. Because of this, the walls are tumbling down, they no longer work, and that is how you can cut through. Physically, literally, you walk through the walls. That is how Milarepa got into the small yak horn. And now the computers tell you, how a small, little atom can have a whole universe in it, and it can open up one after another, endlessly. That is one of the reasons why there is no single point, at which you can arrive, saying, ‘This is it.’ No matter how subtly you ana-
lyze it, there will always be another division. That is why Bud- 
dha’s way of expressing reality is different from any non- 
Buddhist. He never accepted a final, smallest item, which would 
be the ‘last of all’. There is no such thing as ‘last of all’. If you 
keep on dividing, you can go on forever, you can find the tiniest, 
smallest atom, but even that can be further divided. Buddha said 
that you can never reach the point, where you can say, ‘This is 
the last one. There is no more’. That is why the single atom 
which cannot be divided [Tib. du ten sha me] was never accepted. 
This is talking about material reality, which gives you the coun-
terpart of the spiritual reality. Within the tiniest, little thing, every-
thing is possible. That is why external blocks are a lie, a delusion, 
dualistic. People often use that word out of context. They love 
that word, but they use it out of context and for different pur-
poses. Through that it loses the value.

Questions and Answers

Audience: Is the path of seeing a point that one cannot fall back 
from? In other words, when one has reached the path of seeing, 
then dies and gets reborn, will one meet the path again and con-
tinue where one has left off sometime in that next life?
Rinpoche: No. Once you have become an Arya, an extraordinary 
person, you will be free from illness and death. That means, you 
are free from delusion-oriented, uncontrolled, unmanageable ill-
ness and death. Therefore such a person no longer takes rebirth 
through the force of negative karma and delusion. He or she is 
totally free from that. With that, the basis of your question is de-
stroyed.
Audience: So when such a person chooses to be reborn as a hu-
man, will they have this view of reality from birth on?
Rinpoche: They should, at least by the age of seven. You are 
touching here on the issue of reincarnate lamas.
Audience: Will their experience of reality be entirely different 
from that of ordinary beings?
Rinpoche: It is supposed to be. According to the Buddha, every-
body will be reincarnated. But the reason reincarnate lamas are 
considered more important, is because of that. The only reason
why they are coming back is because of their compassion and commitment.

Audience: But since they are reborn, let’s say in a human body, that is within the karmic system. So there will be the appearance of suffering. Is there also the experience of suffering?

Rinpoche: In reality, there might not be. In case of a true incarnate lama, there might not be.

Audience: But not every person who has achieved the path of seeing is referred to as incarnate lama, are they?

Rinpoche: Not necessarily, but the achievement of the path of seeing is the basis for the incarnate lamas. People who have achieved the path of seeing, are in reality incarnate lamas. They may not have been recognized as this or that tulku. They might not have been labeled.

Audience: But does such an individual know who they are the reincarnation of?

Rinpoche: They are supposed to. That is as far as I go.

Audience: Can someone, who in the previous life time has obtained the path of seeing, ever forget that in the next life?

Rinpoche: That is a big question. You have just seen the reality. You are not going to fall back into lower realms, but whether you can retain that knowledge as current knowledge, I am not sure. I don’t know the answer for that. You probably need to perfect that realization. That is why there is a whole further path to travel, before you become fully enlightened. That must be the reason for the path of meditation. Even in terms of the six paramitas, the transcendental actions, you are just beginning to touch them on the path of seeing, you have not gone beyond. So whatever you have done on the path of seeing you have to repeat again lots of time on the path of meditation. That is what the whole path of meditation is about, all the different levels of small small, medium small, big small, etc. It is the total repetition of the alternating experiences of concentration on emptiness and aftermath.

Audience: Is the achievement of the Theravadin path of seeing the level of an arhat?
Rinpoche: No, the level of the arhat comes through the achievement of the path of no more learning. On the path you seeing, you become an Arya, an extraordinary being, in Theravada as well as the Mahayana path.

Audience: You were saying that certain people on the Mahayana path can have the direct perception of emptiness before attaining bodhicitta and because of that, skip the first two paths and go directly to the path of seeing. In the teaching on the GATE GATE mantra you said that the achievements of wisdom cannot be measured by looking from the wisdom point of view, but can only be measured from the method point of view. The example was birds flying through the sky and leaving no trace, but one can establish their progress from the level of the ground.

Rinpoche: The inability to measure the progress in wisdom from the wisdom point of view refers to the path of seeing and onwards.

Audience: During the GATE GATE teachings you also said that it can be dangerous to achieve direct perception of emptiness before making progress with the compassion-oriented aspects of the path?

Rinpoche: I don’t think I said that. I may have mentioned that there are certain intelligent people – actually fortunate people – who may encounter emptiness directly way before they achieve the bodhimind. If that happens, such a person, when they do achieve the bodhimind, will go directly to the third path and skip the first two paths. Until they have achieved the bodhimind, however, they are not yet on the Mahayana path. Whatever they have achieved so far, is a Hinayana path. Whoever develops bodhimind, becomes a bodhisattva and is therefore on the Mahayana path, and when such a person had achieved the direct perception of emptiness prior to that, he or she will go directly onto the third path, skip the first two. Referring to the danger that was mentioned, in the early stages of the practice, if one puts too much emphasis on the wisdom, before making progress with the method-related aspects of the path, there is a danger. This is what I said:
If you do not know how to catch a poisonous snake, and you catch it in the wrong way, it can bite you.

If you look at the emptiness wrongly, it can be like trying to catch a poisonous snake. The result is that you can get killed. A person who says millions of mantras, but with a mean mind, will get no good results from saying all these mantras. If in such a frame of mind you get angry while saying mantras, instead of helping you, they may harm you.

Audience: You have said that even on the path of seeing there are still karmic imprints.
Rinpoche: Even on the enlightened level there are karmic imprints. Some people will try to tell you that they are free of karma. That is bullshit. Even the fully enlightened beings, like Buddha and Avalokitesvara, all the yidams, deities, gurus, etc, are not free of karma. They have only positive karma. That is why they are such great beings.

Audience: Do you think that everyone is created equal?
Rinpoche: I think that everyone is not created. But I think every being is equal.
Audience: How can there be beings, if nothing is created?
Rinpoche: You just pop up.
Audience: Equally?
Rinpoche: The only difference is that some are a little taller, some are shorter, some are fatter, some are thinner.
Audience: Who says that?
Rinpoche: We all say that.
Audience: We all say that some are fatter, some thinner, and so on?
Rinpoche: That’s true. You look around and you can see everybody.
Audience: Does that happen equally?
Rinpoche: I don’t know, everyone is different, some are shorter, some are taller, some have less hair, some have more.
Audience: But are we not equally important?
Rinpoche: Equally important, yes, sure.

Audience: Is there just one lie, is there just one bubble to burst?
Rinpoche: When the big bubble bursts, all other smaller ones will just disappear. They are all under the wing of the one big bubble. I believe that is how the spiritual path really works. The struggle we have is whether we want to get away from that lie or want to remain within it. All the push and pull is because of that. That one thing causes all difficulties. Sometimes people want to be alone. At other times they want to socialize. Sometimes you want to hide in your cocoon and sometimes you want to get out there openly. All this in and out, back and forth, etc, all the difficulties we are having in life is because we could not bust the one big lie within ourselves. But we can’t say that too early, because it would cause trouble for the people. People will definitely misinterpret that. The whole idea of over-romanticizing the theory of emptiness ends up in senselessness. You lose the sense, and after a little while you think it does not matter, whether you have gold or sand, because it is dust anyway, gold dust or sand dust. You don’t care whether you are tied up by iron chains or gold chains, because in any case, you are tied up. In a way it is true, but in another way it makes a big difference whether somebody gives you a handful of gold dust or a handful of sand. It makes a big difference, although it is just dust.

Over-romanticizing will go out of the line, not differentiating between gold dust and sand. That is why we don’t want to talk too much about that, as long as the whole Lam Rim has not been studied and one has not heard about the path of seeing. Therefore we only recently have come up with the teachings of Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha and now the teaching on the five paths. That is a nice way of coming through and busting the big lie. We could teach that earlier, but we don’t want to encourage over-romanticizing. You know, in the sixties, some people went to the travel agent with a hand full of pebbles, saying that they wanted to buy air tickets; they insisted that they had the same value as dollars. That is over-romanticizing the meaninglessness and the busting of the great lie. You end up saying that everything is the same, that nothing matters, because ultimately everything is equal, everything comes down the zero level. You know, people do that.
Audience: Where does the level of ‘boundless joy’ fit in?
Rinpoche: The first bhumi, ‘boundless joy’, which coincides with the path of seeing, is only available on the Mahayana path. Literally it means *sa tang me rab to gawa* – very, very happy place.

Audience: On the path of seeing you cut out all negative karmic results. Therefore there is no return in samsara through karma. I can understand that bodhisattvas can return through compassion and commitment. But in the case of the Theravadin level, what happens to that person after this lifetime?
Rinpoche: In order to understand that, you have to know the four result-levels of the Theravadin path: Stream Enterer, Once Returners, Never Returners, No more Learning.

I am not sure whether the level of stream enterer coincides with the path of seeing of the Theravada level or not. But in any case, Once Returner means that you have to be reborn one more time to complete the path. Never Returner is the level where you can, if you don’t die before, achieve the level of an arhat in that very lifetime.

When you become an arhat in this life time, then your body, which is part of the First Noble Truth, the Truth of suffering, and therefore is a result of negative karma, is still with you. This is called ‘with remainder’. When you die with that body, there is no more left over and that is called ‘ultimate arhat level’. According to the Theravada doctrine this is like when a candle burns down and finally blows out. There is no more candle light, all the wax is gone too, all you get is a little bit of smoke and that will also disappear. Nothing is left. The body is dismantled, therefore all feelings are also gone. Because of that, there is no more cognition, and because of that, even consciousness disappears. There is nothing left over. That is called the ‘ultimate level of no more learning’. It is all dispersed somewhere. The Mahayana will call this level ‘ordinary enlightenment’, while Theravada will call it simply ‘enlightenment.’ In the Mahayana there is still the extraordinary enlightenment to come. So the Mahayana does not accept the viewpoint that nothing remains. They say that, when you reach that level, you may stay in meditative equipoise for centu-
ries or eons, however, one day the Buddhas and bodhisattvas will come and wake you up and highjack you by helicopter to the path of seeing of the Mahayana path.

That is why in Buddhism there are two different focal points. One stream will say that ultimately there is only one vehicle or yana. The other will say that ultimately there are three yan as. That is why you have different schools of philosophical viewpoints in Buddhism. The lower schools, the Vaibashikas and Sautrantikas, will accept that there are ultimately three yan as. The Mind Only school [Chittamatra] and the Central Path Schools [Madhayamika] only accept one ultimate vehicle. This question is an important focal point of Buddhist theology. Before Dan Lopez took up his current position at the University of Michigan, they asked him to speak on this point: whether there is one yana or several. That subject is discussed in all streams of Buddhism.

Audience: I have heard about inner heat, or tummo. Is it useful to think about that in the context of the path of action and the level of heat, etc.?
Rinpoche: It is irrelevant here. It has nothing to do with the path of accumulation or the path of action. It may have something to do with the path of seeing, but mainly with the path of meditation.

Audience: I have a more technical comment to make. Perhaps the terminology of ‘path’ is not the best possible one to use for the five paths. It suggests that there could be five different paths leading to the same goal, whereas in fact it is more like one path, with five different levels of subtlety. I don’t know whether ‘path’ is the literal translation from the Tibetan.
Rinpoche: I don’t know, I am not really translating, I am just talking from the top of my head.

*The five paths in reverse*

With regard to the Mahayana five paths, total enlightenment is achieved on the path of no more learning. In order to get there, you have go through the path of meditation. That does not mean meditation in the way that we normally meditate. On that level
you do a particular type of meditation. In order to get to the path of meditation, you have to meditate on true reality. In order to be able to do that, you have to know what true reality is. This is what you find out on the path of seeing. At that level you will be free of karmic forces, you have total control over your life. The capability to reincarnate by choice is developed at this level.

You do not necessarily have to reborn to achieve that, but the ability comes with the achievement of the path of seeing. Good, true reincarnate lamas should be at that level, not people like me, but the real ones, not the phony ones. In order to reach this, you have to complete the path of action which is divided into four: heat, peak, patience and best of Dharma.

The way it works on the path of action is through generating heat. It is an old, 2500-year old metaphor. If you try to make a fire by rubbing two pieces of wood against each other, you have to rub very hard. Through that, you generate heat. That is not yet enough to develop sparks or generate smoke. You have to rub harder, you have to go to the peak level. Even then you do not quite get a fire, so you have to be patient and work hard. That is the level of patience. Then you will get the best possible heat. After that you can burn the delusions. That is why we talk about heat, sparks, etc. It relates to the burning of the delusions – that is the true exorcism. In order to even get to the level of heat, we have to accumulate merit, which happens on the path of accumulation.

That, in brief, is the description of the five paths in reverse. Karma is a basic, fundamental natural law governing all this. The higher positive karma brings the individual to these different levels.

VII

We have been talking on the subject of the five paths from two different angles: first by using the mantra OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA and then by going through the subdivisions of each of the Five Paths. We hope that through this process everybody will get quite a stable grounding.
Discussion on emptiness, relative and absolute truth

Audience: When you talk about relative reality, what do you mean by that?

Rinpoche: Wonderful question. I will pass that on to the group.

Audience: Basically, relative reality is everything I experience, whatever happens, having to pay my bills, getting into trouble, etc.

Rinpoche: True. Why is it called ‘relative’ reality? Because it is not dealing with the absolute nature of things, which is their emptiness. However, it is reality, and therefore it is called ‘relative truth’, or ‘relative reality’. It is not relative in the normal sense of the word, when we are comparing things, but in the sense that it is very real to us, who are on the mundane path. We have not encountered absolute reality. We may be experiencing duality, it may not be the absolute truth, however, it is real, it is functioning. That is why Buddha introduced the two truths. People think truth can only be one, it has to be either this or that. That is our everyday common sense. Buddha goes beyond that. According to him there is the relative truth and the absolute truth, and both are accepted as truth. Although it is dualistic and not true in the absolute sense, it is real and effects us. It makes a huge difference to us, It is not only whether you are happy or sad, it is even more than that. It determines whether we go towards enlightenment or in the opposite direction. That is why it is called truth, relative [or conventional] truth. On the mundane level, which is the only one that we ordinary people know, we are only exposed to the relative truth, not to the absolute truth. So for us, the relative truth is absolutely real. However, it is relative, because it is not absolute.

Audience: What distinguishes relative reality from samsara?

Rinpoche: Relative reality is samsara. Absolutely samsara does not exist. Relatively it exists, so it is good enough to be existent. I am coming back to my previous statement: ‘If you exist relatively, it is good enough to be existent.’ Samsara is relativity, it is not absolute. There is also the absolute truth of samsara, but samsara exists only relatively.
Audience: I was assuming that the Buddhas’ minds would not be samsaric, that they would not be in samsara, but that they are dealing with relative reality. So I thought that samsara and relative reality were not exactly synonymous.

Rinpoche: They are not synonymous. When you reincarnate as a Buddha in samsara, you deal with samsara. But your mind is not a samsaric mind. So you deal with the relative truth. The purpose of Buddha incarnating in samsara is to deal with the beings. So he deals with the relative level. I don’t think he deals much with the absolute level.

When a meditator on the path of seeing is completely absorbed in his concentration and has no dualistic perception or dualistic conception, when there is no observer and nothing to be observed, when there is no mind observing and no subject to be observed, the observer, the observation and the object of observation all become oneness. Oneness means there is no separation between the person observing and the object of observation. That is called ‘non-dual state’. In that moment, at that stage, at that level, there is no separation. The mind will not acknowledge anything else besides the subject or object it is absorbed in. Nothing else exists. Nothing else is recognized, not even the observer. At that level, you don’t go to some place external to yourself and watch yourself. You don’t make that step. You are in oneness. In our usual state we are in duality. There is the observer, the object, there are interruptions, we go from one object to another. However, that is also true. It is the relative truth. Absolute truth is non-duality – without separation of subject and object. There is only absorption in the one object and even the observer is not acknowledged.

People think that the absolute truth is true, and that therefore the relative truth cannot be true. They think that in absolute reality nothing exists, that it is all absolutely zero. That is wrong. Then you are ignoring the relativity. When you lose the relativity, you lose the truth. From the ordinary level up to the path of no more learning, in your practice you alternate between the two truths. When you are on the absolute level, you are absolutely absorbed and have no other outside observation. But outside of that absorption, you are in the relative truth level. That is the
stage of the aftermath, or post-meditation level. All the other realities will come up. You may have a little difficulty of disorientation. However, you get used to that. Then again, you go into the meditative state. You can only alternate, you cannot function in both realities together. On the level of a Buddha, or even at the level of an arhat, you do not have to alternate. Both, absolute absorption and relative experience, are adjusted. One does not block the other. You have trained and learnt to bring the two truths together. Even on the non-tantric path you can call that ‘union’. It is the union of the absolute and relative. They can function together. Yet in the mind of absorption itself, in the mind that directly encounters emptiness, relativity is not acknowledged. That is maybe too detailed right now. In Tibetan this is called pak pai nyam sha yeshe gi sing nor. That means that within that mind of absorption itself, you don’t have relativity. That maybe a very subtle theological or philosophical difference, but that is what really happens. Unless you are on the path of no more learning, you can only alternate. The path of no more learning is the experience of union.

