

View, Meditation and Action
in
Mahayana
and
Vajrayana

by Khenpo Sangpo Rinpoche

Foreword

This text is based on teachings given by Khenpo Sangpo Rinpoche at Karma Tashi Ling Buddhist Centre in Norway over two week-end courses. The first, ‘Mahayana – view, meditation and action’, were given on the 15th and 16th of September 2018, and the second, ‘Vajrayana – view, meditation and action’, two weeks later, on the 22nd and 23rd.

The first part of the text explains the view of emptiness in the Madhyamika, as taught in the Buddha’s Abidharma. Rinpoche recommended the participants to also read another text, where he expounds the Abidharma, based on an earlier teaching given in Norway in 2002¹. Rinpoche pointed out that a good understanding of emptiness according to the Abidharma is a necessary foundation for the second part, where he explained the higher tantric ‘view, meditation and action’ of Vajrayana.

The teaching on Vajrayana were given as a commentary on Patrul Rinpoche’s root text ‘Hitting the Essence in Three Words’. Patrul Rinpoche was a famous master, who spent most of his life in retreat in the Dzogchen valley in East Tibet. The reader may want to consult the English translation of the root text provided by Lotsawa House². The English quotes in this text are taken from this translation.

Khenpo Sangpo belongs to one of the shortest Dzogchen Longchen Nyingtig-linjene in the world, consisting of: 1) All-knowing Jigme Lingpa, 2) Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu, 3) Migyur Namkhar Dorje (teacher of Patrul Rinpoche), 4) Orgyen Tenzin Norbu, 5) Shenpen Choki Nunwa, 6) Great Khenpo Yonten Gonpo, 7) Kyabje Pema Kalsang Rinpoche and 8) Khenpo Sangpo Rinpoche.

These teachings, spoken directly from Rinpoche’s own experience and heart, were translated into English by Lama Changchub, resident lama of Karma Tashi Ling in Norway, and Boyce Teoh, and transcribed by Aksel Sogstad.

¹ Referanse til tekst

² <http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/tsik-sum-nedek-root>

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View, Meditation and Action in Mahayana

I have visited your centre several times since 2000, giving us the opportunity to teach and listen to the discourses of the holy Dharma together. For a period of about nine years I could not visit you, so I am extremely happy that we today have the opportunity to meet and participate in this discourse of the Dharma.

Often, teachers give teachings by following a scripture or texts, but today I would like to give an oral teaching based on my personal experiences of Dharma practice from the age of seven up until now, when I am 45 years old. It is my personal experience that it brings about greater benefit to those receiving the teachings when I expound the Dharma spontaneously in this manner.

The Uniqueness of the Buddhist view

Generally speaking, within the Buddhist teaching, the understanding of the threefold view, meditation and action is very important. Of these, the view concerning the four seals distinguishes Buddhist and non-Buddhist spiritual views. There exists Buddhist meditation and non-Buddhist meditation. The criteria for determining whether meditation can be said to be Buddhist meditation is whether it acts as an antidote against negative self-grasping. What actually binds us to the suffering of the wheel of Samsara is not the self, but the grasping to the self. Action, as Buddhist behaviour, should not fall into extremes, for example excessive indulgence in sensory gratification or pleasures, or excessive or extreme involvement in the name of religion or spirituality, like asceticism.

Fruition is the result of having transcended, or overcome, the karma and afflictions, and this is the third noble truth marking the difference between Buddhist and non-Buddhist view. On the bases of ground, path and fruition, or view, meditation and action, one has to progress along the path of Dharma to reach fruition.

It is essentially important to cultivate a good spiritual view, or pure vision, because our actions ensue from the view that we adopt, leading us to either accumulate afflictions or non-afflictions. This is why the view is so important.

There is also the mundane path, and by following the mundane path we can attain mundane fruition. Likewise, there is the transcendental path, or the path of Dharma, by which we can attain the transcendental fruition, or the fruition of the Dharma. When we attain the deeper understanding of the fundamental view, we can experience realisation. This experience of realisation can become a very strong remedy against the karmas we accumulate in our mind.

So, if we possess a sound view, we will naturally possess a good character and become good persons. The view is a support that acts like a fertile ground. Based on this fertile ground, we can get a good fruit. Cultivating a good spiritual view gives birth to positive thoughts. It is like when there is a fertile ground, if we cultivate something, we will attain a pleasant fruition.

