

Dzogchen Meditation

by

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1 Introduction

This commentary is based on a treatise written by the great Dzogchen master Longchen Rabjam, widely regarded as the most important Dzogchen practitioner in the history of Tibet. A great yogi of hidden practice, he exerted tremendous effort to realize enlightenment by purifying his own mind through spiritual practice. Many marvelous accounts exist of the spiritual manifestation that occurred when he undertook retreats in the very remotest part of Tibet. He lived without any form of luxury and ate only very simple food. From his biography, we learn that he used a sack to sleep in as well as a pillow to sit on. He completely renounced the worldly life and attained enlightenment in a single lifetime. Among the many treatises that he wrote is *The Trilogy of Finding Comfort and Ease*, which is comprised of *Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind*, *Finding Comfort and Ease in Meditation*, and *Finding Comfort and Ease in Illusoriness*. This commentary is based on the second book of this trilogy: *Finding Comfort and Ease in Meditation*.

Usually, we are exhausted by our confusion; our body is tired, our mind is drained, and our speech is exhausted. Such exhaustion stems from our confusion about who we are on a deep level; this confusion must be eliminated by attaining genuine wisdom. Consequently, we seek comfort and ease by pursuing refuge and applying meditation to relieve the exhausting confusion. The difference between samsara and nirvana is not really that big; it is only a matter of confusion and non-confusion— recognizing the true nature of our mind or not recognizing the true nature of our mind.

The view of Dzogchen is the ground of our very being, our own true nature. No difference exists between the perception of emptiness in Dzogchen and the Madhyamika School's understanding of emptiness. The Buddha explained this emptiness as being “Transcendental wisdom, inexpressible, inconceivable, and non-conveyable.” Moreover, the view of Dzogchen knows no birth. It is not possible to locate the point in time when it came into being because its nature is like space; if there is no point of origination, we cannot find a point of abiding or a point of cessation. Thus, the ground of our being is free from origination, abiding, and cessation. It is unconditional.

The Dzogchen practitioner does not search for enlightenment elsewhere but looks for Buddhahood within him- or herself. If we forget that we are riding a horse and search for the horse in all directions of the world, we will never find it. Ultimate peace and harmony can only be found within ourselves because the treasure of complete happiness—harmony and peace—is buried deep within our own mind. Our joy does not depend on external factors; we can tap into the source of internal happiness to experience genuine inner peace and satisfaction enjoyed by sublime beings like buddhas and bodhisattvas. Happiness other than conditional and limited happiness cannot be given to us by a teacher, the Buddha, or any other individual. Consequently, the Buddha said we have to work for our own salvation.

The mind, as the ground of our being, does not have an evil nature. Its nature is very positive. The three fundamental qualities of the mind are emptiness, clarity, and compassion. Each and every living being is endowed with a mind with such attributes. On this fundamental level, there is not the slightest difference between the mind of a fully enlightened person, a Buddha, and the mind of a completely confused sentient being.

The essence of mind is empty in the same way that space facilitates form. The emptiness of the mind offers us the possibility to experience samsara or nirvana. The mind is free from duality, but can still manifest dualities. The mind is naturally free from the duality of happiness and sorrow; nevertheless, we dualistically experience happiness as opposed to misery, or misery as opposed to joy. The spacious sky is free from change, but we still experience day and night; the crystal is colorless, yet it still assumes the color of any object placed on it.

The clarity of mind can be compared to the illumination of heavenly objects such as the sun, the moon, and the stars. The luminosity of these objects is inseparable from the object itself. The rays of the sun are not separate from the sun. Likewise, the enlightened qualities attained by fully enlightened beings are actually present as a potential in the very ground of our own being. The

clarity nature of the mind is self-cognizant, meaning we are able to cognize this nature on a deep experiential level. If we understand this and meditate to attain realization of this view, we do not need to put in a lot of fabricated effort to attain enlightenment or escape the causes that lead to samsaric existence. Actually, the nature of our mind does not have to be corrected at all; it only has to be left as it is, observed as it is. It is completely perfect. If we try to intrude the nature of the mind with fabrications—if we do not leave it alone—it will be disturbed. Consequently, instead of improving, it will deteriorate its manifest quality. In other words, our very effort will create difficulties.

Many masters have said that, if you really want to understand *trekchö* (through cutting) of the Dzogchen view, you need to understand the Madhyamika view of emptiness. Without doing so, you run the risk of straying into "*neither existence nor non-existence*," which is the peak of the cyclic existence of samsara. This state of deep absorption can easily be confused with Dzogchen meditation.

Ordinarily, sentient beings are under the influence of karma, rambling thoughts and emotions, and the corresponding miseries because of our fixation on the duality of the perceiver and the perceived object. When we encounter the six sensory objects as form, sound, smell, taste, and texture as well as mental phenomena through our senses, the six corresponding sensory consciousnesses arise. Visual consciousness arises upon eye contact and so on. If the sixth mental consciousness fixates upon the object perceived by the five consciousnesses as an independently existing experience—not triggered by the encounter with the corresponding objects, but instead existing by itself—this is what we mean by a dualistic fixation on the perceiver and the perceived object. The result is grasping onto the self.

When the eye sense faculty looks at a visual form, it does so to satisfy this faculty. When our "I" encounters beautiful objects, it reacts with craving; when it meets repulsive objects, it reacts with aversion. The reactive emotions of craving and aversion contain the element of delusion. Together, craving, aversion, and delusion are the three root poisons that afflict our minds. Because of these emotions, we accumulate mental, vocal, and physical karma. These karmic complexes act as the primary cause of various forms of the various limitations, shortcomings, and mistakes we experience as suffering in the cyclic existence of samsara.

In our ordinary situation, we seem to take refuge in the fictitious self. Our body and mind have been serving this self, not only in this life but since time without beginning and up to this point. Yet it is not beneficial to serve this fictitious ego in this manner. Thus, as Dharma practitioners, we are not concerned about the well-being of this fictitious ego but focus instead on selflessness, trying to realize the emptiness of the self. To this end, we must acquire and take refuge in the wisdom that realizes the emptiness of the self.

With a strong sense of ego, it is challenging to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion. The mind becomes so full of self that no room is left for these emotions to arise. On the other hand, the wisdom that realizes the emptiness of self coexists naturally with loving-kindness and compassion. As a bird with two wings can soar high in the blue sky, a spiritual practitioner endowed with the wisdom that realizes the emptiness of self, loving-kindness, and compassion can soar high in the exalted state of Buddhahood.