Out of the two truths, right now we only see the relative truth. It makes sense to us, it has become the reality for us. It is however not absolutely real, because it is dualistic. On the absolute level, nothing exists. That however does not matter, because relatively everything exists and that is good enough. In the experience of absolute truth all other levels of truth are blocked completely. Even when you read very intensely, you don’t notice anything else. You don’t hear people say something and you don’t see things moving. It is not that you have lost your hearing or your eye sight, however, your strong absorption temporarily blocks your seeing and hearing. Your physical and mental faculties have not been reduced, but your focus is too strong, that is why you don’t hear or see anything. When the absorption is very strong, other things don’t exist in your particular world at this point in time.

Audience: If by nature, we don’t have a self, then what is that thing that recognizes the selflessness, if it is not really there?

Rinpoche: Who said that by nature we are not there? What does selflessness mean? Does that mean that there is no self? If you
tell me that you are not there, then I will get the one sitting next to you to pinch you, and we will find out.
Audience: I understand that I exist dependently. I depend on my eyes, ears, nose, etc.
Rinpoche: Are you saying then that blind people don’t exist, because they don’t have an eye consciousness? Then, are you going to say that blind or deaf persons, for that matter, are not human beings?
Audience: Right now I seem to exist separately from this bookshelf for example.
Rinpoche: I can see that too. You have to reach over there to knock on it.
Audience: But I am not supposed to exist independently from it.
Rinpoche: Okay, we can break that bookshelf down and destroy it and then see whether you still exist or not. If that shelf is broken, what would happen to you? Is that going to effect you? You will still be there, right? So you don’t depend for your existence on that bookshelf.
Audience: I will still be there, but if the bookshelf is destroyed, it will effect me relatively.
Rinpoche: How? You feel sad about it?
Audience: No, but someone will have to make another one.
Rinpoche: But that has got nothing to do with you.
Audience: I think it has.
Rinpoche: Why? I think we are getting into trouble a little bit with the dependent origination. For me, in order to see, perceive, observe and project that bookshelf as a bookshelf, I depend on that bookshelf as well as on myself. We have the observer and the object of observation. But if I am not observing the bookshelf, but I observe you, then the bookshelf has nothing to do with that. Neither I nor you depend on the bookshelf at that time. Whether the bookshelf is there or not, we will still exist. Our observation of other things will not be effected at all. But you as the observer of the bookshelf, when the bookshelf is taken away, are not there any more either. You depend for that on the bookshelf.

The body-mind connection, which can be called ‘self’, does not exist independently, because it depends on identity. I don’t mean
my driver’s ID, but my actual identity. When I lose that, it will
effect me. But do I still exist? I think I still do. Suppose, I die. I
lose my physical identity; however, I still exist. I will get a new
identity. Whether it is a different physical form or a mental form,
there will be a new identity. I have then lost the identity depend-
ent on that particular old body, but I have got a new identity
based on a new body. I will have a new driver’s license, a new
passport – everything new. The dependence, again, is very rela-
tive. Selflessness does not necessarily mean that there is no self.
As you have said yourself, it is the lack of an independent self. If
you keep thinking along lose lines, you will find the wisdom.

Audience: Does that mean then, that my emptiness and your emp-
tiness are different? I thought they would be the same emptiness?
Rinpoche: Your emptiness is yours and my emptiness is mine.
Your emptiness relates to you, my emptiness relates to me. But if
somebody wants to see my and your emptiness, they would not
have to work separately. If they see my emptiness, they also see
your emptiness and if they encounter your emptiness, they en-
counter my emptiness as well. They don’t have to realize them
individually.

If you see the true reality of one thing, you are bound to see
the true reality of all others.

You don’t have to work on each thing one by one. However,
there is a slight difference between the emptiness of self and the
emptiness of phenomena other than persons. On the level of
emptiness as an emptiness, if emptiness is the observed object,
there is no separation between your and my emptiness. But if you
have the focus on my emptiness and your emptiness, there is a
separation, because the relativity comes in. If you and me comes
up, it becomes relativity. So even in case of the absolute empti-
ness, the linkage with the relativity comes in. Therefore you have
separation.

Audience: Are you saying that different people experience emp-
tiness differently?
Rinpoche: I did not say that. We were not talking about my and
your different views of emptiness, just about my emptiness and
your emptiness. This the main point. Emptiness is not love and light. Emptiness is real. Therefore there is a general emptiness, there is your emptiness, there is my emptiness. That does not mean that my emptiness belongs to me, nor does your emptiness belong to you. The emptiness relating to you is your emptiness, the emptiness relating to me is my emptiness, and emptiness is emptiness. To see your emptiness is good enough to see my emptiness. You don’t have to work separately. Your emptiness is your emptiness and my emptiness is my emptiness, just as your head is yours and my head is mine.

Audience: Just relatively though?
Rinpoche: No, absolutely too! Absolutely, her head is not my head at all, otherwise I would have a woman’s head.
Audience: But absolutely, I don’t have a head, just as have no eyes, no ears, no tongue, etc.
Rinpoche: No, it is not that like that. You do have a nose, but you don’t have a non-independent nose. Your nose depends on your face. And we both have glasses dependent on our noses. When it is said in the Heart Sutra, ‘There is no eyes, no ears, no nose, etc.’, that does not mean that in absolute reality there is no eyes, no ears, no nose. It means that we don’t have a tongue that is non-dependent. We don’t have an independently existing nose. But in absolute reality we have a nose. If Cafe Tibet gives you an absolutely spicy momo, you will taste that. So in reality, you don’t have an absolutely existing tongue. You have to twist the words around.

Audience: So when two people individually perceive the emptiness of this or that, are they tapping into the same absolute truth?
Rinpoche: Yes. But do you feel the same way as I do? No, and that is really true. It may not make sense, but that is what it is.

Audience: So each individual experience of emptiness is unique for that individual, but emptiness is still emptiness regardless. We are experiencing the same thing, but from individual standpoints, which means what you experience would not be the same as what I experience. It depends on the angle of the individual seeing it themselves relative to their experience.
Rinpoche: Maybe you could say that, yes.
Audience: Could you explain the difference between emptiness and what people often call oneness or wholeness?
Rinpoche: For that I need to know what people mean by oneness or wholeness. The first time I heard ‘The One’ was in Dallas in 1977. They asked me to speak in a church. The minister who introduced me said, ‘I invited you to speak and share your experience with us, but there is one condition: The One must be preserved, you cannot touch ‘The One’. Since then, I have never understood what is ‘The One’.

Audience: In the early American transcendental philosophy of Thomas Payne and Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson there appeared this model called ‘Unity in Diversity’. The idea was that these things went together. If one things changes in the relative universe, everything changes. If one would understand relativity totally, one would go into the emptiness or wholeness.
Rinpoche: If you look in that way, emptiness is wholeness, in the sense that in the direct encounter during the meditative absorption stage, that emptiness you encounter is totally focused on whatever subject you have chosen. Let’s say you are totally focused on the [emptiness of] mind itself. It is not a projected emptiness, like what Trungpa calls ‘space-like emptiness’, where you observe nothing. I don’t think we are talking about that. We are observing the emptiness of something, with clarity. The most difficult is the emptiness of mind. If you lose the focus of the emptiness, or even lose the clarity of the focus, it is no longer a concentration on emptiness, but subtle dullness or sinking mind. It is subtle depression. The point is that meditation on emptiness has to be a lucid mind, yet observing wholeness. The mind observing emptiness has to be a very lucid mind. This is important. The traditional teachings give you the example of a fish swimming through very still, clear water, without disturbing it. This is the tricky part. If people think that emptiness is some kind of a vast sea of blankness, I think they are on the wrong track. In this case you would then have a problem where to stop, how to wake up, when to be active. When you keep the mind lucid and observe emptiness, it is an active state. The absorption in emptiness is active, not passive. The emptiness itself remains emptiness, but the
mind observing it is an active mind. It is active in the sense that it is working, it is clear, it is lucid, it is alert.

Audience: Emptiness and the phenomenal world surely must be connected in some way. It is hard for me to conceive that emptiness and suffering have nothing to do with each other. Can you search for emptiness through the relativity?
Rinpoche: Yes. True. You don’t look for emptiness by looking for zero, but by finding out how you exist. When you analyze that, you will find that you exist dependently. Therefore there is no independent ‘I’. That recognition itself is not emptiness, but it is one step forward.

It is wrong, however, to think that something inside of us will burst open and comprehend something more than we otherwise can. It is not going to happen that way. The wisdom which is searching, will pick up. You have to train yourself in observing it. You have to know the wrong way and the right way. If you notice you are doing it the wrong way, you have to withdraw and go through the right way. When you keep hitting continuously on the right point, then the understanding based on that will appear. You will get it. It is not as if something inside of you will open up and shine, but it is your internal work with these points that will make it happen. This is the difference. It takes time, energy, a lot of purification and built-up wisdom. In combination it works.

Audience: Why would I seek enlightenment, if there is no ‘I’?
Rinpoche: Nobody said there is no ‘I’, did they?
Audience: But the only ‘I’ that has any merit is the one that has the capacity to awaken to that process.
Rinpoche: That is what I tried to address in the discussion earlier when I asked ‘Who said that there is no self?’ After a while I thought I was a little too heavy-handed and softened my line.
Audience: But there is an ‘I’ which is ignorant of this and somehow that ‘I’ needs to be transformed and has to butterfly out of here at some point.
Audience: You are seeking enlightenment, because everything is interconnected with karma.
Audience: No, I am seeking enlightenment, because I am suffering.
Rinpoche: With the business of the interconnectedness, if you are not careful, you will go ‘love and light’. Don’t do it. It is one of those nice, old trips to ascribe everything to some universal, karmic interconnectedness, like a seven-day cruise through the universe in a karmic boat. We don’t want to take that trip. We don’t want to get on the ‘love and light’ boat.

The point is, something shines inside, or relatively you connect the outside to the inside, things open inwards, and when you are open, the true wisdom is a very alert wisdom. It is not a passive sea or cloud. It is participating, acting and alert, yet you don’t see anything else apart from what you really want to see and what you want to thrash out. You want to thoroughly observe and analyze it, with a very alert and active mind. The moment there is passiveness, it becomes subtle depression. The example given for that is when carrying a glass full of water, you have to move with care. That shows you that you need to be alert and active.

Audience: I seem to recall that last week, when the passage of the Heart sutra came up, saying, ‘no eye, no ear, no nose, etc.’ that you said that this means that at that moment none of these things appear to the mind.

Rinpoche: That is right. Earlier today I gave the answer that there is an eye, etc. but not an independent eye, ear, nose, tongue, etc. That is true. But it also true that during the absorption one will only see the observed object. Therefore they don’t see the eye, ear, nose, etc. So, at that moment, when the focus is on that particular object [in this case, emptiness of mind], you perceive no eye, no ear, no nose, no Doug...

Audience: So at that moment, is it an ordinary gross consciousness that is perceiving emptiness?

Rinpoche: Yes, the same mind that we usually have. The capacity develops, but it is the continuation of that same gross mind.

Audience: But the recognition of emptiness has to effect more than the gross consciousness, because the gross consciousness dies at death.

Rinpoche: You don’t have to die to perceive emptiness.

Audience: But you have said earlier that the path of seeing is a stage from which there is no fall-back. Once you have made that
connection with emptiness, that means, once you are an Arya, you remain an Arya. Your relationship with your samsara changes fundamentally thereafter.

Rinpoche: Does that ordinary, gross mind perceive emptiness? No. It has to be reduced and goes to the subtle level and the subtle mind is the main mind that perceives emptiness. That is because it does not see anything else. The moment you focus, you start to cut the gross level out. It is almost like at the dying stage, where all the gross levels fall away. The mind which is really observing is the subtle mind.

Audience: Does that mean that you develop shamatha and with that shamatha focus on emptiness which causes the subtle mind to arise, which then absorbs into the experience of emptiness?

Rinpoche: I do not know if the subtle mind arises. Shamatha is there already. Without shamatha you could not even see emptiness. But through that, because there are no distractions, the gross mind is cut out, which leaves only the subtle mind.

Audience: Is it the case then that the strength of your meditation on emptiness depends on the extent the gross mind is reduced to and how strong the subtle mind becomes?

Rinpoche: Maybe not. I think it depends more on how well the subtle mind is able to observe. That does not mean that the subtle mind has to become stronger. Rather all the other factors come in here, like the purification, the luck, etc.

Audience: Does that include the blessings of the lama?

Rinpoche: True, all of these together.

VIII

PATH OF MEDITATION

We have a chart of the paths (The original chart, on which Steve based his, was worked out by some of my teachers in India and is presented in one of Dagyab Rinpoche’s books.) The chart is structured into base, path and result, according to what level of practice people are on. Basically, until you reach a level where you really join the path, the period before that has been labeled ‘base’. It is the base on which we will build up the practice. At the moment we are nowhere. There is no development, we are just laypeople [non-specialists] on the base level. That goes for the Hi-
nayana and the Mahayana. In Vajrayana, you also have the divisions into base, path and result. Everything that we are using as an exemplary practice, like the ordinary death, bardo and rebirth, is called base. When you are actually entering the generation- and completion stages, you are on the path. When you finally get to the highest level, almost to the achievement of Buddhahood, you are at what is called result stage. Similarly, here there is the same kind of division.

If you take one step backwards, you have the practice of emptiness and acquaintance with emptiness. The practice of emptiness should equal the entrance to the path and the mundane paths, according to the chart.

Entering the path covers the path of accumulation of merit. It is the base stage as well as the entrance. In the beginning you go through what is called ‘mundane paths’, the beginning- or lay stages. This covers the path of accumulation and the path of action or preparation. These are mundane, ordinary or lay paths.

Above that, the path of seeing is called supreme or supermundane path. This is where the division is made between being an Arya or not being an Arya. Before you become an Arya you are on the mundane levels, thereafter you are on a supermundane level.

According to this chart, the path of seeing is divided into the absorption stage and post-meditation stage which we have called aftermath. To call it ‘illusion-like aftermath’ is correct, however in this context it has too much of a Vajrayana influence. So let’s stick to the terminology of absorption stage and post-meditation stage. After coming out of the absorption on emptiness, you are not absorbed any more, so again you perceive all the mundane or ordinary appearances.

Next comes the path of meditation. This is not only acquaintance with emptiness, but also a supermundane path. There should be nine divisions on the chart. Each of these represent one bhumi. Actually, translated from Sanskrit bhumi means ‘ground’, or ‘land’. So you are a landlord or land-owner.
In this context bhumi means stage. It shows that you have a certain kind of establishment. You are well-established and you can be on any of these nine stages. All of these nine stages have particular names. The first one is called ‘Extremely joyful’. This is at the level of the path of seeing. Then follow nine stages on the path of meditation. All these nine stages are divided into small, medium and great levels. Each one of these are further divided into initial, actual and final stages. Because of all these subdivisions it is good to be able to look at a chart. On the chart these are called initial, middle-final and final-final.

On the path of meditation you have seen the emptiness and you are fighting with the subtle delusions. All the gross delusions have been taken care of by then. On the meditative path you first encounter the gross delusions on the initial stage, then the middle level delusions on the middle-final stage, and on the strongest meditative path, the final stage, you are taking care of the subtle delusions. It is easier to cut out the gross delusions compared to the middle level delusions. The hardest to cut out are the subtle delusions. In order to cut the gross delusions you only need a small, weak or not fully matured meditative level. With that you can overtake and manage or handle the gross delusions. We may think that, when the delusions are gross, they are hard to handle and that it may get easier when we are dealing with the subtle ones. But it happens the other way round. The gross delusions are easy to handle, the subtle ones are much more difficult.

When we look at ourselves, when we handle our problems,— let’s say we deal with our anger, attachment or jealousy — sometimes we may feel that a particular delusion comes out so strong that we hardly can handle it. We felt that we were doing okay, until suddenly it became difficult. What really happened though was not that your delusion has become stronger, but that you have cut down the gross part of it and you are reaching now to the deeper down levels of the delusions. The deeper you go down, the more subtle it becomes. Sometimes we may even feel that we cannot handle it, that it becomes too strong. Again, it is not that the delusions become stronger, but because we are cutting deeper into them. That is why it is difficult to handle them. It is
like a stain in the wood. I have a funny stain in the wood floor in
the living room. There is a big jet-plant, which is watered regu-
larly and because of the green carpet people don’t notice when
the water spills onto the floor. Over some time the water has
soaked through the carpet and created a big stain in the wooden
floor. When you scratch it with a knife, the surface level of dirt,
paint and wood comes out very easily. Then, when you reach the
wood itself and want to remove the discoloring in it, it becomes
very hard.