Our belief determines our wishes and actions. If we for example want happiness in all areas of life, we engage in various activities to attain this happiness. When someone has love for their children, they want their children to have all the happiness it can get. But we can easily believe that our happiness comes from some outside object, and then engage in activities to get all these objects in order to achieve happiness. But it is not possible for us to achieve ultimate happiness from all these external objects, either now or in the future. In order to attain ultimate happiness, we need to engage in spiritual practices. It is the only way.

The view of Buddhism can be described as the view of dependent arising. This is because there is a dependence between the inner mind of the person and the outer objects. We can use this mutual dependence to give rise to happiness.

If we want to have a good life, we need to rely on the practice of meditation. In order to have a good meditation we require a right view. Without a right view, our meditation will not give the right results. If our meditation does not progress, we will not be able to maintain a good conduct. If our conduct is not good, we will not be able to achieve any good results on our spiritual path. The basis of the view is the realisation of emptiness. Even if we do not fully understand emptiness, if we are only able to have some certainty of mind about the meaning of it, this will benefit our life. There are two levels of emptiness, emptiness on the gross level, which is the explanation of impermanence, and the subtle emptiness. The teachings of impermanence are the most important subject as far as Dharma practice is concerned.

Impermanence

In our lives, we may encounter three kinds of obstacles, the inner, outer and secret obstacles, but if we keep impermanence in mind, these obstacles will be reduced as time goes on. For example, in Norway we do not experience dangerously outer obstacles like earthquakes, difficulty with housing or food, but although these external obstacles are not present, we still experience the inner and secret obstacles, which seem to be commonplace.

As long as we are born as sentient beings, there will always be obstacles. Based on the afflictive thoughts that we experience, we will always encounter obstacles due to wrong thoughts. For example, when we see people around us, we can experience negative thoughts, and also hearing things can produce negative thoughts in our mind. These things can happen when we are having conversations, eat or socialise. We can experience a lot of feelings that arises in our mind, and they inducing afflictions, which leads us to engage in different kinds of karma.

Generally, we have the five senses and the five sense-consciousnesses. Based on these we encounter different kinds of objects. There are different kinds of practitioners, good practitioners, and not so good practitioners. Good practitioners will not engage in hope and fear, and will not experience these obstacles. Sometimes I tell my students that we have two eyes, and two ears, so we can listen and see, but if we can reduce the activities of our speech, by observing and listening, we can increase our wisdom.

The subtle impermanence refers to dharmata, the ultimate nature. To understand this, we need to practice meditation. The main practice should be meditation on the fact that no matter what happens, we will still have to face death. Generally, it is said that the end of meeting is parting, the end of living is dying, and the end of high status is loss of status. We need to contemplate on this, and when this becomes a part of our path, we will gain certainty. When we have certainty of this fact, then even if somebody is not treating us well, we will not become so angry, and even if somebody does treat us very well, we will become less attached. Gradually, as we practice like this, we will reach the state beyond hope and fear, distance ourselves from our afflictions, and come nearer and nearer to enlightenment.

If we think that we will live for ever, without having to be confronted with the losses of the four extremes, that the end of meeting is parting, the end of living is dying, the end of accumulation is loss, and the end of high status is to lose status, then, if we are not mindful of these facts, we will not be benefited from our awareness, and continue to suffer.

These are the natural rules of the phenomena of our lives, and no one can do anything about this; the Buddha could not do anything about this, neither could other powerful beings of a high status. If we are not paying attention to this, and we are not following these rules in our lives, say for example that we think that we want to love somebody for ever, and we are not following these rules, then we will have to face the consequences of losing what we have been attached to.

So, the subtle impermanence of the Dharmata is the impermanence of our mind, body or objects, and the main purpose of the practice is to realise this. For example, when we engage in the practice of meditation, we can think of it as breathing. When we breath in, we can imagine being born, when we breath out, we can imagine ourselves dying. Or, when we go to sleep, we can think of it as a state of dying; when we dream, we can think of this as arriving the bardo; and when we wake up, we can think of this as a state of arriving the next life. Because, when we pass away, although this life and body has ceased, our mind will continue. This is what our practice has to be, it has to happen at the level of the mind.