The Buddha gave two kinds of tantric teachings: teachings connected based on method—the development stage—and teachings based on wisdom—the completion stage. We use techniques based on the development stage to purify our impure perceptions of the environment and the sentient beings in it. By practicing the completion stage, we try to remove the gross and subtle fixation on our self to remove even the last traces of belief in the inherent existence of things. Whether we meditate on a deity, our spiritual master, the buddhas and bodhisattvas, or whatever sublime beings we envision with our mind, it is essential to synthesize our practice with the completion practice—the wisdom aspect.

Ordinarily, sentient beings perceive the apparent reality but do not realize the actual reality. In the apparent reality, we perceive the point of origination (birth), the point of dwelling, and the point of cessation (death). This goes for all phenomena as well as for people. However, with the perception of actual reality, we transcend beyond these three concepts. In the ultimate truth, our body and mind, and content of mind, thoughts and emotions, know no birth and, therefore, no death. Something that knows no birth cannot go through a process of death. This is not like the concept of eternalism but is a kind of pervasiveness. If phenomena appear to come from birth, we should employ analytical meditation and ask whether this birth has occurred from itself or from something else. If we gain insight into how birth occurs for one phenomenon, this will be equal to gaining insight into the birth of all phenomena. By gaining this insight, we meditate that outer and inner phenomena assume the nature of clean, clear empty space and allow our minds to rest within this space, without the barriers of origination, abiding, or cessation. The reason we dissolve everything into the expanse of space is not that we do not like the outer and inner phenomena, but to lessen our fixation on the duality of these phenomena, which splits the reality into pieces and creates complex afflictive emotions.

All these meditation techniques should be sealed by the practice of loving-kindness and compassion, and the generation of the altruistic mind of Bodhicitta, as well as wisdom. Otherwise, our meditation technique will not have the flavor of the true Dharma, and will not serve the purpose of transcendental meditation. Instead, it will confine us to the higher planes of existence, unable to escape the cyclic existence of samsara.

2 The Preliminary Practices

The realization of the genuine nature of our mind cannot be attained through money, power, prestige, or fame. The ultimate reality of our mind cannot be achieved by becoming very learned or knowledgeable in Buddhist scriptures alone. One of the Buddha's disciples was very learned in the scriptures, but he was a failure when it came to the ultimate realization of the nature of his mind.

The inner quality of sentient beings is wonderful, but as this quality is not apparent, we cannot see this. When we are not able to see it, we cannot use it and are not able to attain the corresponding advantage of this beautiful quality. Our inner quality can be compared with a high-quality car; not using it correctly will create a risk for the driver as well as people on the streets. Our body, speech, and mind are beautiful mechanisms, but they must be appropriately used. Doing so guarantees us full enlightenment. However, if we use them incorrectly, tragedy will befall ourselves and others. Buddhadharma compares our physical human organism to a boat sailing on the samsaric ocean. We cannot cross to the other shore of nirvana without the boat. Lacking a human body, we will not be able to attain Buddhahood.

At present, our mind is like a stained mirror. Since the nature of the mirror is clarity, the stains are adventitious and can be removed. After removing the stains from the mirror, the surface does not need to be improved by further cleaning—it is clean by nature, with an ability to reflect external objects. Likewise, since the stains on our mind are adventitious, they are removable, and we can realize the clean and transparent nature of our mind, capable of reflecting everything without fixation and grasping. To remove these stains, Longchen Rabjam's treatise *Taking Comfort and Ease in Meditation* presents us with three preliminary practices: meditation on impermanence, cultivation of loving kindness and compassion, and Vajrasattva and guru yoga practice. These practices are referred to as the outer, special, and unique preliminary practices.

The progression of the preliminary practices is likened to a staircase. First, we practice meditation on impermanence, then meditation on loving-kindness, then Vajrasattva practice, and finally guru yoga. If we are beginners, then the preliminary practices are more important than the actual ones. By working each step of the staircase, we safely reach the top; however, if we try to jump steps, we are in danger of falling. Thus, progressive development is important.

2.1 Preparation for Meditation

We should seek a place that is free from external distraction and noise, where our mind can also be peaceful and free from discursive thoughts and emotions. We should abstain from meditating in places that are inappropriate or pollute our minds with rambling thoughts and feelings. In general, it is advisable to find a quiet and beautiful place outside the city.

We must also practice the discipline of not harming other sentient beings, which is called the practice of love and compassion. We need to cultivate a practice of deep trust and joyful exertion. We need to develop renunciation with regards to the cyclic existence of samsara. We need to improve our intelligence and develop a broad mind. We need to establish a bright outlook and a profound sense of devotion. Endowed with these spiritual qualities, we engage in the practice phases of listening, contemplating, and meditating. In this way, we acquire wisdom and purify our mind from conditioning and internal toxins, ensuring that we will be able to fulfill our spiritual goals.

2.2 Meditation on Impermanence

All composite phenomena are subject to change because of the law of impermanence. If we try to find the ultimate way by relying on composite phenomena, our expectation will not be fulfilled. Sooner or later, we will feel frustrated when the impermanent nature of the composite phenomena manifests itself. This will cause significant turbulence within our minds as discursive thoughts and emotions, and we will encounter many difficulties. Therefore, it is essential to understand that the relative reality is impermanent. With this understanding, many difficulties simply vanish because we are viewing the reality as it is. By observing our thoughts and emotions, we see that their nature is impermanent. Also, we can observe that our body is impermanent; it does not stay the same from one moment to the next, but continually changes—whether we are able to perceive it directly or not. Likewise, our friends and our enemies are impermanent. By understanding that the nature of phenomena is impermanence—whether of matter or consciousness—we see that samsaric phenomena and experience cannot transcend pervasive suffering.

The purpose of meditation on impermanence is to generate a profound sense of renunciation from the cyclic existence of samsara. However, many people misunderstand renunciation. Some think it means that we must separate ourselves from our family, our possessions, our work, our status in society, our identity, our property, and so on. This way of thinking is a source of misery. When the Buddha said that we should attain separation through the means of renunciation, he meant that we should achieve separation from the discursive thoughts and emotions of craving, aversion, and ignorance. We do not need to separate ourselves from our family in the name of spiritual renunciation. We do not need to separate ourselves from our children or our spouses and beloved. What we need to separate ourselves from is the unhealthy fixation on the people close to us. When we have separated ourselves from our craving, attachment, and fixation, we will instead cultivate love and compassion towards our family, our friends, and our beloved as well as ourselves. This will act as a powerful force to attain enlightenment.