It is like that with the delusions. The more subtle delusions are
much, much harder to get. They are deeper ingrained. They are
soaked deeper into our character. In the example I have given,
the stain almost became part of the wood. Likewise, the delu-
sions are very deeply ingrained in our consciousness. That is why
they are difficult to deal with. It is important to know that, oth-
wise you may think that it is getting harder and your delusions
are getting worse and you are defeated. In reality you are making
headway. The gross delusions are actually removed and you are
getting to their main stream. Finally, it is extremely difficult to
make it completely stainless. (In the case of the unwanted stain in
the wood, the carpenter would sand it down quite a bit, then
stain the wood new and polish it, rather than trying to get the
nasty stain completely out of the wood.) The last part of delu-
sions left with you are the subtle ones. The less matured medita-
tive levels challenge the gross delusions, then the middle level
challenges the middle ones, and finally the strongest, fully ma-
tured meditative levels will remove the last subtle delusions.

Although we ourselves are still only on the pre-path, whether we
are practicing the ‘common with the lower level’, the ‘common
with the medium level’, the Mahayana level or any of the mun-
dane paths, even on the initial levels we are dealing with the delu-
sions. Sometimes we make up our mind very strongly and decide
that we will do this and that. After a while we change our mind
and think that we may not be able to do this and that. This and
even much stronger and deeper battles go on within the individ-
ual. When you challenge that with your practice, you are remov-
ing the gross levels and you are probably cutting deeper into the
delusion-levels. That is why you clash. The second level of the delusions is harder to get rid off than the first level. Since we have not reached the level of no more fall-back, it seems to us that, as we work our way through more subtle levels of delusions, they are getting stronger and stronger. But with a part of your mind you will acknowledge and know and see what is really happening. That will be the clear indication that the delusion has not become stronger, but you are cutting deeper into it.

When you are getting to these difficult phases, it is necessary to practice even stronger, and not to become weaker. Simply realize that at the end of the process, it is going to be good and better for you. The problems we have are the ones that we have been having forever. They have been giving us nothing else but suffering. It is time for change – enough is enough. With these thoughts you make yourself stronger. And you have the opportunity, because you see it. Although you may feel that it is too difficult and you want to give up, you also know what you want to do, you know your direction, you are not lost, you clearly see the obstacles. The ability to see this is itself an encouragement and you also know that you are coming to a deeper level of the delusions, you know that you are through the gross portion of them. So try to be grounded.

There are a number of people who do not challenge the delusions, but instead just stick with the ‘love and light’. That is the term Trungpa chose for that condition. Within that frame of mind you are not dealing with the delusions. Any difficult points you prefer to avoid and you would like to be happy-go-lucky, sitting on a cloud and looking at nice things. People like to engage in chanting and singing. Instead of tackling the deeper problems, they switch the focus, they praise the Lord, or sing other devotional songs, or they throw themselves into a mantra retreat where the whole focus is put on how many mantras you can say. If you say mantras with strong concentration, while dealing with the delusions, then that is okay. But just simply chanting, singing and praying and saying mantras is perhaps not much better than ‘love and light’. It is not dealing with our situation. It is an attempt to avoid the deeper problems and try to live in between
somewhere. It is as good as smoking pot, trying to be high, or snuffing cocaine. It is very similar to that. You may not be using chemical substances, but you try to get into some kind of artificial semi-Dharmadhatu state. The real problem then is actually avoidance. Either you know the problem, but you cannot handle it, or you are afraid of handling it, so you just avoid it. There are different reactions for different reasons. You have room to move on the ‘common with the initial scope’, ‘common with the intermediate scope’, and even on the great scope, Mahayana, and on the mundane paths, you can do a little bit of this and that. But when you reach the path of seeing there is no more avoiding, you have to challenge the delusions.

Audience: Can you give some more concrete example of the more subtle levels of delusions?
Rinpoche: Strong anger or attachment will not give you any room to acquire knowledge about it. You don’t know what is happening. Even if you have some intellectual knowledge, you will forget it. You are not aware of it. The subtle anger is weaker; however, it has a greater effect on us, because it operates on a deeper level. At our stage it might not be strong enough to affect our meditative level. The subtle delusions manifest in different ways. Somehow the balance of our life is not completely smooth. It is not completely smooth anyway. What happens is, you see the problem but you cannot help it. As long as you are able to see and observe it, it is a clear indication that the delusion is not that strong, not that gross. It is a little more subtle and comes back all the time. If you then don’t oppose it, but let it take over, after some time, you will even have no more awareness of it all. When your knowledge of it has been forgotten, it has taken over. Your opponent has taken over. You have not yet developed an immunity. That will not develop until the level of patience on the second path. As long as you have the knowledge and the wish to do something about it, but you somehow can’t help it, you are dealing with the subtle and middle-level delusions. If you can’t manage, the trick here is the guru-devotional practice. It is the only key which makes it work. Somehow – I don’t understand how – that works. Tsongkhapa himself has said,
When you try to memorize the words, and you cannot do it.
When you try to think of the meaning of the words,
and you cannot think anything.
When you try to meditate, and nothing happens.
At that time you have to depend on the Supreme Field of Merit.

That is the me nga, the advice. In western language, you would say, this is the key, or the trick or the twist. You know, it is the final touch. It is knowing the right moment at the right point, knowing which button to push right at this moment, knowing exactly where the problem lies. In Tibetan we call such advice me nga. Some people translate that as ‘secret advice’, some as ‘whispered tradition’, and there are other translations. But it is the final touch which makes it work. Whenever you have problems with the bouncing back and forth of the delusions, switch your practice back to the guru-devotional practice and then try again. Don’t leave it there, don’t try to just get to joyful states – that would become ‘love and light’. You can leave it, but you must come back and try again, or try together with guru-devotion.

It is like this: Imagine you are having a fight with a couple of guys in the street. You are about to get beaten up and you realize that you are not going to manage. Then you run back home, get some help, go back and fight them again.

The Ten Bodhisattva Bhumis

Looking at the chart, we can see all the ten bodhisattva bhumis: Extremely Joyful, Thoughtless, Luminous, Radiant, Difficult to overcome, Forward facing, Far reaching, Immovable, Perfect Intelligence, Cloud of Dharma

These are the ten supermundane stages. Don’t let me talk about each of these stages, it would equal two years of full-time study in the monasteries. At least that is what it was for me. Each one of these stages has a preliminary, actual and aftermath stage. So it becomes thirty different levels. There is no extra efforts from the point of view of the individual [in that there is no new type of practice required]. Whatever you have gone through on the path of seeing, if you just keep on meditating on those lines, the individual stages will automatically change. You will automatically transfer from the initial stage of the first bhumi to the actual
stage, then to the aftermath stage and on to the initial stage of the second bhumi, and so on. What is happening here is you are becoming stronger and stronger and stronger. In equal proportion to that your delusions are becoming weaker and weaker and weaker. In other words, you are tracing the subtle delusions more and more. The moment you have defeated a certain level of delusion, your development through the stages has become stronger. That is how it works.

All the bodhisattva bhumis, apart from the first one, are part of the fourth path, that of meditation. So there are nine, each again divided into three. Actually, since Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana each have the same structure of presenting the five paths, the naming of the stages and their sub-divisions has to be very general and broad, to accommodate each vehicle. Therefore they are divided into the initial, actual and final stages every time. The division into the ten Bodhisattva bhumis however, only applies to the Mahayana.

The first bhumi is called ‘Extremely Joyful’. It is so-called because here you are sure that you are becoming a fully enlightened Buddha. When you realize that, of course you become very joyful. You know that you are definitely going to make it.

The second bhumi is called ‘Faultless’. That does not mean that there are no more faults at all, but on that level you don’t break your vows any more. You become perfect in morality. When we talk about morality, we simply focus on how you keep your vows and commitments. That is the basis on which you measure pure morality. We are not talking about sexual preference. When Buddha talks about morality, there is always a conservative interpretation and a liberal interpretation. I like to be liberal. You cannot criticize the conservative viewpoint either, though. Let them interpret things their way. The question of ethics or morality is a very important issue. The bottom line really is keeping your vows and commitments.

It depends on the individual, whatever vows they have taken. Just in order to be a Buddhist you take the refuge vows. These have positive and negative advises. The positive ones are divided into
advises relating to Buddha, to Dharma and to Sangha, and the negative ones are divided in the same way. Once you keep your vows intact, you are perfect in your morality. You promise to do this and not to do that. These vows are not something new which has been cooked up recently, but have been laid down by Buddha during his life time.

Each of the different levels of vows have their own commitments, Vajrayana, Bodhisattva and Pratimoksha. When we talk about commitments, don’t think of saying your sadhanas. That is not a commitment. It is the practice. People call it commitment, because you are supposed to do that practice once a day. The reason why you took the initiation in the first place is that you want to do the practice. But that is not a vow, even though you are committed to doing it. The Vajrayana vows are those relating to each of the five Buddha families. That is why you do the Six-session yoga every day, so that, even though you may not adhere to the commitments, at least you have reminded yourself six times. They all go like this: I will remember this six times a day, I will remember that six times a day. In a way the Tibetan masters are so great. They condensed all these vows into these short verses which you can easily memorize and then repeat, almost like a parrot. Even if you are not thinking about them, then, while not being able to push forward and improve your practice, this will actually ensure that they are kept clean and intact. That serves the purpose in Vajrayana. This is why, no matter what difficulties one may have in one’s life, one should never break the commitment of the Six-session yoga – at least put it in the tape recorder and let it play. That is the least you can do, when you are sick or your mind is very depressed, which seems to happen a lot too. And if you want to, you can say or sing it together.

Keeping vows and commitments is the actual practice of morality. Even the attainment of the perfect human life depends on it. The Lam Rim teachings say that this life is very difficult to find, because you need the perfect cause, which is perfect morality. We are actually not that bad. We don’t break our vows that much. Even if we break one or two, even if we break them a hundred times every day, we can purify them. There is no such negativity
that cannot get purified. Remember the story of Angulimala, who, after initially killing nine hundred and ninety-nine people, regretted and purified these negative actions and even attained the level of an arhat in that very life time. That does not mean you should go and try to copy Angulimala!

Somebody told me the other day that the special quality of Vajrayana was that, even if you kill a number of people, you can still become enlightened. One should not misunderstand that. Vajrayana gives room even to this sort of people, but that does not mean that Vajrayana practitioners should try that out and see if it actually works. That is not what Vajrayana says. If you can keep your vows pure right from the beginning it is definitely better than to break them and repair them. It is definitely better. It is like a beautiful, antique, China vase. If you break it, you have to take crazy glue and join the pieces back together. It will work, but it is not the same as one that has not been broken.

At the level of the second bhumi, there are no longer any broken commitments at all. You develop some kind of immunity. On that level, the bodhisattvas also have no interest in the lower yanas. That is how it is faultless: there is no fault of wanting to go according to the lower yanas and there is no fault of morality.

The third bhumi is called ‘Luminous’. By that time you have perfect morality, no faults. Your experience is continuously very positive, enlightenment-oriented, so it is called ‘luminous’. It is a radiance, like fires radiates. In the case of fire, the more wood you put on, the more it radiates heat and light.

At the fourth bhumi there is the beginning of the burning of obstacles, that’s why this level is called ‘Radiating.’ It is also like a mirror. The wisdom begins to shine within the individual. That light eats up the delusions and imprints of the delusions. On the ordinary level we have the problem of anger which consumes our virtues. Similarly, here it works the same way, but in the opposite direction. It is the wisdom fire radiating within you, and unlike the fire of anger, which consumes the virtues, the wisdom fire begins to eat up the negativities. The mirror-like wisdom begins to shine.
The fifth bhumi is called ‘Difficult to Overcome’. You are overcoming things which are difficult to overcome, such as doubt. At the beginning level, doubt serves some purposes. Some things on the spiritual path you don’t know and you have to be careful, because you can get onto the wrong path. This could cause a lot of difficulties. Your could waste your life. Although we are not going anywhere else, we have limited time. We cannot afford to waste it. You have to make sure the path you are following is really the right one. You have to find out by yourself. If that path is followed properly, does it make a difference in your life? Is that improving your life, your approach to your friends, to work, to life, to anything you deal with? Is there a difference in the way you used to do things before and how you are doing things now? If it is making a difference, is it getting better or worse? If it is better you can be sure that it is going to work for you.

You cannot wait forever until you take refuge. You should take the time you need, but after a while you have to make a decision. If you do that, you are not going to waste your opportunity. You can start to do the right things without even taking refuge, but there is big difference to doing the right things with taking refuge. A simple example: Without taking refuge, if you are not killing somebody, you are just not killing and that is all. You do not have the karma of not killing. The killing just does not happen. But if you have taken refuge, if you have taken any vow of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha\textsuperscript{37}, no matter how long you sit around here without killing – you may be sleeping, driving around, gossiping, dancing, or whatever – you still get the positive karma of not killing, because you have the commitment not to do it. Just by not killing you are honoring your commitment of not killing and therefore you have the positive karma of not killing. It is building up. But if you break the vows it makes it much worse. It is a tricky advantage that you can make use of.

There are a lot of problems which are difficult to overcome. People may think, ‘I have no problem with anger, I am okay.’ But all of a sudden something happens and you lose your temper. This is going to happen, for sure, no matter how much you say you will not get angry. The nature of anger is such that, as soon
as the conditions are right, it will spark. You may have reduced your anger, made it powerless, but you have not removed its power forever. That is why people, who are in the middle of their practice, which they have been doing year after year, suddenly discover that the delusions are still there, all of them. Basically practice means mindfulness. Many people think that mindfulness has to be practiced in meditation, sitting cross-legged, watching one’s breath, etc. That may be the mindful way of sitting. But basically mindfulness means being always aware of what you are doing and thinking.

But don’t stop in the middle of an intersection and start being mindful! Last time I was in Cleveland, the person who drove me around, suddenly stopped in the middle of a huge intersection. There were no cars crossing at the time. I asked her why she had stopped and she said, ‘Excuse me, Rinpoche, I am in quite a mess. I was thinking of going this way, but that way is probably easier.’

So the true mindfulness is being aware of what you are doing and thinking. Sitting in meditation, thinking about and practicing mindfulness, is training yourself to be mindful. Meditation is not necessarily the physical posture of sitting there and being quiet. Anybody can look at that and copy it. Even in Allen Ginsberg’s song it says,

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The first thing you do when you meditate
is keep your spine our backbone straight
Sit yourself down on a pillow on the ground
or sit in a chair if the ground isn’t there.38
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‘If you don’t know how to meditate, just sit on the ground or sit on a chair’. Sitting meditation is very important. It does make a difference. But it is done in order to train your mind, so that, when you are somewhere in the middle of the intersection or in a bar, in a middle of a game of pool or whatever – you can be mindful at that level. Be aware. Being mindful means always being mindful of what you are thinking, what you are up to. Always check your motivation in the morning. The whole purpose of that is to avoid negative actions. We still do them, but that does not
The Perfection of Wisdom Mantra

matter. We are not perfect. If we were, we would not be here. We would be like Buddha and sit up there. So that is how everyday life should be functioning. You should know how to be mindful. The mind has to know how to watch the mind. Once you have learnt that, you don’t have to sit in meditation posture all the time.

The sixth level is ‘Forward Facing’. If you are a bodhisattva, you have not overcome samsara at this level yet, but you are looking forward to getting out of samsara with certainty. You are going forward to enlightenment. On the first bhumi you are already very joyful, because you know you are going towards enlightenment. On the sixth bhumi, this is further reinforced.

The seventh level is called ‘Far reaching’. By this time you have reached quite far. In the beginning we practiced Lam Rim and so on, and then we have been practicing some kind of Vajrayana practice, be it development stage or completion stage, yoga with signs or without signs. We have pushed forward with a lot of effort and at the seventh level the only possible path to enlightenment is now the combined-together path in the individual’s mindstream. That is why it is called ‘far reaching’. In Tibetan we call it drok pai chek pai lam, the only path, which refers to the combination of bodhimind and wisdom, wisdom being the absolute bodhimind. On this level, all the combined efforts which you are putting in, are direct causes for enlightenment.

The most difficulties are faced on the beginning levels. We put in a lot of hard work. After a while, whatever we do, automatically becomes a cause for enlightenment. It could be wild craziness or well-adjusted behavior, efforts or lack of effort. The individual stage of the spiritual level has become very advanced. Khedrup Je wrote a praise for Tsongkhapa, in which he says,

Even your action of breathing out becomes the perfect cause for enlightenment for millions of people.
There is no question about all other efforts you are undertaking.