Because the end of living is dying, we need to practice properly in this life in order to benefit ourselves. In general, in Dharma practice, the intention is the most important. All phenomena are conditioned, and the most important phenomena is the intention. The Dharma practice depends a lot on our ability to transform our intention. If we can transform our intention, we will be able to establish a good Dharma practice.

Karma and Afflictions as Causes of Suffering

The first of the four seals of Dharma is that all phenomena are impermanent. The second is that all contaminated phenomena, karma and afflictions, causes suffering. The purpose of Dharma practice is to able to master karma and afflictions. If our mind and body are under the control of karma and afflictions, then our mind and body will follow the forces of these. So, it is very important to not allow our mind and body be under the control of karma and afflictions. If we can free the mind and body from these two forces, our mind and body will achieve freedom.

Cessation is the elimination of the karma and afflictions. There is no other state of cessation than this. Here, cessation is referring to the third of the Four Noble Truths, the cessation of suffering, achieving nirvana or liberation.

The Buddha did not say that the nature of mind and body is suffering. He also did not say that their nature are afflictions. He said that if the body and mind are under the force of afflictions, then there will be suffering. In the practice of Dharma, the body and mind are like a vessel, and they become the nature of the path. When enlightenment has been achieved, the body and mind are the nature of the cause of enlightenment. For example, in the practice of Dzogchen, when one attains the rainbow body, the body itself transforms into the light of the rainbow body. If the nature of the body was afflictions, then it could not become a rainbow body. The nature of the mind is the buddha nature. This is a big difference between the sutra yana and the Vajrayana.

The Emptiness of the Five Aggregates

Referring back to the four seals of Dharma. The first is that all phenomena are impermanent, the second that all contaminated phenomena are suffering, and the third is the explanation of emptiness, which is the lack of individual identity, or lack of self.

In the teachings of the Dharma, all phenomena are categorised by the five aggregates. When we say 'all phenomena', we are referring to the five aggregates. The five aggregates are the aggregate of form, or the body, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of perception, and the aggregate of consciousness. Clinging to these leads to birth in samsara. When we say 'emptiness' it means that the five aggregates are empty, meaning that they lack identity or self.

Generally, when we use the word 'emptiness', this refers to the lack of identity of phenomena, and when we use the term 'lack of self' it refers to the lack of self of the individual. These are the two types of identity. When the feeling of self-grasping, the 'I' increases, this increases our afflictions, and this also increases the two types of identity. Because of this, suffering increases. So, the root of all of samsara is the clinging to self. Consequently, the lack of clinging to self is nothing other than the state of Buddhahood.

We, who are borne in this world, believe that there is a truly existing self. This clinging to the self takes two forms; clinging to the I, and clinging to the mind. The first is the cause of the other. The first is the clinging to the self of the individual. Based on this, we cling to the phenomena that surrounds this self, my house, my property, and whatever we call my phenomena. This 'mine' can also refer to the identity of the phenomena.

In order to eliminate clinging to the body, we can establish the emptiness of the body. We can do this by understanding the body as a result of causes and conditions. By considering dependent arising, the body is understood as a product of causes and conditions.

The Heart Sutra states that 'Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form'. If we can examine and understand the meaning of this, it would be beneficial for our spiritual practice.

In general, it is quite difficult to realise the understanding of emptiness. We can first examine the gross emptiness, which is impermanence. We can see that all phenomena are impermanent. Because of this impermanence, the phenomena cannot abide by themselves. They do not exist independently, and all phenomena are nothing but impermanent. If we can examine like this, we can see that the phenomena are not independently existing. We need to examine this properly.

For example, we can examine our body, thinking about yesterday's body and today's body. Asking us whether these bodies are the same or different. We can also do this with regard to our feelings. If we for example are happy today, while we were suffering yesterday, we can ask whether these feelings are the same or different. Also, we don't know whether we will suffer or be happy tomorrow.