2.2.1 The Four Endings

It is traditionally taught that all composite phenomena succumb to four endings: 1) the end of birth is death, 2) the end of meeting is parting, 3) the end of rising is falling, and 4) the end of gathering is dispersion. Without question, the end of birth is death. No historical account exists of anyone who has not experienced death.

As an example of separation, right now our families may be together, but ultimately, they will part. As another example, many organizations have numerous members, but these members will separate at some point in the future. Being together can last for just a short time. Knowing that a meeting will end in separation, we should value the time we are together as much as possible.

Individuals who have risen to a very high status in society cannot maintain this status forever; the law of impermanence ensures that they will eventually lose their status. Therefore, we should not fixate upon high status as it will not last forever. This does not imply that we should not enjoy our high status. As long we have such status, we should use it to benefit ourselves and others. If we have not experienced a rise and fall in status, this is also fine. We can take delight in our low status, knowing that we are fortunate not to have attained a high status that we will eventually lose. A Tibetan expression says, “I would like to be elevated up to high status, but staying low seems safer.”

The fourth ending is that the end of accumulation is dispersion. Sooner or later accumulation of wealth and property will be scattered. Some are very skillful in accumulating wealth and material possessions, but eventually, their accumulation will disperse. Accumulating wealth or property is not necessarily a problem, but if we fixate on our property as everlasting and become unable to separate ourselves from it or use it for the benefit of ourselves or others, great misfortune will result. If we do not utilize our wealth for the benefit of ourselves and others, we will feel regret when the law of impermanence disperses our fortune. However, if we have gained the insight that accumulation ends with dispersion, we will be able to practice generosity, and our material possessions can be used to bring about benefit for ourselves and others.

We should also remember to practice spiritual generosity, giving loving kindness and compassion to other sentient beings. We should be generous with our speech, offering compliments and praise in a soft and gentle voice. We can also be generous with our physical expression by presenting ourselves with a beautiful physical appearance and generously share smiles to create peace and harmony in the minds of others. It is also essential to practice the right livelihood. Wealth and possessions should be used for the benefit of those who are dependent on us—our family as well as those destitute of food, clothes, and shelter. It is important to give some of our accumulated wealth back to society.

In this way, all composite phenomena of the world come to an end. Gaining insight into the true nature of composite phenomena, we develop a genuine sense of renunciation to help us avoid fixating on these phenomena as permanent. Besides, meditation on impermanence will urge us to practice the Dharma because we realize that the impermanence of death may come at any moment.

2.2.2 Subtle impermanence

Subtle impermanence is more challenging to understand because it cannot be perceived with the five sense faculties or the five sense consciousnesses. Subtle impermanence is very pervasive and must be comprehended for us to be liberated from misery. It can only be detected with the sixth mental consciousness.

By not understanding subtle impermanence, we naively believe in the existence of an “I” and refer to “I”, “me”, and “mine” with regard to our body and consciousness, believing in a single physical existence and a unitary consciousness that does not go through any major or minor changes. Yet the reality is that everything is changing—on an apparent level as well as a subtle level. The Dharma explains that, in the single instant of a finger snap, our body and mind go through enormous changes that are not ordinarily detected. We think naively that we are the same person, but this is not really true.

Fixating upon true existence is the extreme view of eternalism. This fixation is dissolved by meditation on subtle impermanence. Fixation can be compared with a piece of wood. The fire of wisdom will burn the wood of fixation to ashes; when the wood is burned out, the fire also extinguishes. Similarly, the wisdom of emptiness used to meditate on subtle impermanence will disappear into the expanse of reality once confusion has disappeared.

Generally, an ordinary person knows only two things—existence and non-existence, much like a small baby knows only of its two parents. We cannot conceive the third category of reality without fabrication. This is the reality of simplicity, called *thögal* in Tibetan. To liberate us from unrealistic fixation onto existence, the Buddha taught meditation on subtle emptiness as a technique of non-affirmative negation. Chandrakirti, one of the ancient Buddhist masters, said in one of his spiritual

works, "If you become well accustomed to meditation on emptiness, this very experience will enable you to abandon your fixation on the true existence of phenomena. When you have negated the fixation on the true existence of phenomena, there is a risk of fixating upon non-existence. To relieve this fixation as well, you should do non-conceptual meditation."

By lacking knowledge of the gross and subtle impermanence of phenomena, sentient beings become susceptible to many difficulties; however, instead of feeling pity for such sentient beings, we should generate love and compassion for those who suffer because of ignorance of impermanence.

2.3 *Bodhicitta: Loving kindness and compassion*

We try to generate loving kindness and compassion towards all beings—especially those who do not understand impermanence. We also cultivate the notion that all sentient beings have been our mother in one of our past lives; therefore, we refer to sentient beings as *motherly sentient beings*. We remind ourselves that a mother has given us tremendous kindness, care, and affection many times. We generate a deep sense of love and try to develop a strong aspiration to repay their kindness by entering into the practice of Dharma. By practicing loving-kindness and compassion towards all motherly sentient beings, all notions of a duality of friend and enemy disappear. The mind develops equanimity and becomes balanced, peaceful, calm, and serene. When we begin to develop the Bodhicitta of loving kindness and compassion, our lives become very meaningful.

The word *Bodhicitta* consists of two terms: 'bodhi' and 'citta'. 'Bodhi' consists of two words: 'bo' and 'dhi.' 'Bo' should be understood as perfect abandonment, meaning the state of Buddhahood that perfectly abandons the suffering referred to in the First Noble Truth and of the causes of the suffering explained in the Second Noble Truth. 'Dhi' refers to the perfect realization. Thus, 'bodhi' means the state of the Buddha endowed with the twofold wisdom that knows the multiplicity of phenomena, the mechanism of karmic causation, and the ultimate nature of things. The term 'citta' should be understood as mind or spirit. More simply, we can translate Bodhicitta as altruism.

By giving rise to the precious attitude of Bodhicitta, we distance ourselves from self-centeredness and the egoistic mind as well as from the cyclic existence of samsara. We come closer to the realization of the ultimate truth: the state of nirvana. When we have given rise to Bodhicitta, then whatever Dharma practice we undertake will be Mahayana practice. Without the precious attitude of Bodhicitta, even presenting ourselves as profound practitioners of Dzogchen would be a mere pretense and not the real Dzogchen practice that brings about true benefit and transformation.

As soon as we manage to give rise to the genuine attitude of Bodhicitta, we are promoted from ordinary individuals to the status of a Bodhisattva, and our self-centered and egoistic mind transforms into a selfless mind. The selfless mind can be compared to infinite space. Within such a space, all phenomenal appearances brought about by the four elements—earth, water, fire, and air—manifest, abide and dissolve without harming the space in any way. Similarly, within the mind of an individual who has generated the positive attitude of Bodhicitta, manifesting conflicting emotions and thoughts abide and cease without leaving any negative traces in that mind.