Everything you do, becomes perfect. This is not because of the high position in the hierarchy, but because the negativity within the individual has almost completely lost ground. Therefore any activity is now positive.
The *eighth* level is called ‘Immovable’. Nobody can push you around, you become extremely stable, in the sense that whether you apply efforts or not, you are moving towards enlightenment. You don’t shake in your progress. Anything which comes up that is normally negative, does not become negative for that person. This is because the foundation for negativity is completely gone. Just the imprints are still there. Whatever people do then is positive, even if it appears to be negative. The crazy wisdom comes in here. But actually, even if you are at that high spiritual level, you are not meant to behave in the crazy wisdom fashion in the 1990s. It could have been acceptable some time in the 1960s, but not in the 1990s.

The *ninth* bhumi is called ‘Perfect Intelligence’. On that level you obtain extraordinary, discriminating wisdom. I don’t know how that wisdom works, one never knows.

The *tenth* bhumi is the highest bodhisattva level. In the tradition of Drepung Loseling monastery, which relies on Panchen Sonam Drakpa’s textbooks, we say that even Maitreya Buddha is only the future Buddha, therefore he is still a bodhisattva and we put him on the tenth bhumi, the ‘Cloud of Dharma’. Drepung Gomang College, on the other hand, will say that Maitreya is no longer a bodhisattva, that he is only labeled a bodhisattva, but is actually a Buddha. Loseling does not agree. They argue that he is labeled a bodhisattva, therefore he is a bodhisattva and should be on the tenth level. In any case, the tenth level is almost the Buddha stage. There is no big difference. You only need very little effort. You are already sitting on a cloud which is very comfortable. You almost need no further effort and the next stage is the Buddha stage.

This level is called the ‘Cloud of Dharma’. The right cloud will produce the right shower or rainfall. Here this is the right cloud. Love, compassion, knowledge, not forgetting and the right meditative level produce that cloud. That cloud produces the proper rainfall for the right field to produce the right fruit. So a bodhisattva of the tenth Bhumi is recommended as a guide and teacher. That is the time where your compassion and remembrance of all knowledge and the personal experience of the medi-
tative stages are in their optimal combination. This makes the individual fit to be teaching others. These are the three qualities of a teacher: Individual development, knowledge and the ability to remember it, and compassion. If you want to train people as teachers you have to emphasize these three qualities. With these they will become perfect teachers.

Somebody showed me some days ago a magazine called ‘Common boundary’. In the middle of some article it said, ‘Gelek Rinpoche acknowledged that Tibetan Buddhism has a very strong influence of male chauvinist viewpoints and traditions. His statement is far-reaching, but not enough. We would like to see the emergence of different female teachers in the Buddhist tradition. Particularly we look forward to that happening in Jewel Heart.’ Actually in Buddhism there is no problem of what gender a teacher has. It does not matter, if it is a man or a woman. Women can nowadays become full-fledged bikshunis. There is apparently a lineage from Taiwan. I have no idea whether it is a true bikshuni lineage or not. My personal feeling is, that it is not. But short of becoming a perfect bikshuni, you can do anything. You can become a Buddha or an enlightened person as a female. Look at Tara. She does not wear nun’s robes. As long as you can build up the three qualities within you – that is the most important point. Experience is what counts.

With experience I don’t mean that you have felt something empty, saw a new star, had a funny dream, or something. I get millions of strange calls like that. Only yesterday somebody told me, ‘I was sitting there, when people were doing their prayers and suddenly I realized that my head was not there. After a little while I felt that my body was not there. My chanting was coming from the navel level – a perfect sound right out of the central channel. What is that Rinpoche? Are you going to encourage me?’ My answer was, ‘If you think I am going to give you a black belt or a red belt, you are wrong. But apart from that, it is not a bad thing.’ So I am not talking about that kind of experience. I am talking about the experience one gains from one’s practice; the practice of the guru-devotional practice, the realization of the importance of the human life, the difficulty to find it, imperma-
nence, refuge, the Four Noble Truths, love and compassion, the
six paramitas and the ten bhumis and five paths. When you have
the experience of the five paths and ten bhumis, or even just of
the Lam Rim stages, then you are able to share that with others –
even if it is only one or two or three little realizations. Whatever
you have, you can share. That is how you develop. In this regard
it does not matter, whether it is a man or a woman, a child or
dog, cat or cow, parrot or whatever. Anything, and this is really
true, is perfect in that framework.

That is in essence the ten bhumis and the nine stages of the
path of meditation.

**PATH OF NO MORE LEARNING**

The last and final path is that of no more learning. That is the
Buddha level. No more learning means no more efforts. As long
as you have to learn more, you have to put efforts in. So at the
fully awakened stage there is no more effort, there are no more
questions, there is no more doubt, no more work to do. All delu-
sions, even their imprints, are removed. Actually, after the path
of seeing, on all the ten bhumis, you are mainly dealing with the
imprints of the delusions, rather than with the delusions them-
selves. It is not the gross affective emotions, but their imprints.
You are no longer dealing with the garlic, but with the garlic
smell. That is the traditional example. Garlic smell is harder to get
rid of than garlic. You can easily pick up a piece of garlic and
throw it away. But the smell lingers. You have to wash the con-
tainer out, open the window and spray around some perfume.
Using perfume is actually just a quick fix. It is like, instead of
completely removing the stain from the wood, sanding it back a
little and then applying a coat of polyurethane. Masking a smell
with perfume is just temporarily hiding it. The traditional Tibetan
teachers used to call it ‘the cats’ way’. Cats tend to quickly cover
their excrements, thinking that it is not there any more. When
you are dealing with the delusions, you cannot entertain that idea.
There is no quick fix. You have to get them completely out of
your system. The allopathic treatment will not do. It is not a mat-
ter of taking an aspirin, temporarily blocking the symptoms and
waiting until your virus goes away.
At the Buddha level, therefore, there are no longer any obstacles. There are no more afflictive emotions or even their imprints. Because of that, a Buddha knows everything. Buddhists will even say that a Buddha knows everything in the past, present and future simultaneously everywhere. It is beyond our comprehension. A Buddha is supposed to see individually in one moment all the multi-billions of beings’ thoughts, including those of the non-human beings, and not only the present ones, but those of the past and future too. That was Buddha’s claim. He said that himself. People challenged him and he went on to prove it to them. He told all the people in his area to go home and come within the next day to a specific place, each depositing a separate bag of grains, marked individually and secretly, without telling anyone. The people did that and the next day there was a huge mountain of grain bags piled up in that place. When Buddha walked past, he picked up one bag after another and gave it to the person it belonged to. That is how he tried to prove to them his level of knowledge. In the same way as he knew which bag of grains would belong to which out of a million different families, he told these people, when handing them their bags, exactly what they were thinking. He was reading their minds. This was the external proof of showing them his awakened state. In the *Ganden Lha Gyema* one verse says,

> Your mind has the intellect that comprehends the full extent of what can be known.

If you try to figure Buddha’s knowledge out with a tape measure you are getting nowhere. But if you think about this story of the Buddha and then read this *Ganden Lha Gyema* verse, it will make more sense. So a Buddha would know the past, present and future different thoughts of every living being, including individual ants. That is what it means to be fully awakened, fully enlightened. The capacity is unlimited. Knowledge, function, anything, there is no limit.

Audience: I can sort of imagine knowing the past and the present. But the future is not fixed, what will happen can change at any moment.
Rinpoche: At the Buddha level, and even on the last two Bodhisattva bhumis, you can. On the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth Bodhisattva levels you will see the future as it is taking shape right at this moment. It looks very much like the poll readings.

Audience: It has got to be better than that!
Rinpoche: What you actually get is all the peoples’ thoughts at this moment, so you know whatever is going on. The knowledge of the bodhisattvas on the fifth, sixth and seventh bhumis is like that. The tenth level bodhisattvas and Buddhas however, know exactly what is going to happen. In the case of the upcoming elections they can tell you what is going to happen at every turn, day by day, and then what the final result will be. They don’t read the polls. The polls could be like that: from now on Bob Dole will put in a great effort and he will come head to head with Clinton in the polls and will almost look like he could beat Clinton, but then on the 9th of November, Clinton will get past him and on the 10th he will have won. In that way, seeing the future is different for the different levels of development. Practitioners on the lower levels don’t exactly see what the changes are going to be. When events are getting closer, they begin to see it.

Audience: How does reading and knowing the future fit in with the creation of karmas of the individual, the level of choice they have to influence their future?
Rinpoche: The Buddha will be able to see on the karmic level whether people will succeed in their efforts or not. Bodhisattvas on lower levels may not be able to see it. They can see what the tendency is at this moment. It is interesting. The time frame and how the bodhisattvas of the different levels see things differently, show the limitations. It works the same way with the past as well. When they try to look into the more distant past, the bodhisattvas with limited abilities will not be able to see it. They can see what happened last year, etc.

When it is focused on one’s own experience, we call it memory. It are bits and pieces and flashbacks, short and long ones, and then it becomes perfect. But, when you try to see the other people’s past, it is totally different. One of the kings during Buddha’s
lifetime wanted to become a monk. All of the Buddha’s disciples rejected him, saying that he did not have the positive karma for that at all. Buddha, however, finally accepted him. The arhats were shocked, but Buddha explained that some zillion years ago, this king was a fly, sitting on a piece of cow dung, when some stream of a river came and swept it round a stupa. That is a very limited, subtle, almost non-existent karma, but Buddha was able to see it and connect it.

Each and every one of us human beings also has a different way of remembering the past. You always hear different stories and tales about past events, so there is a different perception of it. There are different interpretations. That is because of a weakened capacity of human understanding. In the case of the spiritual practice, people started writing things down. That helps. But further on the higher spiritual levels, it becomes the job of the mind to write things down and to take notes.

IX

We are almost getting to the end of the teaching on the five paths.

The last path is called ‘Path of No More Learning’. We have two kinds of obstacles: the delusions and the imprints of delusions. Traditional Buddhist teachings say that we are asleep until this level. We are sleeping the sleep of delusions and their imprints. At this point then, there is no more sleep left. You awaken. When you awaken, you know the nature of everything that exists. That is why it is called the Awakened, All-knowing, Tathagatha, Gone Beyond stage. At that stage, if there is anything to be known, it is known to the enlightened mind. That is the ultimate achievement. The individual can go to that level. Not only do you know everything, but you know it all the time. There is no limit.

Dharmakaya, Sambogakaya, and Nirmanakaya.

Such a state is basically divided into Dharmakaya, Sambogakaya, and Nirmanakaya. Dharmakaya is the mind at that level. Sambogakaya and Nirmanakaya mean the physical aspects, the qualities of the enlightened beings. The Nirmanakaya is the manifesta-
tion body. You can manifest anywhere, for any length of time, for any purpose, without any difficulty or any obstacles.

In Buddha’s life time, the last person he helped was a non-human being. He was known as Trise Gyalpo Tangogyan, the horse-headed king of the smell eaters. His physical appearance was as somebody with a horse-head. He was the ruler of those beings who subsist on smell. They don’t have to eat food. They live somewhere in a kind of different galaxy. This king was supposed to be an extremely good musician, one of the most accomplished musicians of all time. He was meant to get into contact with Sakyamuni Buddha in that life-time. The karma for that to happen was ready. However, he did not show up. That was because he had such a strong attachment to his music that he could not leave. Buddha was now about to die and told his disciples around him, ‘Look at the Buddha’s body. It is very rare to be able to see it. Now you will not see Buddha’s body again.’ He took off all his clothes and showed his body to all his disciples. Suddenly, all of a sudden, while he was showing his body, he was manifesting his body also in that distant realm. He manifested as a musician who produced music that was sweeter, gentler and more attractive than the music of the king. The king followed that sound and appeared at the place where Buddha was about to die. So he was the Buddha’s last disciple.

That is the manifestation body. You can manifest at any time, anywhere, without any efforts. Another time, Buddha suddenly appeared, just as Angulimala was about to kill his own mother. He appeared in front of Angulimala and as Angulimala chased him, he slowly walked away. Yet Angulimala was unable to catch him. So he shouted after Buddha, ‘Wait!’ and Buddha said, ‘I have been waiting for you’. All these manifestations just showing up anywhere is possible because of the Nirmanakaya.

From the Vajrayana point of view the three kayas are explained somewhat differently, compared to the Sutrayana. Don’t mix these up. If you mix them up, you don’t get the benefit of either of them.
I should briefly explain the division of Rupakaya and Dharma-
kaya. Rupakaya is the physical body and Dharma-kaya the mental one. Both of these are combined together. They function together. Mind is body, body is mind. There is no separation. That is why every part of the physical body also has consciousness. On our level, we are limited. If we touch something, we can feel it. But on the enlightened level, you can then not only feel it, but also see it, hear it, taste it and smell it. All of this can function together. Body and mind function on the same frequency. Wherever the mind is there is the body. Wherever the body is there is the mind. In English we have the expression ‘God is everywhere’. Since the mind knows everything, it is there. When the mind is there, the body is there automatically too. So if God knows everything, he is everywhere. This is one of the extraordinary qualities of the enlightened beings. It is beyond our comprehension. We divide physical and mental aspects, however, they function together. That is called ‘union of body and mind’. That means, the body is mind and the mind is body. Mind represents the female principle and body represents the male. Therefore it is also the union of male and female. And for God’s sake, the union of male and female is not a neuter. That is absolutely wrong. It is the perfect male and the perfect female. It is not a neutral gender. That would mean that after some time, what is the perfect male, would have to become non-male and the perfect female has to become non-female? That is total bullshit. They don’t become hermaphrodites. There are five categories of mixed sex. One is where the person has both, male and female organs. Another one has a male sex organ, but only extremely small and incapable of functioning. When you become a perfect being, you don’t develop into something like these imperfect categories. That is why the union of male and female is perfectly male and perfectly female. The problem is that we think of our ordinary sexual function and then wonder how that is going to work if these are united on the enlightened level.

The final stage of the Hinayana level of no more learning is the achievement of the arhatship. This is divided into two: those with remainder and those without. The one with remainder is an arhat who still has his body. He has become an arhat and has not died.
The human body is part of the first Noble Truth, that of suffering. That is why this arhat is called ‘with left-over’. After death this arhat separates from his body and there is no more left-over. It is said,

When the body stops, the consciousness stops.
Ultimately everything stops like a candle light goes out,
when the wax of the candle is exhausted.

According to the Hinayana teachings, arhats then disappear completely. According to the Mahayana, the arhats just go for a picnic. After a little while the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will take them by helicopter to the third path of the Mahayana and they will eventually become enlightened Buddhas.

According to the Indian Buddhist philosophy, there are two systems. One system maintains that there is only one final vehicle, another says that there are three final vehicles. Those who accept that there are three ultimate paths, accept that the person will completely disappear at the arhat level. But the Mind Only School and the two Madhyamaka schools, including the Vajrayana – that is all Mahayana schools – accept only one final vehicle. That means that ultimately everyone will progress to become a Buddha. You don’t stop somewhere in the middle. You may go for a picnic for a while, or you may go down to the lower realms for a while, but eventually you will attain enlightenment, hence only one final path.

Thus I have completed the presentation of the five paths. I have gone through the development of the stages as well as touched a little bit on the different philosophical viewpoints.

Questions and Answers
Audience: Can you clarify the difference between the one and the three final yanas?
Rinpoche: That is a theological difference between the early Indian Buddhist schools of thought. There are three yanas, the Shravaka [Hearer], Pratyeka [Solitary Realizer] and the Bodhisattva yana or vehicle. One school maintains that each of these is capable of delivering the ultimate level, according to the final goal
presented in that particular vehicle. That is why this system is called the ‘three final yanas’. The Mahayana schools however maintain that the Sravaka and Pratyeka vehicles can bring the practitioners to a picnic level, where they will stay for a long, long time. However, ultimately everybody has to become fully enlightened. So they say that there is only one ultimate vehicle.

Audience: Earlier you said that at the level of patience of the second path you develop an immune system against falling into the lower realms. Today you said that at the second Bhumi level you have no longer any broken vows. Is there a difference there between those two stages in terms of creating negative karma, but not falling to the lower realms and not creating any negative karma at all? And where exactly is the point of not going backwards in your spiritual development, even if you take a break somewhere?

Rinpoche: The answer is that on the level of patience you do not go back to lower realms any more. You may still have a lot of broken vows, but you know how to purify and how to handle that. At the second bhumi level, the stage of perfect morality, you don’t break vows at all any more. Actually, once you reach to the level of the second path and further, everything is close by. There is no big difference. I forgot to mention also that at the third level of the path of accumulation there is a special meditative stage called chö gyun gi ting dzin, which means ‘continuation of the Dharma samadhi’. At that level you begin to talk to the images and tangkas and they will converse with you. If you try to talk to them before you get to that level, is a sign that you are crazy, but at that level you really converse.

Audience: Is there a cut-off point at which collective negative karma can no longer effect you?

Rinpoche: Collective negative karma can affect you for quite a long time. But at the level of patience of the second path most of that should stop too. But even then, Buddha himself manifested a back-ache when the Sakyas had a war with another caste. There are a lot of different interpretations of that incident, but still, collective karma goes a long way.
Audience: You said earlier today that on the fourth bhumi you attain the mirror-like wisdom.
Rinpoche: Don’t think that this is the mirror-like wisdom as one of the five wisdoms in Vajrayana terms.