When we examine the nature of our body in this way, we arrive at the conclusion that the nature of our body is inexpressible and inconceivable. Further, if yesterday's and today's body are the same, then we cannot grow old. If yesterday's body is different from today's body, then cause and effect will not be able to function, because if we did something bad with yesterday's body, then today's body will not be able to experience the effect. On the other hand, it is difficult to accept that yesterday's body and today's body are not the same, that they do not have the same continuum, because if we did something nice yesterday, the

body of today can experience the effect. If we examine the nature of the body in this way, we will find that it is beyond being same or different.

In the teachings of the sutras, it says that there is no arising and there is no ceasing, there is no permanence, there is no creation. This is true for every single entity. It can be understood with the body as an example, but is also true for all other phenomena, even a grain of rice. By understanding one phenomenon, we can understand the nature of all phenomena.

If we consider the fact that there is no coming or going, then according to the nature of reality as explained in the scriptures, the body of yesterday cannot transform into the body of today. We cannot really understand the nature of yesterday's body, because it is gone, and we cannot understand the body of tomorrow, because it is not here yet, but if we understand the nature of our current body, we will be able to understand the nature of the body.

This process is a good way to practice the first of the Four Mindfulnesses, the mindfulness of the body, the others being mindfulness of the feelings, phenomena and mind. For myself, I often receive tasty food from people, and also good things to treat the body with, but the fact is that this is not really what the body needs. The body needs to receive love and compassion. When we increase our wisdom, we will naturally experience wellbeing. It is said in the scriptures of the sutras that the three higher trainings are discipline, concentration and wisdom, and if we are able to train well in these, we will experience unsurpassable bliss.

In order to understand the meaning of emptiness, we need to examine the nature of our body. We need to see if there are anything that can abide in a permanent manner. Is there a permanent abiding entity in the body? We also need to check if there is an independently existing self. Is there anything that exist all by itself, like God? Within our aggregates there is no single entity that can function independently, without depending on anything else, like a God. When we examine the aggregates or the five faculties, like seeing, hearing, smelling and so forth, we need to check whether they can exist without relying on something else. We will find that there is nothing in the body that can exist independent of some other part of the body. There are two kinds of meditation, analytical meditation and resting meditation. Examining in this way is called analytical meditation.

I would also like to explain two terms, emptiness and lack of self, or identity³. Let us examine the body as before by considering feeling, the second aggregate. There are three main categories of feelings, happiness, suffering and neutral feelings. We can see that when we examine the three kind of feelings we experience, none of these experiences are able to abide in a permanent way. Feelings fluctuate from happiness to suffering, to neutral and so on. Although we want to stay happy there is no way we can be continuously happy, because feelings are impermanent. Feeling, the second of the aggregates, therefore does not have a fixed identity. It does not exist inherently.

Among the five aggregates, it is the aggregate of feeling and the aggregate of perception, the second and third aggregate, that are the most important aggregates to examine. This is because we go about our daily life while engaging in the aggregate of feeling. It is our feelings that motivate us in our daily life. The aggregate of perception⁴ motivates us when we engage in the higher tenants of the philosophical teachings and practices. Different people practicing the different religions such as Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, have different perception of things. So, it is important to analyse these two aggregates.

Understanding and Cultivating the View

Again, it is important to understand the nature of impermanence. For example, when we are being treated well by others or experience a nice situation, then we should not think that this person or situation will be able to give us permanent happiness, because if we at some later point receive negative treatment, we will feel unhappy. We should therefore not fall into the habit of clinging to whatever happiness or suffering we receive. If we were guests checking into a 5-star hotel, we would still have to check out very soon. It is not a permanent happiness, and the guest that checks in knows this very well. Similarly, if we were to check into a bad hotel, we would not feel so depressed, because it does not belong to us, it is just a

³ Note by Lama Changchub: Tibetan uses the same word for self and identity

⁴ Note by Lama Changchub: This is sometimes translated as the discrimination

temporary accommodation. If we can see ourselves as a guest passing by, we will not be so attached to what whatever happens in our lives.

It is important to know that our view is affected by the way we think. We are currently explaining emptiness of three kinds of subjects. The first is the five aggregates, the second is formation, or karma, and the third one is mind, or consciousness. When we examine these three, we need to know that they all are empty, they lack an independent self.

So, what we then need to do is to understand that the nature of the five aggregates is empty, and that they have no independent self.