The experience of the exalted state of mind of perfect abandonment and realization is attained when we attain enlightenment. Enlightenment is brought about by practicing compassion in union with wisdom. Compassion means that we wish all sentient beings to be liberated from suffering and the causes of suffering. Requesting and receiving Dharma teachings help us to increase our wisdom. Receiving teachings on the Dharma—and thoroughly analyzing and meditating on these teachings—is the general practice of the path of listening, contemplation, and meditation.

2.4 *Vajrasattva Meditation and Guru Yoga*

The final preliminary practice is actually two practices: meditation practice on Vajrasattva, the Buddha of purification, and the undertaking guru yoga practice. These practices are unique to tantric Vajrayana Buddhism and are therefore called the unique preliminary practices.

In the practice of guru yoga, all phenomena—outer as well as inner—should be perceived as the playfulness of our lama. We visualize that our spiritual master takes on the appearance of Padmasambhava in the sky in front of ourselves. In Tibet, Padmasambhava is known as Guru Rinpoche. We feel the deep presence of Padmasambhava and request him to bestow us the four empowerments. We combine the practice of Vajrasattva with guru yoga practice, visualizing Vajrasattva as being inseparable with our guru.

Some individuals claim that it is not necessary to perform the outer, special, and unique preliminary practices, but Longchen Rabjam states very clearly in his writings that this is a wrong approach. By relying on the practice of meditation on Vajrasattva, we are able to purify the obscuration of our body, speech, and mind. By building on the practice of guru yoga, we are able to achieve the ordinary and supreme spiritual accomplishments (Sanskrit: siddhis). Ordinarily, we generate negative vibrations by perceiving things with a negative outlook. These negative vibrations distribute into space. By practicing Vajrasattva meditation and guru yoga, we counteract this, and instead spread positive vibrations by cultivating a pure perception of the outer environment as the energy field of the buddhas, where sentient beings have been transformed into meditational deities.

In the practice of the Buddha Vajrasattva, we visualize the environment transformed into the pure land of the Buddha Vajrasattva and ourselves converted into the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha Vajrasattva. We imagine that there is no separation between ourselves and the Buddha Vajrasattva. Other sentient beings in the energy field of Buddha Vajrasattva are visualized to assume various aspects of the fivefold Vajrasattva family.

To begin, we sit with our ordinary body on the floor in meditation posture. On the crown of our head, we visualize a white, fully blossomed lotus with one thousand petals. On top of the lotus, we imagine a full moon lying flat. On the top of this moon stands the seed syllable 'HUNG,' white in color, clean and clear, brightly illuminating and transparent, shining like the sun. We imagine that the syllable 'HUNG' contains all the blessings and compassion from all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. We then offer a supplication prayer to this syllable by uttering, "Since time without beginning I have been wandering from realm to realm, experiencing all kinds of suffering and limitations. My mind has been dark with discursive thoughts, emotions, and defilements, but throughout this time you have not been there for me to take refuge." If we happen to be tormented by specific suffering or illness, we can bring these to mind as we focus on the seed syllable. This supplication reaches the Buddha Vajrasattva. He cannot bear our suffering and responds by transforming the seed syllable into a fully-fledged Vajrasattva with consort. The figures of Vajrasattva and companion are dazzling white, like a snow mountain illuminated by the sun. We feel that we have never seen something like this before and that we are indeed in the presence of the Buddha Vajrasattva. At this point, note that our visualization should not be too substantial. Vajrasattva and consort are vividly apparent but are simultaneously intangible like a rainbow—like the union of emptiness and appearance.

We now visualize moon discs in the heart region of Vajrasattva and his consort, lying flat with a white seed syllable 'HUNG' on top. The syllables are tiny as if written with the finest of brushes. Around the syllables circles the 100-syllable mantra. Initially, the mantra is still, but as we start to recite the mantra, the syllables circle faster and faster. The recitation of the mantra fulfills the offering of the supplication prayer and activates the spiritual mind of Vajrasattva. When the syllables are rotating very fast, they start to give away nectar—which we visualize as vividly as possible. While imagining, we shift our focus to the face of Vajrasattva or the vajra and bell that he holds in his hands. Like rain falling from the sky, the 100-syllable mantra drips nectar down through the bodies of the male and female deity. From the point of the sexual union, the nectar enters the central channel at the crown of our head. The nectar then passes down through the crown chakra, filling up the body throughout the many channels going out from the throat chakra, heart chakra, and naval chakra, cleansing illnesses and evil influences from non-humans as well as negative karma and obscurations. The current of the nectar pushes out all negative influences and suffering, and our bodies become entirely cleansed and purified. When the nectar pushes out all negativities, diseases, obscurations, and defilements, we visualize this as scary animals—such as frogs, spiders, and snakes—leaving our

body and falling to the ground. The ground then cracks open and swallows all the creatures, without any chance for them to return. At this moment, our whole being—thoroughly cleansed and transparent—becomes as if made of light, with the three channels, chakras, and subsidiary channels. At this moment, we should feel extremely blissful. We should firmly believe that we have attained a deep level of physical and mental blissfulness through this process of purification. This visualization has proved to be very useful—even for people suffering from severe illnesses like cancer who visualize the tumors being washed away by the nectar.

Vajrasattva now becomes very delighted and says, “Fortunate child, from this moment and onwards, all your defilements and negativities are completely purified,” before melting into light. This light dissolves into us, and we become Vajrasattva with consort ourselves. In our heart, we visualize a moon disc with a blue seed syllable ‘HUNG’ as if written with a single hair, encircled by the mantra OM BENZA SATTVA HUNG, with a white ‘OM’ at the front (facing east), a yellow ‘BENZA’ to the right (facing south), a red ‘SA’ behind, and a green ‘TVA’ to the left.

As we start to recite OM BENZA SATTVA HUNG, clear light radiates from the seed syllable and the surrounding mantra in all directions as an offering to all buddhas and bodhisattvas residing in the ten directions throughout the universe. When we have made this offering, the light returns to our hearts with blessings from the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Another light now radiates out in all directions towards all sentient beings and the environment, transforming everything into the pure land of the buddha families.

By meditating in this manner, we will actually relate correctly to the outside world as well as the sentient beings inhabiting it. The forms are in union with emptiness, the sounds are in union with emptiness, and our thoughts—as awareness—are in union with emptiness. If we feel inspired, we can sing the 100-syllable mantra and the six-syllable mantra with a melody.