Audience: I did not really understand what is going on on the fifth bhumi.
Rinpoche: You will – once you get there. I did not really make it very clear, I just left it there. I am glad you noticed. The name is ‘Difficult to overcome’.

Audience: Is there a level at which, apart from not falling back to lower realms, your level of spiritual attainments goes with you to the next rebirth without degenerating?
Rinpoche: That also happens at the level of patience of the second path.

Audience: When you attain the three kayas, which one you obtain first?
Rinpoche: Dharmakaya refers to the mind level. The mind becomes enlightened. On the physical level, your body becomes the Sambogakaya. So naturally, that is the second step.

Audience: Is there a difference between Nirmanakaya and Rupakaya?
Rinpoche: It is like this: every Nirmanakaya is Rupakaya, but not every Rupakaya is a Nirmanakaya. It could also be Sambogakaya.

Audience: You said that at some stage the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will awaken the arhats and transport them to the third path of the Mahayana. But isn’t the third path the path of seeing and related to wisdom?
Rinpoche: That is right. The arhats have already fully developed the wisdom and therefore don’t have to go to the first two of the Mahayana paths, but join instead from the third path onwards.

Audience: But why do they suddenly have the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings?
Rinpoche: They have been called by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. They have been inducted into the military service. When they are called, they have to respond. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will say to them, ‘Look, you can’t just sit here, you have to
do something!’ and that motivates them. So they become new bodhisattvas, but at the level of Aryas. They are new recruits into the military service.

Audience: So is it the case that for example a Pratyeka buddha would have to come down to the third level of the Mahayana path and work his way up again to the level of a Buddha?

Rinpoche: Yes. But there is no difficulty with that. The path of no more learning of a Pratyeka Buddha is a much lower achievement than the bodhisattvas’ third path. That is because of the bodhimind, the method part. That is why the bodhimind is so precious, so important, so valuable. The example for this situation is that of a crown prince and an old minister. The arhats are like old ministers, seasoned, senior diplomats, like Prime ministers. But the young bodhisattvas are like crown princes who are destined to become king of England – or may not become king of England!

X

The five paths in reverse

This is the last session on the five paths. We introduced the five paths initially by discussing the mantra O M GATE GATE PARA-GATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA. Then we went through the five paths which you can see on the chart. We did not go into how the five paths work in the Vajrayana system.

Again, in short, a person does not become a buddha, unless they achieve an unshakable, diamond-like concentration. Diamond is considered to be one of the strongest materials. It is supposed to cut glass, while glass cannot cut a diamond. The diamond-like meditative stage is the last non-enlightened mind which will transform into the enlightened mind. The power to become actually enlightened lies at that stage. It is the last stage of the path of meditation.

The path of meditation has been built up to that level in three different stages, lower, medium and higher stages. Each one of them in turn has a preliminary, actual and conclusion level. Each one of these is a direct opponent to particular negative emotions and even the causes of negative emotions, as well as imprints of
negative emotions. The smaller levels of the stages destroy the gross, powerful delusions and imprints. The subtle delusions and their imprints are finally destroyed by the highest, most powerful levels of meditative stages. The delusions are removed from the gross to the medium to the subtle levels. Finally you become free of even the subtle imprints of the delusions. Our spiritual development, the opposition to the delusions, grows in ourselves from weak to strong levels. Yet the weak levels are able to cut through the grossest delusions and their causes.

This has become possible, because you have achieved the third path, the path of seeing, on which you see the true nature, or true reality.

The ability to encounter the true nature of reality directly has become possible through accomplishing the four different levels of the path of action or preparation.

This has been made possible in the first place, because we have accumulated enough merit on the path of accumulation. We have collected countless numbers of merit.

Merit means positive karma, luck, fortune. Some people have a problem when I talk about luck. They think, ‘What has luck got to do with the spiritual path?’ That is a very stupid question. If you are not lucky, you are never going to make it on the spiritual path. First of all, you are not even going to be interested. Secondly, you will not meet the right, the perfect path. That in itself requires tremendous amounts of luck and positive karma. Even if you get on to it, if you are not lucky, you will not be able to continue for long. This may not be so much because of negative obstacles, but because of not being lucky enough. Without luck, you are not going to see true reality. Therefore the first path is that of accumulating merit and luck.

Many people think that luck only relates to material life, not to spiritual life. That is absolutely wrong. Luck has got a lot to do with spiritual life. If you are not lucky, you are not going to make it. If you look at Buddha’s body, there are calculations of how much merit it costs to attain the ultimate achievement of his
body. For example, the merit it takes to achieve the *ubhnīsha*, the little lump on the head, is hundred thousand times the merit it takes to achieve the *urna*, the little hair curl on the forehead, which in tantra is the third eye, etc. This is why Buddha’s body is so precious. It takes a lot of luck, fortune and positive karma to obtain it. So luck has got a lot to do with the spiritual path. That is why the path of accumulation is the first path. It has three levels, small, medium and big.

*Lam Rim summary, including the six preliminaries and the seven limbs*

Now the question rises: How is this whole structure of paths and bhumis relevant to us? How do I connect to the first path? What is the bridge between me right here at this moment and the first path? Is an initiation going to get me there? A magic show? A ritual? Education? Commitment?

It is the Lam Rim practice. It really begins there. That does not mean just listening to the Lam Rim or reading it. Once you have properly entered the practice at the Lam Rim level, you will move along – unless you drop out. There are different names and presentations, like Lam Rim, three principles, foundation of perfections, etc. That is just different presentations in order to suit the different capabilities of students.

Lam Rim means stages of development. Stage one is how to handle your daily life. How do you relate to people, relate to the material world? How do you handle that and what goal do you have? Technically it is called ‘Common with the lower level’, but in reality it is about how you deal with your daily life, how you function, how you think. Is it absolutely necessary to shave your head, put on robes and run away from society? Or is it possible to keep your hair long and live in society with companions, fulfill your responsibilities in society and at the same time have a spiritual practice? The answer to that is, ‘Yes’. Living a family life, you can still have liberation, like for example Marpa. That is the answer.

If you run away, you do not necessarily get liberated. The example is the mole, that little animal which goes into hibernation
every winter. In spring it comes out of hibernation and is still the same mole as last fall, except perhaps a little thinner. So if you run away from society and shave your head, you will come back after some time and you will still be the same. I was joking once with some western monks and nuns. The nuns are actually better than the monks. The western monks do not remain ordained for longer than fifteen or twenty years. The longest of all is I think Pende. And he even disrobed last month too. Our Gelong-la, who died here, really died as a monk. He was perhaps the first westerner who became a monk and remained one until the end of his life. Most of them give up the robes. That does not mean that they give up their practice or their search for liberation. The practice does not depend on how you look and how you dress. That is absolutely immaterial. Buddha made actually a lot rules relating to dress. He imposed these in order to minimize attachment. Today many of the monks use their robes as some kind of showpiece. That is absolutely against Buddha’s intention. Buddha’s intention was for the monks to wear whatever they received. The color of the robes was at the time the least acceptable in society. Women, who were considered lower in rank, were usually the only ones to wear red and that also only for their lower garments like skirts. That is why Buddha chose yellow and maroon. These colors were generally rejected in his time, while for example blue was permitted. Nowadays people stitch additional yellow ornaments onto the robes because it looks nice. To avoid attachment to their clothes Buddha recommended to cut them in pieces and sew them back together. As example he gave the irregular patches of land that farmers had in hilly areas. So originally the monks’ robes were stitched together from many variously shaped pieces. Later the cloth became more expensive and still later brocade was used and pure gold ornaments added. Originally Buddha introduced the worst ever possible color and looks. The reason was to reduce the attachment. Lay people could wear anything – from dhoti to lungi. Dhoti is that funny, little white cloth that the coolies wear, just big enough to cover the sex organs. Lungi is the same as a sarong. So whatever you wear as a lay person that is fine, Buddha had no objection, except he did not want people to dress as if they were crazy. For exam-
ple, if in general everybody in society is wearing something, you cannot run around naked, or if everyone in society is running around naked, you should not wear clothes. It is the same thing. In the same manner you should not put on a three-piece suit when you go to the beach. That is another crazy way to dress. Otherwise dress in not an issue.

The main issue is the mental state. The best is if your mental state is totally devoted and influenced by love and compassion. If that is not possible, at least motivate yourself to seek freedom for yourself. That is the minimum motivation one should have. So first, build your motivation, then follow the six preliminaries, like cleaning your room, etc. Cleaning is important. You may think that you are going to sleep in that room again, so why clean it up. The point is that you are a practitioner. When you practice, you invite the supreme field of merit to your room, even to your bed. Some people may think, ‘I do my practice over in the other corner of the room, so it does not matter how messy it is in general.’ Don’t think that way. When you invite the supreme field of merit, the whole atmosphere matters. You would not invite the governor of your state to your room and say, ‘The governor will sit in this corner of the room on this chair, so it will do if I clean just that section of the room.’ No matter how crazy this governor may be, if we try to act as crazy as he, we will not be any better than he is. So from our normal etiquette point of view we would not do something like that. With the supreme field of merit it is the same. You are inviting all the enlightened beings, so you should provide a good atmosphere. This has two purposes. First of all, you want to make the enlightened beings comfortable. You don’t want to invite them to place that is smelly, where you have to wade through underwear. Something like that really does not work very well. It should be clean. Secondly, by doing that, we also accumulate positive merit for ourselves and practice purification. Cleaning is one of the best ways to purify our negativities. I have told you a number of stories illustrating that on a number of occasions. That is why cleaning and providing the right atmosphere is very important, actually not only inside your room, but your whole external environment. For spiritual practitioners it is very important. If the external environment is not in
order, then no matter what you try to do internally, will not work very well. We all know that in America we always shut the windows and turn on either the heater or the air-conditioner. But if you do that too much, it becomes unhealthy. We need fresh air. We have to open the window! We all experience that, right? So the external and the internal environment have to be perfect. We are not in complete control of the external environment, but that does not mean we should not be concerned. We should be active, helping, we should make it as good as possible. The internal environment is in our control. That is why you have to clean it, make it inviting, beautiful. Whoever you invite, make them feel like staying there. They should not be forced to look at their watch or cover their noses. The enlightened beings are committed to be there, but you don’t have to give them a hard time.

After cleaning, you should have offerings. That is also very important. Even a glass of water. And you need representations. Images serve as representations. This is the Buddhist tradition. We don’t worship the images, but they are used to represent the enlightened beings. So you have Buddha images. We do worship the Buddha’s spirit and enlightened nature. So pictures, thangkas, photographs, statues, etc, are used.

Once you have images, it is important not to jump over them, sit on them, but to have due respect. Don’t put them in the bed, where you sleep. Don’t pass too much gas either! To balance that, you can light some incense. Then you can put up some flowers. It is not necessary to have too much. Even if you have one glass of water and put a flower in it, that is good enough. If you have all the time in the world and nothing else to do, then you can put up a hundred glasses of water every day, pour the water in in the morning, empty them out in the afternoon, clean the glasses and start again the next morning. That is how we were trained to do it. I don’t do that any more. I put the water in bottles and close the lids, so that the level of the water does not go down. That is a corrupted act.

You don’t have to go out of your way to get too many offerings, but offering is one of the greatest acts of generosity, because you
offer to the supreme field of merit. There should not be any manipulation. You offer straight forward, with a clean, clear idea. It is important that your offering be pure in motivation, pure in style, pure in quality, pure in the way you do the offering. The fault of manipulation should not be there.

Then next, you take up the meditation posture. You have to sit comfortably, that is the main thing, it does not have to be cross-legged. But if you are comfortable with the cross-legged position, sit on a cushion, not on a chair. Don’t sit cross-legged on a chair. I have seen some people do that. This is like wearing a three-piece suit on the beach. I don’t like it, when people pull their legs up when they sit on my sofa. I object to that and tell them to leave. If you want to sit cross-legged, sit on a cushion. That is what they are for. At home, if you have an old sofa, I have no right to tell you how to sit on that. I am just sharing my personal feelings. On your sofa or love seat you can sit how you want, but not on mine. In my place, people even tried to sit cross-legged on the dining chairs, which must be uncomfortable, inconvenient and also the chairs will break. I had to have my chairs fixed a number of times, because people broke them and landed on the floor. Look at Maitreya Buddha. He sits on a chair, but not cross-legged. So you have to have the right style of sitting. If you want to sit cross-legged, you sit on the cushion, or on the ground on the carpet, or on the wood floor. As long as you don’t get pain, you can sit there. But if you sit on a chair, put your two legs down, and your two hands on your knees or cross them.

Then you meditate. What does meditation mean? Watching your mind. That is the first thing. Watching your mind means finding out whether your thoughts, ideas, motivations, etc, are faulty or correct. If they are faulty, correct them. If they are proper, rejoice.

Then you take refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and generate the bodhimind, as good as you can, according to your understanding. Then practice the four immeasurables, wishing everybody to be happy, joyful, separated from suffering and having equanimity.
Then generate the supreme field of merit, either through the *Ganden Lha Gyema* or through that very short invocation. You invite the supreme field, whether it is Buddha or the spiritual master, or whoever. Then you make the Seven limb offering.

First is *bowing down*. That is the offering of respect. It means that you admire the qualities of the supreme field of merit. You like and want these qualities. Don’t think of the Japanese style of bowing. They bow and then they give you the bill, in the restaurants and shops. In 1977 I was in Texas. That was the beginning of the Japanese car imports. People were commenting that these Japanese were nice guys, because they were always bowing. I said to them, ‘Wait till you get the bills!’ They did not get it, but later they came to know. So here it is bowing because we admire the merit field’s qualities of body, speech and mind, their capabilities, their purity and their awareness, their awakened state, their mind that knows everything, their knowledge, their intelligence. That is what we admire and what we want. That is the real purpose of bowing in the spiritual practice. It is not the sort of bowing, when the soldiers salute the general. That is compulsory – you have to salute whether you like it or not. If you don’t, you will probably be court-marshalled. It is not at all like that. You admire the qualities and express that you want to have them yourself.

Then you make *offerings*, actual and mentally created. You may only offer one glass of water, but you visualize that it becomes multi-millions of glasses of water, and it is not even water, it is nectar. Not only nectar, but an ocean of nectar which is so huge that the whole of space is filled up. That goes for all offerings, whether it is flowers or incense or whatever. On top of that, you also think that the objects of your offering accept it and you rejoice in that. Through this you receive double the benefit. These are all technical methods to maximize the merit you gain. You are encouraged to offer whatever you can afford to materially. If it only consists of a mental exercise and does not involve your wallet or cheque book, then that is not good enough. It would not be right. The Tibetan teachers will tell you that you should never offer the blue part of the butter and the yellow part of the vegetables. When the vegetables go bad, they become yellow. When
the butter gets bad, it becomes blue. That is not really an offering. On the other hand, even if you don’t have anything, you don’t have to feel bad. In the longer six session yoga you have a mandala offering in which you include ‘mine and other beings’ body, mind and wealth’. Your offerings are unlimited. Having plenty is caused by generosity.

Next is *purification*. That is extremely important. You should use every opportunity to purify your negativities. No matter how heavy the negativities may be, there is no negativity that cannot be purified. Everything can be purified if that is done properly, because it is impermanent and empty in nature.

If things are by nature empty, there is room for everything.

There is room for purification. You can definitely purify. I am a non-believer in the so-called guilt feeling, the feeling that tells you, ‘I am stuck, I am gone, I blew it’. I never believe that, because of impermanence and emptiness. Even our negativities are impermanent. They are subject to change. If we provide the conditions for change, things will change. And the condition is the purification. You have to know how to purify. This is done through the process of the four powers.

What are those? The *power of base* is the enlightened beings and the sentient beings. These are the two possible groups of beings that your negative actions affect. The *power of regret* means that you must regret what you have done. That does not mean that you become helpless and hopeless. People often think that they cannot make things undone, that they cannot change things. Nobody is asking you to go back and change the past. But you can make changes for the future. Try to convince yourself and the person you have harmed. If that person is still alive you can compensate them materially. If the person is no longer alive, you compensate them through the spiritual means, like positive actions, positive contributions. Regret is there, so you don’t do it again. It does not mean you try to change the past. Make sure you change the future. The next power is the *power of promise* not to repeat the action. That comes automatically, if you really have regret. If you go somewhere to eat and you have poisonous food
that causes you to be sick for a month, you are not going to go back to that restaurant, are you? The last power is the power of the antidote. Do something. If it is killing, save a life. If it is stealing, show generosity. Be moral, be enthusiastic, be concentrated, build some wisdom. Very simple. Saying Vajrasattva mantras helps as an antidote action, but if you think just saying Vajrasattva mantras will make you free, you are mistaken.

The application of the four powers will purify all negativities. You may simply say, ‘I purify all my negativities’, and with the application of the four powers and the proper visualization you can purify all negativities.