What we normally do is to think in terms of my body, my mind, my feelings, as well as my thoughts. It seems that we accept that there is an entity, a something that is independent of these things, as a truly existing I, or self. It is one hundred percent certain that all of us believe that this I exist among these five aggregates, and that we do everything for the sake of this I. Even the beginning of samsara or nirvana comes down to this I.

When we think about all this, it seems that the I is the creator of this world. Everyone has this I in their mind or brain somewhere, and we are carried away by this I. The Buddha said that this I is the great demon, and that there is no greater demon in the three realms of samsara other than this I. It is this I that controls everything, that everything else is dependent on. Like the king who has the authority over everything else, the I has the authority over all other phenomena.

When the Buddha taught the emptiness of this identity, the arhats fainted. This is why this topic may feel a little dangerous. If we do not feel any fear while listening to the explanations of emptiness, it can be because we do not understand it. That our ignorance obscures it, so that we do not understand it. When we do understand it, we can sometimes feel a kind of danger. If we contemplate this by ourselves, we can feel lonely, or even afraid. Some people will feel this, but not all.

In many religions or philosophical systems, they examine this I or self, but the Buddha taught that the self does not exist. Even if we are not able to understand that the self does not exist, if we can reduce this feeling of self by whatever method we use, then this is also very good and beneficial.

We always saying, my body, my mind, my things, my car, my properties, but this increases the clinging to the self. It would be good if we could reduce the clinging to the self through our various activities, such as when we talk, if we can reduce our usage of 'I' and 'mine', it will help reduce the clinging to self. For the more we use these words, it increases our attachment to the I. So, it would be good if we can be mindful and reduce it.

The I, or self, is the root of samsara and nirvana, and it would be good if we could understand that there is no such thing as an I that is independent of the five aggregates. This is what we mean when we say that all phenomena are empty or lack identity or self.

The Buddha taught that the ultimate result of the spiritual Dharma practice is nirvana. That this is the highest level we can achieve in our life. The state of nirvana is also called the state of peace, or state of pacification. There are many people on this planet, but very few who work towards achieving the ultimate result of nirvana. In order to achieve this, we need to engage in practice. For example, if we just smell the food, we will not become full. In the same way we cannot achieve the result from the Dharma by just listening. If we just listen and fail to put it into practice, it becomes a fake practice. We call this wrong learning, and wrong contemplation.

Of the three, practice, learning and meditation, meditation is the most important. The Tibetan word for meditation, 'gom', means cultivation, not just meditation. So, cultivation should be performed in our daily lives. It is not just something we recite or do while we sit on the meditation cushion. We need to apply it in our daily lives. The basis of the practice, the view, is something we need to apply in our daily life.

The view is the basis of the practice. Most people, being intelligent, are able to do the necessary things to get what they want, but it is quite rare to find someone who has the pure intellect to achieve the freedom from suffering from samsara. It is therefore crucial to establish the pure intellect.

To cultivate the right view, we need to engage in the Middle Way. In order to accomplish a high view, we need to manage the subtle karma. For example, there are lamas who claim having achieved realisation of emptiness, but go around sleeping with many women, drinking a lot, hoarding wealth, wallowing in

luxury. These actions are not signs of realisation of emptiness. This is a wrong way of going about realising emptiness. This is falling into the extreme view of thinking that karma does not matter. Such lamas, who have accumulated many negative deeds, may think that it is good that everything is empty, that they do not have to worry, and they can do anything they like, thinking that emptiness is very comfortable. For myself, if I were to act like these lamas, and explain emptiness in this way, then I could probably get a lot of followers and students, but this would not be the right thing to do. This is also stated by Guru Rinpoche. He said that the understanding of the view should be like a bird descending from the sky. When the bird descends, it can clearly see everything on the ground. It knows where it is going. All the subtleties of karma exist, always. Also, when the bird wants to fly up into the sky, it takes effort to do that. We should therefore always be mindful of karma, and always engage in the accumulation of virtuous deeds to purify the mind.

It is therefore very important to understand the right view, and we need to engage in learning and contemplation to understand the view properly. To understand the view, we need to rely on wisdom from learning and contemplation. When we are able to achieve this wisdom, we will be able to make natural progress in meditation.

The wisdom of contemplation is the actual experience of the path. We cannot fully realise the view properly by only relying on wisdom from learning. We also need the experiences of contemplation and meditation. Through these we can realise the proper view.