Having now spent some time visualizing Vajrasattva, we enter into the dissolving stage. In this phase, the outer environment—previously transfigured into the energy field of the five buddha families—now melts into light and dissolves into the sentient beings. The sentient beings also melt into light, which again dissolves into us as Vajrasattva. We, as Vajrasattva, then vanish into light, starting from the fingers and toes and gradually reaching the ‘HUNG’ syllable in our heart surrounded by the six-syllable mantra. First, the mantra dissolves into light beginning with the ‘OM,’ then ‘BENZA,’ then ‘SA,’ and then ‘TVA.’ Finally, the ‘HUNG’ syllable dissolves into light from the lower part up until only the very top part is left. Eventually, this also vanishes into the expanse of space.

We now rest our minds in the non-referential expanse of space as long as we can. If conceptual thoughts start to stir, we alternatively rest in the expanse of emptiness and do visualization of Vajrasattva. This time, we do not have to create Vajrasattva in a very elaborate manner but can visualize the deity in a single instant.

At the end, we make a brief dedication of the merit we have gained by doing this practice and then take a rest.

3 The Actual Practices

We shall rely on three techniques that enable us to trigger experiences of blissfulness, luminosity, and non-conceptuality to realize the true nature of our mind. These techniques are based on meditation on the immaterial energy channels (Sanskrit: nadi), energy currents (Sanskrit: prana), and energy concentrations (Sanskrit: bindu). The bindu is the purest substance of our nervous system and consciousness. It permeates throughout the network of channels in our body. We activate the already existing bindu energy by generating the flame of wisdom in our hearts. By employing the prana—the energy current—we experience the clarity aspect of our minds by carefully controlling the breath. The technique based on the nadi—the energy channels—has three stages: the stage of ejection, the stage of fixation, and the stage of purification. The purpose of this technique is to generate a state of non-conceptuality linked to the emptiness of the mind. While performing these techniques, it is essential to observe the wholesome motivation of Bodhicitta. As always, if the

motivation is healthy, then the practice will be beneficial; if the motivation is unwholesome, then the practice will be destructive and produce an adverse effect.

Generating bliss and luminosity and resting in the natural state of the mind act as favorable results in an experience of the union of bliss and emptiness, which is inseparable from luminosity. Thus, if we meditate not on misery, but on joy, we will be able to understand the third category of phenomena—that of neither existence nor non-existence. This state of freedom from all elaborations and mental formation is the true nature of who we really are.

The actual practice gives rise to four different types of meditative experiences. The first experience is that whatever appearances we encounter will provide us with a sense of bliss. The second experience is that we will not be separated from this bliss, day or night. The third meditative experience is that our mind will not be disturbed by discursive thoughts and emotions. Either they will not arise or, if they do, they will be powerless. The fourth meditative experience is that our intelligence will improve, and we will swiftly understand the meaning of Dharma. If these four meditative experiences unfold as we work with this meditation, it means that our meditation is working as it should. Through these methods, we can also gain spiritual powers, like the divine eye, clairvoyance, and many more.

Therefore, it is crucial to put effort into this practice. Without practice, the desired result will not come about. If we only talk about the food being placed in front of us, instead of eating it, our hunger will disappear. Likewise, if we do not undertake the practice of Dharma, it will be difficult to abstain from discursive thoughts and emotions. When these are not purified, we will experience a polluted mind incapable of giving rise to genuine meditational experiences and spiritual realizations.

Dharmakaya, the formless body of the Buddha, is likened to the space that facilitates all phenomenal appearances that consist of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. However, these appearances do not transcend beyond the nature of space itself. In the same way, the appearances of Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya do not transcend beyond the appearance of Dharmakaya. These three kayas—these three realities of the Buddha—share the same essence, but they appear different to beings according to their spiritual development. Ordinary people are only able to perceive the reality of the emanated form body of the Buddha. Individuals who have evolved to a very elevated spiritual state are able to commune with the enjoyment body of the Buddha. The Dharmakaya reality of the Buddha is perceived and communed directly by someone who has attained full and perfect enlightenment.

Space has neither shape nor color itself, but we can talk about its shape in relation to a tangible object, such as in referring to the space inside a room. In the sutras, the Buddha said that "Those who perceive me as form and sound do not truly perceive me" and "Those who perceive me in terms of form and sound have actually entered the wrong path." Therefore, the Dharma talks about seeing something that cannot be seen—something that defies all forms of defining characteristics. Such seeing is said to be supreme seeing.

Ordinary sentient beings may claim that they have seen space, but if they were asked how they did so, they would not be able to answer. Likewise, bodhisattvas may claim that they have seen the ultimate truth, but seeing the ultimate truth is seeing something that cannot be seen. Actually, there is nothing to see. We use the phrase "seeing the ultimate truth," but the ultimate truth can never be seen as an object because it does not have the characteristics of an object. It cannot be seen with the eyes or the mind. This perception is said to be true seeing. This objectless object—the true nature of our mind—cannot be perceived through the sense faculties, yet it can be experienced deep within us, like a mute person experiencing candy, unable to explain the sweet taste to others. If we look within ourselves, just simply observing the natural mind without generating mental fabrication, it is possible to observe the reality of our mind. The nature of this mind is the actual Dharmakaya. We can experience it, but we cannot describe it.

3.1 *Generating Inner Bliss*

We assume the seven-point posture of Buddha Vairocana and visualize our body becoming transparent like a rainbow, vividly apparent without any solid substance. Inside our body are the three primary energy channels: the blue central channel, the white right channel, and the red left channel. It is essential to assume a proper physical posture by straightening the spinal cord so that the three primary energy channels are also straightened. In this way, the energy will flow unobstructed and activate the bindu. When this happens, the mind becomes blissful, peaceful, and bright.

The lower end of the central channel goes down to a point four finger widths beneath our navel. The left and right channels start from the nostrils and go down on each side of the central channel to join it at the point beneath the navel. The three primary channels symbolize the three kayas—the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, and the Nirmanakaya, which respectively represent the formless body of the Buddha, the enjoyment body of the Buddha, and the emanated form body of the Buddha. The upper end of the central channel touches the apex of our crown.

At the area close to our navel, inside the central channel, we visualize the Tibetan syllable 'A' in red in color and very warm. Inside the center of our crown chakra, we visualize the seed syllable 'HAM' in white in color. If you are not familiar with these syllables, you can visualize them as small balls of colored light. The fire at the level of our navel shoots up through the central channel and melts the 'HAM' in the crown chakra, causing nectar to drip down through the central channel. This nectar passes through the throat chakra, the heart chakra, and the navel chakra and permeates our body throughout the myriad of subsidiary channels. The crown chakra has 32 channels going downwards. The throat channels have sixteen channels going upwards. The heart chakra has eight channels going downwards. The navel chakra has 64 channels facing upwards.