Then comes rejoicing. Without any efforts you can make big profits. There is no risk involved – a good investment in the field of spiritual business. It is like a business. You are working for luck. How do you get that? By doing good karmic business. Rejoicing is a risk-free, big investment business. If you rejoice, you get a double or triple profit. If Lou is working hard and doing nicely and if I rejoice, from the positive karma accumulated through working I get the merit too. So let him work, while I rejoice. Rejoicing is a very important technique to gain merit. The opposite of rejoicing is jealousy. That will only make you lose.

These are the correct, good motivations selected by the enlightened beings, provided for us, easy to pick up. It is like a ready-made TV dinner – with nutritional value too. Rejoicing makes you lucky, makes you happy, joyful. Buddha has given us these methods, so that we can change – change from being jealous to rejoicing, change from sitting there totally stuck, to purification. Dharma practice means changing our way of living and thinking. With that I don’t mean that you have to shave your head.

The next of the seven limb practices is the request to remain. If you make requests to your spiritual master, to the supreme field of merit, to remain, it is a way of lengthening your own life.

The next is requesting wise and compassionate guidance. This is absolutely necessary. It is a timely shower. If the shower comes at the wrong time, it will create more trouble than help. Tibetan Bud-
Buddhist teachings is not a single thing. At first, when I came to this country, I was shocked to find that a lot of people, after attending one lecture, said that they knew what Tibetan Buddhism was all about. They expect to become experts after a one hour study. They think that Buddhism is one single, little point. That is extremely naive. There are countless negative emotions within us. Each one of these will also have gross, medium and subtle levels. Each one of these will be challenged by a specific practice for which there is a teaching. You have this lengthy Lam Rim and this lengthy Vajrayana, because the levels of the emotions are different. The challenge for that is different. Some people may think that if they have heard a little bit about the meaning of OM MANI PADME HUNG, that with that they know what Tibetan Buddhism is. In the early sixties and seventies you had a number of people who could explain the meaning of OM MANI PADME HUNG and called themselves Tibetan Buddhist experts. They were limited to that. Even now there are some people like that. These are self-proclaimed experts and some universities recognize them and give them good credentials. All that is only possible, because Tibetan Buddhism is new in this country. Lobsang Rampa claimed to be an incarnate lama and that he could fly from the Potala. What he wrote in his novels was widely accepted as true. How rich the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual path really is, is very little known in the West, to tell you the truth. So when someone only knows very little, he has to dress it up with all sorts of mumble jumble and make it into some ‘29th soup’. Traditionally, on the 29th day of the last month of the Tibetan calendar, people make a soup. They put every single damn thing they could still find into that soup. So this 29th soup is not good enough to be called food. That is the example. Traditionally, timely teachings means that the right thing gets taught at the right time. But nowadays we teach the whole Lam Rim and also Vajrayana – all together, because one never knows.

Finally, you do the dedication. That is your safe deposit box. You want to protect your savings. So don’t leave them in the glove department. It is very easy to break in and take everything. If you keep them in the safe deposit box, it is much harder to get in. Likewise, all our positive virtues can be destroyed by anger. An-
anger is expensive. It is like a fire that consumes all fuel. The fuel in this case is your positive karma. Your positive actions become the fuel for your anger. You are welcome to be angry as long as you want to – it is at your own expense. You can work hard, earn a little bit of merit and then give it all to anger and burn it. If you want to do that, it is your choice. So when you want to be angry, think about that and put some cold water on your face. Then think again and try not to get upset. Remember what anger does. In order to safeguard your merits, you dedicate them to enlightenment. If you make a bigger dedication, it is more difficult to destroy.

These are the preliminaries to enter the actual practice. The actual practices are: 1) seeking freedom, 2) developing love and compassion, 3) gaining wisdom.

All these activities will put you onto the first path, followed by the second path on which you will build up your immune system against falling into the lower realms. At that level, even the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will talk to you. But don’t listen to the voices inside your ear. That is not the voices of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. When they talk to you it means that the thangkas and images are actually talking to you. It is not that you think that they are talking to you. People get tremendously confused. They always look for mystical things. When they get some imbalance in their bodies, or a couple of screws come loose, they will hear something. Sometimes the deficiency of certain vitamins can be the cause and if you follow that, you are letting yourself down. Tsongkhapa, when he had visions of the thirty-five Buddhas, he ignored them. When they were looking at him from the left, he turned to the right. When they were looking at him from the right, he turned left. He made sure that the visions were genuine, and not delusions or something conjured up by evil spirits. When it was finally confirmed that his visions were genuine, he learnt from them and through that provided tremendous guidance to his and many future generations – even now we have his living tradition. So don’t be superstitious. Be grounded. Ignore all such things. If they are really true, they will become stronger and stronger and better and better. Only then you ask questions. And
at the beginning you only ask questions that you know the answers of. And only when finally you are really convinced and your spiritual master is convinced, only then you can ask questions and you will not be let down. In the beginning there will a lot of spirits who come round and want to do something. They do that, because your level is now a little bit better. At that point obstacles tend to come up. So at the beginning level, everything should be ignored. Even if you see a huge monkey sitting right in front of you, walk through, don’t even think twice. And if you see a huge Yama, the Lord of Death, standing in front of you, don’t be afraid, walk right through. You should have no hope and no doubt. Don’t fall under the illusions of fear and doubt. With these visions you almost go to the point of not believing. On this level you get a lot of these things and you have to go completely to the point of non-believing and have a pure yuppie, scientific attitude. Then you get through. You have to behave like a real scientist.
Dharma and politics
Talk by Bakula Rinpoche

Bakula Rinpoche is a very senior lama and monk in the Gelugpa tradition, who is a spiritual as well as a political leader. For a long time spiritual and temporal leader of Ladakh, member of the State parliament of Jammu and Kashmir and the Federal Parliament of India, he now has the position of Indian ambassador to Mongolia. Gehlek Rinpoche and Bakula Rinpoche are long time associates and Gehlek Rinpoche here translates directly Bakula Rinpoche’s talk.

Since I have been asked to speak about Dharma and political involvement, I will now say a few words. Let it be clear first, Dharma and politics are two absolutely separate things. There should be no misunderstanding at all. However, can a politician be a spiritual practitioner? If they choose to do that, it is great. If they don’t want to, they don’t have to be. Can Dharma practitioners be politicians? Why not, they definitely can. So politics is not out of bounds for Dharma practitioners. As Buddhists we accept interdependent relationships. There is many ways of explaining and understanding it. Here we can say, there is a tremendous amount of contact between politics and Dharma practice where one complements the other. I will give you reasons. Basically I will give you myself as an example, but before I do that, I would like to say that I am a Dharma practitioner, there is no question about that. I am also a full fledged Buddhist monk. For a Buddhist monk or bhikshu it is wrong, definitely wrong, to be a politician. Why? Because as a fully ordained monk, you should not have many [temporary] goals, your lifestyle should be one of great simplicity, you should have fewer activities. Those are the rules of a full fledged monk. As an incarnate lama my duties are to study, learn, meditate and
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teach. So going into politics is actually wrong for me. If you ask me why, in spite of knowing all this, I am still indulging in politics, I have many reasons.

You have to know that I was born in a place called Ladakh. It is a poor, backward, difficult place. However, Ladakh has a huge name. It is very well known in many places. It is a very large area. It had very close connections with the earlier Tibetan kings. Ladakh was an absolutely independent kingdom itself. In Jammu and Kashmir there used to be a dynasty of rulers called ‘dobras’ who were the Kashmiri kings. They colonized Ladakh and completely overrun the Ladakhi culture and traditional way of living. Ladakhi independence was completely wiped out by the military power of those Kashmiri kings. Not only did they overrun Ladakh completely, but they robbed it of whatever wealth it had and of any culture it had. Ladakhis were not allowed to even practice Buddhism. The people of Ladakh became extremely poor. Not only that, if you look into the history of Ladakh, there are many monasteries that are 500 years or even 800 or 900 years old and there have been artists over the centuries who have left a tremendous treasure of artworks, images of the enlightened beings, etc. but the Dobra kings deprived the Ladakhis of even their basic livelihood. I happened to grow up in Ladakh in that critical period.

Forget about Buddhist education, etc, they did not allow any school system at all in Ladakh. It is not that Kashmiris don’t have any schools themselves, they have a complete western style graduation system, but they totally deprived Ladakhis of the opportunity to use it. When I was young, it was unusual for a Ladakhi kid to complete class 8 of high school. People were told that this person was over-educated and they used to think he must be very well educated. So the new rulers robbed Ladakh of any education system and they would never permit Buddhist studies at all. That was in the 1940s. I had just come back from completing my Buddhist studies in Tibet.

In about 1947/48 fortunately or unfortunately a big war broke out between Pakistan and India. A powerful military offensive by
Pakistan reached within almost seven miles of my monastery and at about that time the Dobra king had to renounce all his independent powers and cede the control over all his areas to India. Fortunately the Dobras lost their political power completely, and together with Jammu and Kashmir Ladakh became part of India.

The Indian government has protected Ladakh since that time very strongly. There are not many roads and no airplanes, but the Indians sent very strong armed forces to prevent attacks by Pakistan. One of my oldest monasteries called ‘Spituk’ has given shelter to the Indian soldiers that protect Ladakh.

As for myself, I went to Tibet at the age of 10 and on completion of my Buddhist studies there, I returned at the age of 20. Very fortunately, I passed my Geshe examination with outstanding results in the same year as His Holiness the present Dalai Lama was recognized and enthroned. When I returned to Ladakh, it was in that bad state. Jawaharlal Nehru, who was Ghandiji’ number one person in running India, went personally to Ladakh and was so shocked that he put his whole weight behind protecting Ladakh from the Pakistanis on the one side and also the release of the power by the Dobras on the other side. He helped a great deal. At about that time I, after returning from Tibet, planned to go into retreat for a few years, meditating on the Lam Rim and other things that I learned and gradually teach the people of Ladakh. That is how I wanted to spend my life. However the change to a new Kashmiri government did not go very smoothly for the Ladakhis. It was supposed to be a democratic government. But not only did they keep everything they had taken before, but also made new rules, according to which the monasteries were not allowed to own land at all. When the monasteries cannot own any land, the monks have no food. Earlier, I had received some letters by Nehru, asking me to come and talk to him, but I replied that I did not speak any other languages, I did not have any knowledge of Western customs and that therefore it was probably of no use. But when they had taken all the land from the monasteries, the monks all got together and asked me to be their leader and do something. First I went to Kashmir and tried to talk to the local government, but they did not pay any at-
tention and totally ignored me. Finally I went to India and met for the first time with Nehru. Mahatma Gandhi was not there at the time and I did not meet him. I met Nehru and he helped. He called the Kashmiri leaders down to Delhi. Kashmir was now part of India. He told them not to touch Ladakh and to let Ladakhis keep their traditional way of life. He told them that this was an order from the central government to the state government. So he was of great help.

In 1949 Nehru came to Ladakh. There were no roads there, so he had to come on horseback. He visited all the big monasteries. He did not come as a tourist – there was nothing to be toured. He just came to show support. He brought with him also the then Prime Minister of Kashmir, a man called Sheik Abdullah. I did never get along well with him after that for the rest of his life. They called me and Nehru said that obviously the people of Ladakh needed help and he had looked for somebody that could represent and lead them and could not find anybody. He said, ‘You are the only hope they have. So you will have to be the political leader of Ladakh, otherwise the same difficulties will repeat themselves again.’ I started laughing and told him, ‘I went to Tibet for 10 years and studied meditation, etc. If you want to know how to meditate, I can tell you. But about politics I know nothing. I don’t even know the Indian language, not a word. If I don’t even know what water means and what to go means, how can I be in politics? So don’t make jokes.’ But I thought about it and reflected that if I got into some kind of political power that perhaps I could make a difference to the people of Ladakh. I was thinking, ‘I may be a monk or incarnate Lama or whatever, but if it helps and since I have been called upon by a great person such as Nehru, who is like a Lord of the Lords, maybe I should accept.’ That is how I got into politics. Since I was in Tibet, I said my prayers every day and in the prayers it says, ‘For the benefit of all the sentient beings, I would like to obtain enlightenment.’ I had been saying that for years and now there was a situation where – perhaps not for the benefit of all sentient beings – but for the benefit of the people of Ladakh, I could do something. So I thought, ‘Let that be my guiding principle.’ I have no bodhicitta, I don’t even know what it is, but I have good and kind
thoughts. And these thoughts made me get involved on behalf of the people of Ladakh and so I got into politics. I worked with people and it is by the good fortune of the people of Ladakh and the blessings of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, or whatever it may be, that when I look at Ladakh today, it is not the old, difficult, poor Ladakh any more, but it is quite okay compared with those times. Economically, the country is much better than before, it is quite okay. As for the education, we may not have many PHD’s, but there are a number of people with BA’s and MA’s now, not just a hand full, but quite a lot of them. As far as the politics are concerned, although we are part of Jammu and Kashmir, we do have a lot of autonomy to decide over our own affairs. After long struggles, I became a member of the legislative assembly of Jammu and Kashmir, I became a minister of that state. That was the period where I had tremendous fights with Sheik Abdullah for the sake of the people of Ladakh. I did not have any personal problems with him, but for the sake of Ladakh we fought a lot. Finally I moved a seat of the Federal government in New Dehli and I became a member of Parliament there for a long time and I also became the spokesperson for all the Buddhists of India and addressed their difficulties. After 38 years of political and spiritual struggle for the people of Ladakh, their situation is now quite okay. Then I have spent the last 6 years as India’s ambassador to Mongolia. That is how I wasted my life.

When I saw the opportunity to literally serve the people of Ladakh, I went one step away from just sitting there and saying, ‘For the benefit of all beings’. Whether it was all sentient beings or not, there were a lot of human beings that needed help and since I was asked to do it, and was given the opportunity to serve the people, I took it and it was the right thing to do. That is the way Dharma practitioners should do it and can do it. But if you move into such a position out of desire and attachment, if you cannot let it go, then that is the wrong way. If there is an opportunity to help and if the opportunity is thrown in front of you, and if you are sure that you are able to help, then you should take that opportunity. That is how I went. If you work in politics with a kind heart and if you are totally dedicated to serving the people you are representing, if it is politics or any other work, Dharma practitioners
can definitely do it. But if it is mixed with the eight worldly Dharmas, the moment one recognizes that, one should withdraw.

When you are in a powerful position, you should know how people are suffering. You should know how a tiny, little deed of yours can make a difference to hundreds and thousands of peoples’ lives and their feelings. When you know that, you can be of great help. It is not so much that Dharma practitioners should be in politics, but if the politicians had Dharma, it would be very beneficial for a great number of people.

Look at Mahatma Gandhi. He did not do so much Dharma practice as in going to temples and worshipping, but what he did do was being totally dedicated to carrying out Buddha’s message. This he kept as his principle and in that he was followed by Nehru. He even formed five codes of ethics relating to the country’s politics. From that time onwards they became basic principles. Even though India is not free of problems, the basic root of Indian policy and politics is still the touch of Gandhi and his followers on the basis of the five ethics. That has been a tremendous help for millions of Indians and also indirectly others that India has contacts with. You can see how Dharma can positively influence politics.

Audience: How do you argue with political opponents and not get angry?
Bakula Rinpoche: In our prayers we normally say, ‘May all sentient beings have happiness and the cause of happiness. May they be free from suffering and the cause of suffering.’ So when you have to argue and fight with somebody, you have to think that this person is also a human being. If I keep on telling that person something to make him stop hurting other people, he may change his mind and not hurt others. He may pick up something and develop some compassion. With that sort of feeling, with such compassion, you can go ahead and argue. For example, if you have naughty children you may tell them a number of times not to steal things. They don’t listen. So you catch them and give them two or three spanks. You do it with love and compassion. Your wish is that this kid will learn better in future. With that, I
think it is okay. But if you have the wish to hurt and harm, that is wrong. You can point out with love to somebody that his or her actions are hurting a number of people – with love, that is the main thing. In the beginning we may not have the great love we have been talking about, but we can at least have some kindness and compassion towards that person and do it that way. That is what I did. Even in Buddha’s life stories, the Jataka tales, you can find examples. There is one where he was as ship’s captain and in order to try to save some seven hundred people he had to kill a certain person. He did that out of compassion. In that case it is considered to be a virtuous action. Sometimes you have to think in that manner as well.