As my own teacher once said to us, we should not treat the practice of learning like eating food, putting it into our mouth and defecate it out later. Then we will just loose it. When we engage in the practice of learning, if we do not follow it up with the practice of contemplation and cultivation of meditation, we will not be benefited when we meet obstacles.

This concludes the explanation of the view.

Questions and Answers

Q: You have been talking about the ego, that it should be suppressed somehow, reduced but not suppressed, somehow transformed, as I understand it. Is it right that in Buddhism it should be reduced, but not suppressed and pushed away, or somehow transformed?

A: The main objective is to reduce the clinging to the self. This is what we want to reduce, so that we can realise the wisdom of the non-existing self. It is not the self itself. When we realise that the self does not exist, then we have achieved the first bhumi, being a bodhisattva. Then we can make friends with Chenrezig.

Q: My question is about clarification on the right view, and its relationship to what we value as right. I have noticed in my life, when I have some great interest, for example, I recently started fixing some rust on my car, and after that, for the first time in my life, I noticed rust on other cars around me. So, my view, or perception, seems to be very related to my value system. My question is about the relationship between value and right view.

A: Compared to the rust of the mind, the rust of the car is quite insignificant. When our minds get rusty, we are in trouble. There is actually a strong relationship with the correct view and the view we hold in our daily life. For example, when we have correct view through the practice of correct meditation, we will have a balanced mind. And with this mind, whatever we do in our daily life, such as sleeping, we can do it very well and properly, we can also take better care of the people around us. We will have more loving kindness and compassion for the people around us.

We can see examples of having right view and understanding in our daily lives. For example, a doctor, who is able to gain a correct understanding of an illness, after examining the patient's body, is able to prescribe correct medicine and treatment. This example also applies to our own practice. If we examine and understand the mistakes and confusion of our mind, we can gain a correct view, and be able to engage in the right practice of purification of the mind.

Q: Maybe I did not formulate myself so well. Of course, these things are very true. I think my question is more like, are the words 'value' and 'view' almost the same? If I have a right or correct value system, will I then also view things correctly? This is perhaps also a sort of language question. Because when I hear that we must have the right view, I do not have a very strong relationship to this, or intuitive feeling for what the view is. For example, I think I should value the right things in this room, like for

example paying attention to Rinpoche, and value him. But if pay attention to a very nice girl, if I have the wrong value, then my experience here would be something superficial.

A: The view is connected to wisdom, or you could use the synonymously term vision. When you have a vision, your vision can see the value. In other words, your view can see your value. In that way, value is influenced by the view, by the right view or vision. So, when we attain the right view regarding karmic causations, we become afraid of engaging in the karmic causes that result in unpleasant experiences. We are not afraid of the consequences themselves, but afraid of the causes that lead to the consequences. We will know that there will be no consequences if we stop generating the causes. So, the right view prevents us from engaging in the wrong causes.

Most ordinary people are afraid of the consequences, but they are not afraid of the causes. Say for example, people are not afraid of the resultant decease that is caused by anger, let us say. Because ordinary people become very angry, they react with tremendous anger repeatedly. Anger creates stress and tension, and can be the cause of certain deceases. But ordinary people are not afraid of the actual cause of the resultant decease.

Let us compare the practice of engaging in love and compassion with anger. When people get angry, we can see that their face expression changes. Their face becomes dark, not nice-looking. On the other hand, when we practice love and compassion, our facial expression might not become as peaceful as that of a bodhisattva, but it will look at lot better. In general, we can see that our habituation with anger is strong, and our habituation with bodhicitta and compassion is very small.

Q: Thank you for the teachings so far. My question is related to what you said at the outset of the teaching, that you would speak freely from your experience of 35 years in relation to what you have said about overcoming the clinging to the I, or self. Can you say if there have been any experiences in your life where you think there has been a change or development in your relationship to the clinging to the I. Are there any episodes that you can share with us?