We now visualize the seed syllable 'VAM'—blue in color—at the level of our heart. As the nectar reaches the 'VAM' syllable, it generates a profound sense of bliss before the 'VAM' syllable shrinks and vanishes into space, and we rest our mind in the expanse of space, free from any reference points. At this point, our thoughts are free from any fabrications. We don't try to bring our mind back, and we don't try to send it away. Dwelling within the expanse of space in this way is called *thögal* meditation—the meditation on the nature of mind.

3.2 *Generating Inner Clarity*

In the second main technique, we are introduced to the bright and luminous nature of mind. This practice focuses on the energy currents—namely, the prana.

As before, we assume the seven-point meditation posture of the Buddha Vairocana. We visualize that the lower ends of the right and left channels bend in and merge with the lower end of the central channel. The upper ends of the right and left channel end at the nostrils. The upper end of the central channel goes up to the apex of the crown. We then exhale stale air three times quite forcefully from the nose and imagine diseases and hindrances leaving us.

We now breathe in deeply the pure energy of all external phenomena, the environment, and the sentient beings in it. The air passes through our nostrils into the right and left channels and all the way down, where the air enters the central channel and moves upwards. The air then reaches the heart chakra—the wisdom chakra of the five buddha families—and resides there as a pure energy ball of round white light. To keep the energy ball of light in place, we control the air below and above the heart chakra. We should not strain ourselves too much holding our breath. When we feel uncomfortable, we gently release the breath and relax. As we do, we imagine that all the pure energy is released and spreads out throughout our body and further throughout the entire universe.

3.3 *Non-conceptual Meditation*

We do non-conceptual meditation to realize the nature of our own mind. Meditation on non-conceptuality is done in three stages. The first is called transference. The second is called focusing on space. The third is called purification.

3.3.1 Transference

Again, we assume the seven-point posture of the Buddha Vairochana and visualize the energy channels as in the first and second primary techniques. In our heart center is a clean, bright ball of five-colored light that symbolizes the luminous nature of our own minds. We then start to exclaim 'HA' 21 times on the out breath. There should be an interval of two or three seconds between each utterance. To give this more energy, we can place our upper palms in our lap and push down. With each shout, the ball of light rises gradually up through the central channel until it finally leaves the crown of our head and soars into space. We keep our attention on the ball as it travels upwards. After uttering 'HA' 21 times, the ball of light becomes smaller and smaller, ultimately vanishing into space. At this point, we allow our mind to rest free from concepts in the expanse of space, where there is no individual meditator, no object of meditation, and no action of meditation. The borders between subject, object, and action have been erased, and we attain the experience of totality. Merging with this universal totality, we allow our minds to rest.

If traces of concepts of subjects and objects appear while we attempt to dwell in the expanse of universal totality, this means our meditation has been interrupted. We must then re-enter the experience by starting the technique all over.

3.3.2 Focusing on Space

Sitting outside, with the sun shining on our backs, we gaze unwaveringly into the vast clear blue sky in front of us. This triggers the experience of non-conceptual inner space, free from mental constructions, and our mind naturally becomes calm and composed. Simply looking directly at this internal space gives us a deep experience of primordial awareness. While doing this, we breathe very gently, without excessive sound. If we are unable to remain in this inner space, we start again by focusing on the sky.

When we look at a tangible object with our eyes, this triggers the reactive emotions of craving or aversion; however, when we just look into the middle of space, this does not trigger any reactive emotions in our minds because we do not experience any craving or aversion towards space. This is because space cannot be possessed.

This technique is also termed the *threefold sky*, referring to the meditation on outer space, inner space, and deep primordial space. This meditation is found in the sutra teaching of the Buddha called The Compendium of the Buddha. This technique of focusing on space was also taught by Kamalashila, one of the early Indian masters who came to Tibet.

3.3.3 Purification

Again, we start by focusing our minds on the expanse of space. While gazing deep into space, in a state free from wavering thoughts, we visualize that the animate and inanimate world, the environment and its inhabitants, and ourselves all transformed into pure, clear empty space. Our channels, energy currents, and chakras also take on the nature of empty space. The process is comparable with the way clouds dissolve in the sky. We then rest our mind in this openness of empty space, without division between outer, inner, and innermost space. We become entirely free from all barriers and experience the wholeness of reality. All duality is exhausted only to experience primordial purity.

We do not dissolve the outer environment and the sentient beings in it because they are impure, but to prevent them from triggering discursive thoughts and emotions within ourselves.

The expression "*primordial purity*" signifies that our minds have been pure from the very beginning. This purity is not made by us or anyone else. The nature of water is purity, but it can be polluted by adventitious phenomena. We can restore the original purity of the water by removing these adventitious phenomena. In the same way, the obscurations that hinder us from recognizing the primordial purity are temporary phenomena that can be removed. If the nature of our mind were aversion, then aversion would express itself or underlie all situations. This is not the case. Likewise, the nature of the mind is not craving, or else we would be craving all the time.

3.3.4 Meditative Experiences of Non-conceptual Meditation

The first meditative experience is that gross, dualistic conceptions are removed from the mind of the meditator. This process is like the border between subject and object becoming thinner. The second meditative experience is that the non-conceptual state of mind does not easily leave us; we can abide in it for days. The third meditative experience is that the five root defilements begin to become pacified and the mind becomes very gentle. In fact, the mind goes through such a transformation that makes it impossible to give rise to any defilements. The fourth meditative experience is that we perceive the nature of the manifold phenomenal appearances to be like space, without any point of origination. Whatever has no point of origination, will not have a point of cessation, and there opens up a vast experience without any concept of birth, abiding, or cessation.

4 Questions and Answers

4.1 Concerning Impermanence and Causation

Question: If you are a fully enlightened being, how can you perceive other beings?

Answer: The state of Buddhahood is the state of the Dharmakaya. The Dharmakaya creates the Sambhogakaya, and the Sambhogakaya creates the Nirmanakaya. The Dharmakaya is the formless body of the Buddha. It is like the vast expanse of empty space. From this expanse arises the Sambhogakaya that emanates the Nirmanakaya body of the Buddha. Thus, the Buddha is not actually the creator of the Sambhogakaya and the energy field of Nirmanakaya. The manifestation of the three kayas and the energy field of various Buddhas come about not by anybody creating them, but from many causes and conditions. Perhaps "create" is not a very good word to use. When we say create, it makes us think of a creator who can do magic without regard for the law of causes and conditions.