I am not telling you, that you should all go into politics. The most important politics is the politics of helping oneself. The individual should in a very wise way gain control over the delusions, ignorance, attachment and hatred. These are known as the three poisons. If you want to defeat something, that is what you should struggle with. The change you need is a big change of mind. If the mind is very strongly influenced by the three poisons, try to remove them and that will be a good change. You have a great opportunity to learn by using the Lam Rim, which is one of the best methods to develop one individual to attain the highest level. Tomorrow we are going to have the high jump. But don’t rush. If you just jump for nothing, if you climb up those steps too fast, you are going to fall down for sure. The higher you jump, the more painful the fall from there will be. You people should go very slowly and gradually. That is the best. You have been listening to Lam Rim teachings and you have been practicing, and the way you are making the Tsoh offerings during the Lama Chöpa and how you do the protectors offerings and so on, is going very well. Recognize that here you have a great opportunity, do not miss it. There may be other centers doing similar practices, but the Jewel Heart Centers is what I have seen with my own eyes and they are doing very well. So don’t miss the opportunity and develop your own mind. Along with that of course, you have to work, because you have to eat and live. If you are a business person, you should be doing business. If you don’t, you are depriving yourself of an opportunity. You have to
be very diligent and work hard. But if the principle of your business is cheating other people, you should limit the cheating, and if you know the Dharma and have a good and kind mind, your cheating will be automatically limited. If you cheat people badly, the results will come and they will be terrible. If you are in politics, or in any other profession, it is an opportunity to serve people and instead of sitting there and just by thought saying, ‘For the benefit of all sentient beings’, there is an actual opportunity to practically do something. You should not miss either. Then gradually, if you can take the lay practitioners vows, the upasaka vows, it will be useful. You don’t have to take them. Dharma does not depend on changing your dress or hairstyle or anything. It depends on changing your mind and attitude. If you can take the lay vows, they are very good. Whatever teaching you have obtained in the evening, make sure you think about it the next morning. Don’t just take down notes and leave them until the following week. That will not do any good. Unlike we people, the Western people are extremely intelligent and well educated. So when you really pay attention, you will be able to do far better than other people. So read your notes, try to think and also raise questions. You don’t have to feel embarrassed and shy, but ask and learn. Make your Dharma practice into one that changes your mind and your motivation and way of living – that is the greatest way.

In Mongolia, when I arrived there, no upasakas were left. Since I have been there, about thirty or forty people have taken the lay vows, among them a number of women, who have taken on monastic vows. When I came to Mongolia, there was not as single nun in the country. Now there are quite a lot of them. I am sending them to India for further training. If some of you would like to do that in the future, it would be very good. But you don’t have to. Dharma is in the mind. You can practice it also within your own family. Also, if you work and make a little extra money, it is also good to make the best use of it. The best use is generosity, which means helping the poor, giving them something. I heard that over here, people give food to the poor. That is very good. It is also good to support schools and hospitals. That is very good and all these are acts of generosity. Well I have nothing more to say. Thank you.
Rinpoche: “Tricycle Magazine asked me to do an interview on this subject. I told them that this was not going to work. If this were to be the subject for an interview, in a 30-45 minutes questions and answers trying to explain all that would not be possible, some short answers would not really make sense. So we would probably do a disservice. That’s why I thought we spend some time on it now. Afterwards, if it is useful, we can edit it and give it to Tricycle. They can then use it for an article. If not, at least we don’t do a disservice.”

Meaning: that is not essential.

The Heart Sutra speaks from the point of view of the absolute mode of existence.

Buddhapalita’s explanation on emptiness is the Prasangika Madhyamika view, which is regarded the ultimate view on emptiness. See Glossary: Madhyamika.

The manifold appearances

Being a medium for external spirits.

In the Tibetan letters this is clearly seen: A = འ; O = བ

The first of the ten Bodhisattva grounds.

See Gelek Rinpoche, Solitary Yamantaka teachings on the generation stage, pg. 32ff.

The 6 sufferings: 1) no certainty, 2) dissatisfaction; 3) giving up the body again and again; 4) taking on a new existence again and again; 5) high becoming low again and again; 6) loneliness. Commentary: Gehlek Rippoche, Lam Rim Teachings, Ch. XIV.

Also called path of preparation: preparing for direct encounter with emptiness.

For more detailed information see page 79.

Tib. gom lam dorje tabu ting dzin.

Literature on the Heart Sutra: Dalai Lama, Essence of the Heart Sutra; Sermey Khensur Lobsang Tharchin, The Key to the Treasure of Shunyata, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, Heart of Wisdom. Donald S. Lopez, The Heart sutra explained.

Referring to the wisdom of emptiness.

Weekly teachings in Ann Arbor, open to everyone.

18 Tantrayana and Vajrayana are synonymous.


20 On the chart called: absorption stage and post-meditation stage.

21 *Tib. zhi lag* [zhiné and lhagtong combined]: union of calm abiding and special insight.

22 See page 23.

23 Also see note 11.

24 Lucky karma and unshakable karma both lay causes for positive results within samsara, while the real positive karma lays causes for liberation from samsara.

25 Rinpoche, a title given to recognized incarnate lamas.

26 Guntang Jampelyang is the same one as Guntang Tenpai Drömei.

27 That means, it is dependent on the collection of various factors.

28 The post-meditational stage.

29 Rinpoche uses this example to describe the difference between the obstructions to liberation = garlic, and the obstructions to omniscience = smell of garlic left in a container after removing the garlic.

30 *Tib. Uma gyän.* Verses not [yet] found.

31 For a commentary on the verse see Gelek Rinpoche, *How to integrate the primordial mind,* Chapter IX.

32 Explained in more detail in the section of the path of meditation, p. 128.


34 See page 46.

35 Here is not meant the direct perception of emptiness.

36 Play of words. Rinpoche: ‘In the Malaysian culture the Malaysians call themselves ‘bhumiputras’. The Malay language is an offshoot of Sanskrit. So they translate bhumiputra as ‘son of the soil’. In Malaysia, if you are not a Muslim, but a Hindu, Buddhist or Christian, you are not a son of the soil. You don’t have a lot of rights.’

37 After taking refuge one can take one or more lay vows, such as: 1) not killing; 2) not stealing; 3) no sexual misconduct; 4) no lying; 5) no intoxication. As the basic self-liberating precepts Rinpoche mentions in the Lam Rim teachings: 1) not killing human beings; 2) not stealing a certain value; 3) net involving in sexual misconduct; 4) not lying a big lie; 5) no overintoxication.


39 Incidentally, this talk was given on 19th March 1996. The process of the election campaign and the election itself in November that year actually
pretty much happened in the way outlined by Rinpoche.

Gyelpo means king; Trise are the smell-eaters, in sanskrit Ghandarvas. Tangpogyan means ‘The one adorned with a horse head’.

A Pratyeka buddha is actually only so-called, in reality it is an arhat.

Joke about Prince Charles who may never make it to the throne.

‘O Protector of all beings, Divine Conqueror who knows all, Great Buddha, with your retinue, please come forth from your Divine Abode.’
**Arhat** (Skt; Tib. *drachenpa*) ‘Enemy destroyer’ or ‘foe destroyer’. One who has overcome the forces of karma and delusion and attained liberation from cyclic existence and thus has obtained arhatship, the spiritual ideal of Hinayana Buddhism. It is the culmination of the four stages of perfection: in succession one becomes stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner, arhat. The arhat has achieved nirvana, but not buddhahood, because he does not return out of compassion to teach others as the Mahayana bodhisattva does.

**Arya** (Skt; Tib. *pakpa*) ‘Title meaning ‘noble one’. It indicates one who has attained the third of the five paths, the path of insight/seeing (Tib. *tong lam*) and so through an understanding of emptiness, has gone above the world.

**Avalokiteshvara** (Tib. *Chenrezig*) The great bodhisattva of compassion, chief disciple of Amithaba. The Dalai Lama is considered to be a incarnation of Avalokiteshvara. In China he is (in combination with his female counterpart Tara) known in female form as Kwan Yin.

**Bardo** (Tib; Skt. *anubhava*) Intermediate state. The state of consciousness between death and rebirth. It begins the moment the consciousness leaves the body and ceases the moment the consciousness enters the body of the next life. One remains in that state anywhere from a moment to forty-nine days.

**Bhumi.** Literally: Ground. The ten bhmis, grounds or bodhisattva stages are the realizations of superior or *arya* bodhisattvas. The stages are called: very joyful, stainless, luminous, radiant, difficult to overcome, approaching, gone afar, immovable, good intelligence, cloud of dharma. It are realizations on the mahayana paths of seeing [bhumi one] and the path of meditation [bhumi two to ten] and correspond with the paramitas.

**Bikshu** (Skt; Tib. *gelong*) Buddhist mendicant monk. Bikshuni is the female counterpart.

**Bodhimind** (Skt. *bodhicitta*; Tib. *jangchub-kyi sem*) ‘The awakened mind’, ‘the awakening mind’ or ‘mind of enlightenment’. Bodhimind or bodhicitta is the altruistic motivation of a bodhisattva: a mind that is directed towards
the attainment of buddhahood, for the sake of all living beings; the fully open and dedicated heart. Once one has generated the bodhi-mind, one enters the first of the bodhisattva paths, the accumulation path. The bodhimind is of two main types: relative or conventional and absolute or ultimate. The former is also of two types: that which aspires to highest enlightenment as a means of benefiting the world, and that which engages in the practice leading to enlightenment. Ultimate bodhimind is the latter of these placed within an understanding of emptiness.

Bodhisattva (Skt; Tib. jangchub sempa) Also referred to as ‘child of the Buddha’, ‘spiritual hero’, or ‘fortunate one’. A bodhisattva is a living being who has produced the spirit of enlightenment in himself and whose constant dedication, lifetime after lifetime, is to attain the unexcelled, perfect enlightenment of buddhahood for the sake of all living beings. The term bodhisattva refers to those at many levels: from those who have generated aspiration to enlightenment for the first time to those who have actually entered the bodhisattva path, which is developed through the ten stages (Skt. bhumis) and culminates in enlightenment, the attainment of buddhahood. Those who have embarked on the path but have not yet gained direct perception of the meaning of emptiness are called ordinary bodhisattvas; those who have attained the path of seeing and can in meditation directly perceive emptiness are called extra-ordinary or superior bodhisattvas or aryabodhisattvas.

Buddha nature Our potential to attain full enlightenment. Specifically, it is the ultimate nature of the mind. Every living being has buddha nature. Buddha nature and buddha seed are synonyms.

Buddha Sakyamuni ‘Sage of the Sakyas’, name of the buddha of our era, who lived in India 563-483 BC. He was a prince from the Sakya clan. He taught the sutra and tantra path to liberation; founder of what came to be known as Buddhism. His mundane name was Siddharta Gautama. Buddha Sakyamuni is the fourth of one thousand buddhas that are to appear in this world age. Also see: Buddha.

Buddha (Tib. sang-gye) Lit. ‘awakened one’. Title of one who has attained the highest attainment for a living being. It refers to one who has completely purified (sang) all the defilements, the two obscurations, and completely expanded (gye) or perfected his mind to encompass all excellences and knowledges. A fully enlightened being is perfect in omniscience and compassion. Every being has the potential to become a completely enlightened buddha. There are countless buddhas.

Buddha’s bodies (Skt. kaya, Tib. ku) There are several divisions. If three kayas: (1) dharmacakaya or truth-body or ultimate body, (2) sambhogakaya or enjoyment-body or beatific body, (3) nirmanakaya or emanation-body or incarnational body. The last two ones together are called form-body or rupa-kaya. If two kayas: (1) truth-body or dharmacakaya and (2) form-body or rupakaya. If four kayas: truth-body divided into (1) svabhavikakaya or nature-body and (2)
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**jnanakaya** or wisdom-body; the form-body divided into (3) **sambogakaya** or enjoyment-body and (4) **nirmanakaya** or emanation-body.

**Buddhadharma**  Buddha's teachings and the inner realizations attained by practicing them.

**Chandrakirti** (ca. sixth-seventh century C.E.)  The most important Madhyamika philosopher after Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. He is regarded the 'ultimate' disciple of Nagarjuna as he is the elucidator of the essence of Nagarjuna's message. He wrote famous commentaries on Nagarjuna's work, such as *Guide to the Middle Way* (Skt. *Madhyamikavatara*). So he is considered one of the highest authorities on the subject of the profound nature of reality.

**Channels** (Skt. *nadi*; Tib. *tse*)  A constituent of the vajra body through which energy-winds and drops flow. In the body there are three main channels: the central channel (Skt. *avadhati, sbhusnumma*; Tib. *uma*), the major energy channel of the vajra body; the right channel (Tib. *roma*) and the left channel (Tib. *kyangma*). From the tip of the sex organ up to the top of the head it is very straight, but from there it bends down in an arch and terminates between the two eyebrows. It is located exactly midway between the right and left halves of the body but it is closer to the back than to the front. Immediately to either side of the central channel are the right and left channels.

**Cittamatra**  The Cittamatra or Mind-only school is one of the two mahayana schools of buddhist tenets, the other being the Madhyamika School. Cittamatra means 'mind only'. The cittamatra, also known as Yogacara, mahayana system of tenets developed by Asanga and his brother Vasubandhu. According to this school all phenomena are the same nature as the mind that apprehends them. Dependent phenomena are truly existent but they do not exist external to the mind.

**Clear light** (Tib. *ösel*)  The subtlest state of mind, which becomes manifest only when all the gross minds have ceased their active functions. This state is experienced by ordinary beings naturally at the time of death, though it may not be and cannot be recognized by those not trained to do so. With the mind of clear light -and the pure illusory body- the full awakening of buddhahood can be achieved. The clear light is potentially with everyone; its full development in order to sustain the spiritual path is aimed at in highest tantra yoga practice.

**Completion stage** (Tib. *dzök rim*)  Highest yoga tantra realizations that are attained through completing a special method that causes the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve within the central channel.

**Concentration** (Skt. *samadhi*; *Tib. ting dzin*)  The ability to focus the mind single-pointedly on any chosen object of meditation and keep it there. Concentration meditation is one of the two main forms of meditation, the other one being analytical meditation.

**Dependent arising** or interdependent origination or dependent existence or inderdependent relationship. (pratityasamutpada)  Any phenomenon that
exists in dependence upon other phenomena is a dependent-related phenomenon. All phenomena are dependent-related because all phenomena depend upon their parts. Sometimes dependent-related is distinguished from dependent-arising with the latter meaning arising in dependence upon causes and conditions. However, the two terms are often used interchangeably.

Dharma (Skt., Tib. chö) Buddha’s teachings and the realizations that are attained in dependence on them. One’s spiritual development. ‘That which holds one back from suffering’. Also, any object of knowledge.

Dharmadhatu (Skt.; Tib. chöying) Realm of true reality. The ultimate reality underlying phenomena; that is, their non-existence as intrinsic natures, or emptiness. The wisdom of dharmadhatu is one of the five wisdoms.

Dharmakaya (Skt.; Tib. chö ku) Truth Body. The mind of a fully enlightened being, free of all coverings, remaining meditatively absorbed in the direct perception of emptiness while simultaneously cognizing all phenomena.

Dualistic appearance The appearance to mind of an object together with the inherent existence of that object.

Eight worldly dharmas Eight worldly concerns or the eight childish attitudes: 1) gain, finding, obtaining, profit, acquirement; 2) loss, not-finding, disprofit, damage; 3) fame, glory, celebrity, reputation; 4) dishonour, disgrace, infamy, disrepute; 5) praise, laud, commendation, renown; 6) blame, abuse, reproach, reproof, censure, reviling, degradation; 7) well-being, happiness, prosperity, pleasure. (skr. (sukha); 8) misery, pain, distress, trouble (skr. dukha).

Emptiness (Skt. shunyata, Tib. tongpa nyi) The absence of all false ideas about how things exist; specifically the lack of apparent independent self-existence of phenomena.

Enlightenment (Tib. jangchub) Full awakening, buddhahood. The ultimate goal of buddhist practice, attained when all limitations have been removed from the mind and all one’s positive potential has been realized; a state characterized by unlimited compassion, skill and wisdom.

Eon (Skt. kalpa) A large period of time, described as the time it takes a dove to exhaust a mountain of grain the size of the Mount Everest by removing one grain every thousand years.

Eternalism or existentialism. (Tib. tak-tä) Belief in an unchanging ego or self-nature in either persons or phenomena. One of the two extremes to be avoided; the opposite of nihilism.

Field of Merit (Tib. tsok ching) In general a field of merit is any basis on which one can collect merit, like a field of earth is the basis on which you can grow crops, the crops depending on the field. A supreme field for accumulating merit are the holy beings, to which we can offer the seven limbs of our practice, the holy beings acting as a field in which we plant and nourish our seeds of virtue.
Five paths   According to dharma a path is necessarily an internal path. There are mundane and supramundane paths. A supramundane path is any path leading to liberation or enlightenment, for example, the realizations of renunciation, bodhicitta and the correct view of emptiness. Strictly speaking only superior beings, aryas, possess supramundane paths. The five paths are: 1. path of merit or path of accumulation (Tib. *tsok lami*); 2. path of preparation (Tib. *jor lam*); 3. path of seeing or path of insight (Tib. *tong lam*); 4. path of meditation (Tib. *gom lam*); 5. path of no-more-learning. The first two paths are the paths of ordinary bodhisattvas, the following two paths are the paths of ary bodhisattvas or superior bodhisattvas, on the fifth path the bodhisattva has become a buddha. The paths in hinayana carry the same name but differ in the practice.

Four Noble Truths (Skt. *catuh-arya-satya*, Tib. *pakpei denpa zhi* )  1. The truth of suffering; 2. The truth of the causes of suffering. 3. The truth of the cessation of suffering. 4. The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering. They are called ‘noble’ truths because they are supreme objects of meditation. Through meditation on these four objects we can realize ultimate truth directly and thus become a noble, or superior being.