Question: What is the difference between the self-creating and causes and conditions?

Answer: According to the Buddhadharmas, the reality of the self comes into existence because of causes and conditions. Our belief in a self is very naive. We believe that there is a kind of separate, independent self that exists by and of itself. Yet Buddhadharmas says that no such self exists—that such a self is a mere fabrication, whether philosophically or naively. If we obtain this insight, we realize that the self is a mere label. However, what is the basis of this label? It is our own psycho-physical being. If you believe in the self, this will give rise to a belief in others, causing the actual reality to be split in two. If the interaction between self and others is pleasant, we react with craving. If it is unpleasant, we respond with aversion. If we express a negative emotional complex such as craving or aversion, we perform a harmful karmic activity that will hurt others. In this way, we pollute our minds with reactive emotions and karmic creations. The evolution of fundamental ignorance culminates in the fully-fledged experience of samsara.

With the two root poisons of craving and aversion present, the element of ignorance is also strongly present. Ignorance is very strongly present in a mind that fixates on the self as real. Lacking wisdom, the totality is split in two—subject and others—and from the interaction between these, there forms emotional complexes that evolve into karmic complexes, which causes samsara to solidify. Thus, the root of the cyclic existence of samsara is the fundamental ignorant mind that does

know the actual reality of the self. Therefore, the meditation on selflessness is one of the most essential meditations in Buddhadharma.

When we perceive a visual form, then who sees it? Ordinarily, we believe that "I am the perceiver." But if there is no self to see it, then who does? For example, when the eye sense faculty, which is based in the eye organ, makes contact with a visual object, it triggers the experience of visual form in the visual consciousness. We say that visual consciousness arises from the meeting between the eye sense faculty and the visual object. Without this meeting, the visual consciousness would not be triggered, and there would be no experience. So, who is the perceiver? There is no perceiver as a self. Still, ordinarily, we think that deep inside ourselves something called a self that exists as the independent and separate owner of all experience. The Buddhadharma explains that, without this sense of self, we still function perfectly well as everything is experienced as a result of many causes and conditions.

When we see the universal spiritual law discovered by the Buddha—that is, the law of interconnectedness—everything becomes important. Not only ourselves, but also others become important. For the first time, we see and experience, not intellectually but personally, that everything is intimately linked together; therefore, we give importance to others. It becomes effortless to develop loving kindness and compassion towards others because we regard others as ourselves—without much difference between ourselves and others.

For example, if a very egotistical person somehow manages to accumulate a significant amount of money, his ego will grow, thinking, "I am such a successful and important person." But where does the money come from? It comes from society—perhaps from a lot of people. Often, the egotistical person thinks that he or she does not need anybody else, that he or she managed to collect all this money by him or herself. But how could he or she have made all the money without the existence of others? It is not possible.

If we lessen the egotistical mind, we will be more willing to distribute some portion of our wealth back to society. Buddhadharma tells us that just by eating one mouthful of food innumerable sentient beings have been involved in producing this food. Therefore, when we eat, it is vital to remind ourselves that this food came about due to the meeting of many causes and conditions and through the participation of many individuals before it somehow ended up on our plate, where we now also participate in the chain of events. Therefore, we generate loving kindness and compassion towards all sentient beings that have worked so hard to produce this food necessary for our survival. Undoubtedly, the law of interdependent connectedness that the Buddha discovered is fundamental.

Question: Can you explain subtle impermanence?

Answer: In the smallest of instant, there occurs a change in the body on the physical and mental level. Usually, we are not able to detect this form of subtle difference. Intellectually, we might have knowledge of it, but since we do not experience it on a personal level, we do not believe in it with confidence. Consequently, we react strongly to physical and mental sensations. Our reactions arise because we do not understand the subtle impermanence of sensations. Like the Buddha said in the sutras, ordinary individuals are not able to perceive subtle impermanence. Sublime beings, however, are able to, and this enables them to leave misery behind. The Buddha gave the following example. If you place a strand of a hair on the palm of your hand, you will not feel it. But if a hair enters into your eye, it will cause a tremendous sensation. Likewise, ordinary sentient beings are not able to detect the misery of the all-pervasive suffering due to the ignorance of subtle impermanence. Yet buddhas and bodhisattvas are so sensitive that they experience the all-pervasive suffering just as that hair fall into the eye. Ordinary beings, like us, are occupied with escaping the gross misery. Sublime beings are concerned with escaping the subtle suffering.

Question: Who created the three realms?

Answer: According to the Buddhadharma, the creator of the three realms is the self. Nothing exists in these realms that are not created by the self—even the sentient beings are created by the self. If you are liberated from the grip of the self, you are not a sentient being but a bodhisattva or a

buddha. This is attaining the totality. One of the spiritual laws discovered by the Buddha is that of selflessness. Some Buddhist spiritual opponents expounded that there is a small I and a supreme I. Buddhadharmas says explicitly that believing in such a self is a mere fabrication; it does not accord with reality. Buddhadharmas says that believing in the reality of a true self is the source of all suffering. Even in a family, problems come about because of an intense fixation on the existence of a true self. Also, between two people, disputes occur because of a fixation on a self that does not want to be threatened by others. Conflicts between two parties in general—whether between two persons, persons in a family, different religious organizations, nations, or society in general—come about from grasping onto the true existence of the self.

Question: How does this relate to the Buddha-nature?

Answer: The Buddha-nature is found in the core of selflessness.

Question: How does the Buddha-nature come to be?

Answer: The Buddha-nature has not come into existence. The Buddha-nature is the all-pervasive reality, free from birth and death.

Question: If everything is created by the self, then if we do not have a self—only Buddha-nature—how can things exist?

Answer: We have to distinguish between the relative self and ultimate selflessness. The apparent reality of the relative self experiences certain outer and inner phenomena. The belief in the reality of the relative self is the actual creator of everything. For example, for a person who is sleeping, many dream appearances unfold, and he or she perceives these to exist vividly. Now let us say that next to the dreaming person is another person who is completely awake. For the person who is awake, the dream experiences are not real, but a mere projection by the dreamer. If the person who is dreaming wakes up, all the dream appearances will vanish. This is like attaining full enlightenment. The Buddha-nature is there when we are fast asleep and when we are awake. It is said that Buddha-nature is the ground for both samsara and nirvana. When the Buddha-nature is not recognized by self-awareness, this lack of awareness gives rise to the experience of samsara; but when it is identified by self-awareness, this gives rise to the experience of nirvana.

4.2 *Concerning Vajrasattva Meditation*

Question: What is the purpose of Vajrasattva meditation?

Answer: The reason for using this technique is that beginners are not able to instantly dissolve their discursive thoughts and emotions. In applying the development stage of tantric meditation, we attempt to purify our impure perceptions, which have been habitually cultivated over many lifetimes. This purification works for our past life, our present life, and our future life as well. It is like a circle.

Question: What is the purpose of visualizing ourselves as Vajrasattva and receiving the light from the five Buddha families?

Answer: The purpose is to create a pure perception of the environment and the sentient beings in it. We transfigure the environment into the energy field of Vajrasattva, the sentient beings into the five Buddha families of Vajrasattva, and view the environment as a Buddha realm containing buddhas. This does not mean that all sentient beings become a copy of Vajrasattva, but that they attain the enlightened spiritual state of Vajrasattva. The deepest level of our mind is actually already enlightened with a buddha potential, which is nothing more than Buddha Vajrasattva. When you visualize Vajrasattva, the embodiment of all enlightened beings, you are not actually fabricating something that does not correspond to the deepest reality of being. There is a very intimate relationship between the visualization of Vajrasattva and your own buddha potential. It is not a superstitious thought.

Question: I find the sexual union confusing. Can you explain?

Answer: The nature of mind has two basic qualities. The essence of mind is empty, the nature of mind is clarity, and the indivisibility of these two is pervasive compassion. The union of the male and female Vajrasattva actually symbolizes the union of emptiness and appearance. Emptiness is the ultimate truth, appearance is the relative truth. You can find emptiness within appearance, and appearance within emptiness. In the Hinayana teachings of the Buddha, the Dharma says that one should abandon women. This refers to ordained Sangha members, and monks do meditation techniques to generate a sense of repulsiveness towards women to prevent them from being sexually attracted. Certain individuals might come to the wrong conclusion, though—that women are bad or inferior, thereby devaluing women. To rectify this, the tantric teaching of the Buddha says that one should not scold or abandon women. In fact, in certain tantric teachings, practitioners use a physical sexual union to achieve enlightenment.

Question: Can the depicted sexual union also mean the inner female and male side of oneself?

Answer: Yes. It is not necessary to rely on an outer sexual partner in order to attain enlightenment. You can rely on the inner sexual partner. As human beings, we are a union of male and female sexual energies. We attain enlightenment when we strike a balance between these energies.

If visualizing the deity in union with a sexual partner triggers our passion, we should not do this form of visualization. We should visualize a single deity. Remember, the purpose of all these techniques is to overcome the three root defilements of craving, aversion, and delusion, not increase them. Certain people will benefit a lot from this technique; but if it does not benefit us, it does not mean that the technique is totally useless. It may be useless to some, but not to others. This is the reason the Buddha taught many different techniques. We can choose between Vajrasattva being in a union or being single.

Question: Would it make it easier for us to do this practice if we receive Vajrasattva initiation?

Answer: Yes, the practice will certainly be more fruitful for someone who has received Vajrasattva initiation. If you want to practice Dzogchen, you will have to begin from the very beginning. We have to travel in a progressive manner. Patrul Rinpoche's book *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* reveals the gradual path that we follow in the Nyingma tradition.

4.3 Concerning the Actual Practice

Question: If we do not have a very deep understanding of karma, is it still okay to do this meditation?

Answer: Without depending on the relative truth, we cannot meditate on the absolute truth. You will have to study the relative truth first. Read about what is meant by impermanence and karma. Then you will be prepared to explore the ultimate truth of emptiness.

Question: Is there a connection between bliss and love?

Answer: Supreme bliss certainly has a deep connection with genuine love. However, if it is not a supreme bliss, then it is connected with passion. Sensual pleasures or sensual bliss is just mere bliss, not supreme bliss.

Question: What is the quality of the energy that we draw in from the outside world? Is it positive or negative?

Answer: It is positive. It is energy that will lengthen your life and create physical and mental well-being—energies that will create prosperity and harmony.

Question: Are we born with the obscurations that prevent us from experiencing primordial purity?

Answer: These obscurations can come from past lives or from this present life.

Question: What if we feel unwell while we hold our breath?

Answer: You should not strain yourself too much. If you strain yourself, you could cause harm instead of good. The heart center is very sensitive. Focusing too hard or holding your breath forcefully can cause tension in this area. So be gentle. If you begin to feel slightly uncomfortable, release the breath. After you have released the breath, you can do the second part, where the light spreads out from the ball of light into your body through the channels, completely illuminating your body.

Question: What is the purpose of the transference meditation?

Answer: If you meditate like this, you will be able to experience the fruition of samatha, which is the experience of mental and physical suppleness. When you experience the fruition of samatha, you will be able to use your mind for whatever purpose, in the most effective way. You will be able to engage in virtuous projects, without resistance from your mind.

Question: Some people claim they can see others' aura. What do you think about this?

Answer: According to the Buddhadharmā, your body is made of light. Your whole body is made of light because the building blocks of the body are simply vibrations of light. This is the view of tantric Buddhism. Tantric Buddhism says that you can attain a rainbow body when you depart from this life simply because the nature of the body is light. This light is inseparable from your own mind. It is perfectly fine to try out this meditation technique without believing in it. If you meditate properly, you will achieve the intended fruition, and faith will arise.

Question: Is there a danger of increasing the ego if we practice this by ourselves at home?

Answer: We should not focus on temporal meditative experiences. The ultimate purpose of meditation is to experience full enlightenment. Beautiful, but temporary, experiences are just a by-product of meditation; we should not take them to be the ultimate result. We should focus on attaining full enlightenment, free from all fixations.

Question: Where is the "I" when the light sphere disappears into emptiness?

Answer: Actually, to begin with, there is no "I" at all. This is the Buddhist view. The "I" is a fictitious phenomenon. The self only exists on an apparent level. To purify our confusion concerning this self, we do this meditation.

Question: Does the observer disappear when the concept of the mind disappears?

Answer: Actually, it is not that easy to enter into the experience of the non-conceptual mind. Even if you manage to do so, it is difficult to sustain the experience for an extended period of time. So we do not need to worry about entering into this state; it will not make us disappear. It is a natural reaction to be scared of the expanse of emptiness, but if you enter into this expanse, you will experience that it is a lovely state to be in. When the ball of light vanishes into the expanse of space, allow your mind to rest within that expanse, free from the three conceptions—the conception of a meditator, the notion of an object of meditation, and a conception of performing meditation.