Four powers of purification   Four practices of purification used to counteract the karmic imprint of negative actions. 1. Power of the base (compensation): if enlightened being then take refuge; if non-enlightened being then meditate love-compassion. 2. Power of action: generally any virtuous [anti-dote] action. 3. Power of regret. 4. Power of repentance or promise (commitment).

Four schools of tenets   Four philosophical views taught by Buddha according to the inclinations and dispositions of his disciples. They are the Vaibhasika, Sautantrika, Cittamatra and Madhyamika tenets. They are studied in sequence, the lower tenets being the means by which the higher tenets are understood. The first two are Hinayana tenets and the second two are Mahayana tenets.


Gelong   See Bikshu

Gelugpa   The tradition of Tibetan Buddhism established by Je Tsongkhapa as a fusion of older sects, sometimes named Ganden Kagyu, also known as the New Kadam, The name Gelug means: wholesome way or: virtuous tradition. The three great Gelug monasteries are Ganden, Drepung and Sera. The other main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism are the Nyingma who go back to Guru Padmasambhava, Sakya going back to Sakya Pandita, and the Kagyu going back to Marpa-Milarepa-Gampopa.

Generation stage (Tib. *kye rim*) Also called development stage. The first of the two main stages of *maha-annutara-yoga-tantra* during which one cultivates the clear appearance and divine pride of one’s chosen meditational deity. The second stage is called the completion stage.
Guru (Skt; Tib. lama) See Spiritual master

**Guru Yoga** (Skt.) The fundamental tantric practice whereby one’s guru is seen as (a) identical with the buddhas, (b) one’s personal meditational deity and (c) the essential nature of one’s own mind.

**Heart Sutra** The essence of wisdom sutra. Of the several perfection of wisdom (Skt. *Prajnaparamita*) sutras a very condensed and famous one.

**Hinayana** Sanskrit term for ‘Lesser Vehicle’. Also called Theravada or ‘Way of the Elders’. The Hinayana goal is to attain merely one’s own liberation from suffering by completely abandoning delusions.

**I or self or ego** (Skt. *atman*, Tib. *nga*) Buddhism does not accept the existence of an independent, self-existent, unchanging ego or self, because if such were to exist, a person would be unchanging and would be unable to purify himself of fettering passions and attain buddhahood. Rinpoche often refers to this one as ‘I rinpoche’, ‘the Big Boss inside’, the ‘Queen Bee’ or ‘Dictator I’. There is acceptance of a relative, impermanent, changeable, conscious entity, which is the continuation of life, linking one’s former life to this life, and this life to future lives.

**Ignorance** (Skt. *avidya*, Tib. *marikpa*) The root cause of cyclic existence; not knowing the way things actually are and misconstruing them to be permanent, satisfactory and inherently existent. The delusions that gives rise to all other delusions and the karma they motivate. Ignorance can be eradicated by the wisdom of emptiness.

**Illusion body or illusory body** (Skt. *maya-kaya*, Tib. *gyu lu*) A subtle bodily form generated through the practice of the completion stage of highest yoga tantra.

**Kagyu** One of the main Tibetan buddhist traditions, the other ones being Gelugpa, Nyingma and Sakya. In the lineage of the kagyu are well-known Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa and Trungpa Rinpoche.

**Karma** (Skt.; Tib. *le*) Deeds. Term referring to actions and their effects. Through the force of intention we perform actions with our body, speech, and mind, and all of these actions produce effects. The effect of virtuous actions is happiness and the effect of negative actions is suffering.

**Labrang** (Tib.) Institute of a reincarnated lama

**Lam Rim** (Tib.) Stages on the spiritual path to enlightenment in sutrayana. In tanrayana the stages of the path are called *Nag Rim*.

**Lama** See Spiritual master.

**Lama Chöpa** (Tib.) A tantric guru-yoga practice.

**Madhyamika** (Skt.; Tib. *Umapa*) One of the two main schools of Mahayana tenets. A system of analysis founded by Nagarjuna, based on the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutras of Shakyamuni buddha, considered to be the supreme presentation of the wisdom of emptiness. There are two divisions of this school, Madhyamika-Svatantrika and Madhyamika-Prasangika, of which the latter is Buddha’s final view.
Mahasiddha  Sanskrit term for ‘greatly accomplished one’. Used to refer to yogis with high attainments.

Mahayana (skr., Tib. tegchen)  ‘The great vehicle’, called ‘great’ because it carries all living beings to enlightenment or buddhahood. It is distinguished from hinayana, which only carries each person who rides on it to their own personal liberation. It is the vehicle in which refuge is taken in the scriptures revealed after Buddha’s death (and propagated by masters such as Nagarjuna, Asanga, etc.), as well as in the earlier scriptures accepted by hinayana. Also, unlike the hinayana, whose basis is renunciation, the basis of the mahayana is great compassion; and its aim, rather than personal nirvana, is fully omniscient buddhahood. The practises of a bodhisattva. Mahayana includes both the vehicle of perfections (paramitayana) and vajrayana

Maitreya Buddha (Tib. Jampa)  The embodiment of the loving-kindness of all the Buddhas. At the time of Buddha Shakyamuni he manifested as a Bodhisattva disciple. In the future he will manifest as the fifth universal Buddha.

Manjushri (Tib. Jampelyang)  Male meditational deity. The eternally youthful crown prince, the embodiment of the wisdom of all enlightened beings. From Manjushri the lineage of the profound view of emptiness was handed down to Nagarjuna. Manjushri incarnated in human form is called Manjunatha (Jam mgon), an epithet for Tsongkhapa.

Marpa Lotsawa [1012-1092]  A great Tibetan yogi of the eleventh and twelfth century, disciple of Naropa and teacher of Milarepa. Founder of the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

Meditation (Skt. bhavana, Tib. gom)  Literally ‘getting used to’. The process of controlling, training and transforming the mind that leads one to liberation and enlightenment. The process of becoming thoroughly familiar with beneficial states of mind through both analytical investigation and single-pointed concentration.

Merit  The wholesome tendencies implanted in the mind as a result of committing skillful actions. That positive wholesome tendencies or energy has the power to create happiness and good qualities.

Milarepa, Jetsun (1040-1123)  A Tibetan yogi who achieved buddhahood in one lifetime. He was the foremost disciple of Marpa, famous for his intense practice, devotion to his guru attainment of enlightenment and his many songs of spiritual realization. His biography is a favorite example of hardship undertaken in order to attain enlightenment.

Mind (Tib. shepa)  That which is clarity and cognizes.

Nagarjuna  Saint, scholar and mystic of Buddhist India, born about four hundred years after the Buddha, who revived the mahayana in the first century AD by bringing to light the teachings on the Perfection of Wisdom, the lineage of wisdom, according to the myth handed over to him by the nagas. He is author of the fundamental Madhyamika work and founder of
the Madhyamika or Middle Way school of tenets. He is said to have lived five hundred sixty years due to his alchemical ability.

Neuroses (Skt. *klesha*, Tib. *nyong mongs*) Often translated as delusions or as afflicted emotions. A thought, emotion or impulse that is pervaded by ignorance, disturbs the mind and initiates actions (*karma*) which keep one bound within cyclic existence. That which makes the mind impure. Delusions are mental factors. The three root delusions or the three poisons: ignorance, attachment and hatred; from these many others arise.

Nihilism (Tib. *che-ta*) Belief that phenomena are completely non-existent. One of the extremes to be avoided; the opposite is eternalism.

*Nirmanakaya* (Skt.; *tul ku*) Emanation body. Form in which the enlightened mind appears in order to benefit ordinary beings.

Paramitas Perfections of the bodhisattva. The six paramitas are the perfections of giving, moral discipline, patience, effort, mental stabilization, and wisdom. They are called perfections because they are motivated by bodhicitta. They correspond with the ten bhumis.

*Pratimoksha* See Vows

*Pratyeka* Solitary Realizer The higher of the two types of arhats of the hinayana. The hinayana practitioner who attains nirvana by following his personal path and living in solitude, but who lacks the complete realization of a buddha so cannot benefit limitless beings as a buddha can. He is contrasted to the sravaka arhat who attains nirvana largely by listening to teachings and living in groups.

Rebirth The entrance of consciousness into a new state of existence after death and the intermediate state.

*Rupakaya* (Skt.) See Buddha’s bodies.

*Sambogakaya* (Skt.; *long ku*) Enjoyment body. One of the form-bodies of a buddha. The body of Buddha as it exists in the Buddha fields or paradises and upper realms; form in which the enlightened mind teaches the highly realized bodhisattvas who are at that stage. This body is fully adorned with the unique physical characteristics of a buddha. It can only be seen by those who have attained the highly realized stage of an arya.

*Samsara* Cyclic existence; the recurring cycle of death and rebirth under the control of ignorance and fraught with suffering.

*Sangha* (Skt.) As object of refuge it is the community of *arya* beings or saints, those who have achieved spiritual aims -have attained a direct realization of emptiness- and are able to help. According to the *vinaya* any community of four or more fully ordained monks is also a sangha. Any being, lay or ordained, who has taken bodhisattva vows is also a sangha. In daily life we regard the community of those on the spiritual path as a sangha.

*Self* See: I

*Sentient Being* (Skt. *sattva*, Tib. *semchen*) Any being who possesses a mind that is contaminated by delusions or their imprints. Both ‘sentient being’ and ‘living being’ are terms used to distinguish beings whose minds are
contaminated by any of the two obstructions from Buddhas, whose minds are completely free from these obstructions.

**Shamatha** (Skt.; Tib. *zhinay*) Mental quiescence or meditative equipoise. The tranquil, single-pointed settling of the mind on an object of meditation for a sustained period of time. A degree of concentration characterized by mental and physical ecstasy. The nine stages leading to shamatha are degrees of concentration

Shantideva (687-763) A great Indian Buddhist teacher, meditator and scholar, most famous for his masterpiece, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara, Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life.*

**Spiritual master** (Skt. *guru*, Tib. *lama*) A spiritual guide or teacher. One who shows a disciple the path to liberation and enlightenment. A direct guru is any spiritual guide from whom we have received teachings in this life, a lineage guru is any spiritual guide who has passed on the lineage of teaching received by our own direct gurus. One’s principal spiritual guide is also known as one’s root guru (Tib. *tsewei lama*). In tantra, one’s teacher is seen as inseparable from the meditational deity and the essential nature of one’s mind.

Sravaka, tib. *tsuddo*) Hearer. Hearers are disciples in Hinayana. Literally: 'those who listen to the teachings'. Their goal is nirvana, liberation or arhatship to be reached along the five paths of a hearer. They are of eight types according to the level of delusions they have abandoned: approaching the state of a stream-enterer, abiding in it; approaching the state of a once-returner, abiding in it, approaching the state of a never returner, abiding in it, approaching the state of a foe-destroyer, abiding in it. A stream-enterer is on the path of seeing and will never again be reborn in the three lower realms, a once-returner will return to the desire realm only once more, and a never returner will never again return to the desire realm.

**Sutra** (Skt.; Tib. *do*) The teachings of Buddha that are open to everyone to practice. This pre-tantric division of buddhist teachings stresses the cultivation of bodhicitta and the practices of the 6 perfections.

**Sutrayana** The pre-tantric vehicle or path of Buddhism, leading to the attainment of full enlightenment over three countless eons through the practice of the six perfections; hence also called the perfection vehicle (*paramitayana*)

**Tantra** (Skt., Tib. *gyu*) Literally ‘thread’ or ‘stream’ or ‘continuity’, the ‘stream’ or ‘tread’ of innate wisdom embracing all experience. Another name is: secret mantra. The texts of the secret-mantra teachings of Buddhism. The esoteric teaching of Buddha. The essential practice of tantra that distinguishes it from sutra is bringing the result into the path. The practice involves identification of oneself with a fully enlightened deity. The tantric stages of the path are called *nag rim*. Levels of tantra: Successively *Kriya* tantra (Skt.; Tib. *dyagyu*) which uses many external rituals
such as washing etc.; *charya* tantra (Skt.; Tib. *chö gyü*) which balances outer methods with inner ones; *yoga* tantra (Skt.; Tib. *neljor gyü*) which emphasises internal methods; *maha anuttara yoga* tantra (Skt.; Tib. *lama me gyü*), which exclusively relies upon internal methods. The first two are called lower tantras, the last two higher tantras.

**Theravada**  ‘Vehicle of the Elders’. Tradition of buddhism following its earlier style of practice and understanding of scripture. Sometimes called *hinayana*. Its final goal is *arhat*ship.

Three principles of the path: determination to be free, bodhicitta or the altruistic mind, wisdom.

**Tsongkhapa** (1357-1419)   Literally ‘The man from the onion land (Tsong)’. Je Tsongkhapa was a great fourteenth-century scholar and teacher who reforming the Kadampa tradition restored the purity of buddhadharma in Tibet, thus founding the Gelug tradition. His many treatises finalized the work begun by Atisha of clarification and synthesis of the vast body of Indian scriptures and schools of practice into a unified exposition of sutrayana and tantrayana paths. He wrote several lamrims, the most well-known one is Great exposition on the Stages of the Path, *Lam rim chen mo*. On the stages in tantra he wrote the Great exposition of secret mantra, sNgags rim chen mo. He is regarded a full enlightened being and along with Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1363) and the Sakya Pandita (1182-1251 an emanation of Manjushri. That is why he is called Jamgon, ‘gentle lord’, indicating that he and the deity Manjugosa-form of Manjushri- are of one essence. He is regarded as the synthesis of Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani and therefore regarded as the embodiment of the wisdom, compassion and power of all the buddhas.

**Vajra** (Skt.; Tib. *dorje*)  Diamond scepter. Generally the Sanskrit word ‘vajra’ means indestructible like a diamond and powerful like a thunderbolt.

**Vajrayana** (Skt.)  Secret mantra vehicle. The advanced means to quickly achieve buddhahood -within one lifetime- for the sake of all sentient beings. Its method is bringing the result into the path. It is also called: *tantrayana*. It is part of the mahayana, which is divided into *sutrayana* and *tantrayana*.

**Vows**  Promises to refrain from certain actions. The three sets of vows are the Vows of individual liberation [pratimoksha], the Bodhisattva vows, and the Vajrayana vows.

**Yidam** (Tib sometimes *lha*)  Also called meditational deity. A male or female figure embodying a particular aspect of the fully enlightened experience and used as the focus of concentration and identification in tantra.

**Yoga** (Skt.; Tib. *neljor*)  A term used for various spiritual practices.


About Gehlek Rimpoche

Born in Lhasa, Tibet, Kyabje Gehlek Rimpoche was recognized as an incarnate lama at the age of four. Carefully tutored by Tibet’s greatest living masters, he received specialized individual teaching at Drepung Monastery, the nation’s largest monastery.

In 1959, Gehlek Rimpoche was among those forced into exile, fleeing the Communist Chinese who had occupied Tibet since 1951. While in India, Rimpoche as a member of a group of sixteen monks, was chosen to continue specific studies with the great masters who had escaped Tibet, including the Dalai Lama’s personal tutors.

At the age of twenty-five, Rimpoche gave up monastic life. In the mid-70’s, Gehlek Rimpoche was encouraged by his teachers to begin teaching in English. Since that time he has gained a large following throughout the world. Coming to the U.S. in the mid-80’s, Rimpoche later moved to Ann Arbor, MI and in 1987 founded Jewel Heart, an organization dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture and Buddhism. Today, Jewel Heart has chapters throughout the U.S. and in Malaysia, Singapore and the Netherlands.

A member of the last generation of lamas to be born and fully educated in Tibet, Gehlek Rimpoche is particularly distinguished for his understanding of contemporary society and his skill as a teacher of Buddhism in the West. He is now an American citizen. Gehlek Rimpoche’s first book, the national bestseller, Good Life, Good Death, was published in 2001.
About Jewel Heart

Jewel Heart is an educational and cultural center whose doors are open to all. Its purpose is to transmit the essence of Tibetan Buddhism in an authentic and accessible form. Jewel Heart provides guidance and practical methods to anyone interested in spiritual development, as well as to those who wish to follow the traditional Buddhist path.

The name Jewel Heart was chosen to represent the organization because the heart is the essence of the human being, and the jewel something of great value – considered precious. Through embracing the preciousness of our life and developing our qualities, inner peace will grow, and our actions will be influenced by compassionate concern for others. It is to this end that Jewel Heart dedicated its efforts.

The Jewel Heart logo contains three graphic elements: the spinning jewel wheel, the lotus, and the flame. The central wheel symbolizes the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The Buddha represents our potential for enlightenment. The Dharma is the spiritual development within each individual. The Sangha is the community of those individuals, who have developed wisdom, act as guides.

In nature, the lotus rises from the mud, yet remains pure. Similarly, we are capable of rising above ordinary conceptions and putting love and compassion into action in daily life. The flame that surrounds the jewel wheel represents the fire of wisdom, consuming all obstacles and bringing insight.

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