A: In the East, I spend approximately six to seven hours simply listening to other people every day. And it is very tiring. I give my precious time for the sake of others. This does not mean that I do not cherish my precious time. This happens by the blessing of the Dharma. Also, back in Tibet, I was the abbot of Samye Monastery. If I were to cling to that position, and hold onto that position, I would, spiritually speaking, become powerful as far as status is concerned. By giving all these things up, the natural expression of altruism comes about from the practice and blessing of the Dharma. When I encounter difficulty, or get exhausted and tired after listening to six or seven hours every day, I do not become angry. Neither do I react with dislike.

Ideally, the physician or doctor should spend as much time as possible with the patient. When the patient is cured, the doctor takes delight in it. A spiritual teacher, as a physician, spends a lot of time with the patient if it is needed to help that person. This is also an integral part of this practice.

In a relationship, like to lovers, it is very important to introduce the quality of patience. This will further enhance their loving relationship. It is very important to have the quality of patience. It should be patience based on wisdom of the view.

Meditation

We have talked about the realisation or understanding of the view, which is the emptiness or lack of identity or self. This explanation of emptiness, and lack of inherent self or identity, belongs to The Four Seals of Dharma. We need to be certain of these Four Seals, not feeling any doubt.

The view is the basis for all practices, and if we can develop a right view, then our actions of body, speech and mind will improve, and we will also achieve better results. The view involves understanding the right path towards enlightenment. And once we know this, we arrive at a firm decision of what to do in our practice. This includes what we have to do regarding our practice, from the moment we wake up, until the moment we fall asleep. Once we know what to do, we will be able to complete the accumulation of merit and wisdom.

Now, we shall talk about the second topic, meditation. Meditation means to habituate, to habituate to the practice of Dharma, to habituate to the view. The purpose of engaging in meditation is to be able to master our mind. If we do not engage in practice here and now, we will not have much mastery or control over our mind, body and speech.

When we try to practice Shamata meditation, the practice of calm abiding, we may not be able to focus on the object of meditation, our mind being distracted towards the objects of the five senses. This is why it is stated in the sutras that our mind is like a monkey. This is illustrated by the example of a monkey inside a building, the windows representing our five senses. The monkey continually jumps between these windows, always reaching out, not being able to settle down in the house. During the practice of Shamata, we need to control the five senses, seeing, talking, hearing, touching, and smelling. It is very important to control the activities of our senses because our mind will engage in activities through these.

More systematically, we classify our senses in the eighteen elements or the five aggregates. The eighteen elements, or dhatus, consists of the six sense objects⁵, the six sense faculties⁶, and the six sense consciousness⁷. When there is a form that appears to one of these elements, for example a form appearing to the eye element, then the mind starts to engage in this object. The idea here is to stop this from happening.

One of the methods is to make an effort to block the five senses from engaging in their respective objects, so that the monkey in the house will not lose itself to each of these individual objects. Once this happens, there is a possibility that due to the force of habituation, the monkey will be able to stay inside the house. It is said that there is nothing that cannot be habituated to if we give it enough time. Until we have achieved the level of Shamata, the ninth level of meditative concentration, it is very difficult to block the gross level of consciousness from going out to the respective objects.

The mind is such that it is difficult to stop it from doing something. Mental activity is an ongoing process. This is why, when people look at their mobile phones, the mind is very concentrated because it has a job. The mind is able to engage in this gross kind of concentration. It is not a very good concentration, but it is doing something single-pointedly.

That is why chanting mantras as a basis for meditation, or meditating on deities or the breath, is something we initially feel is difficult. There is a resistance. This is because the mind has gotten so used to being so friendly with our afflictions. But after a while, if we keep meditating, our mind will gradually let go of afflictions, and it becomes easier and easier. If we keep on engaging in virtuous practice, like offering mandalas and doing prostrations, then over time, it will become easier and easier for the mind to settle down on its own.

This is also the case when I ask monks to do the preliminaries of Dzogchen, the ngöndro practices, completing 100.000 prostrations and so on. Some of them feel a lot of difficulty when they have accumulated a few thousand. Because of laziness they are not able to do a lot of these practices. In the same way, I have a student in Asia, who struggles to meditate for half an hour, because his mind cannot remain concentrated on an object for so long. But when he goes to the casino, he can concentrate single pointedly for 24 hours. This is because he has a strong propensity towards bad things. This is why it is said that we should not fall into habituation of negative activities.

⁵ visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, and mental objects

⁶ eye faculty, ear faculty, nose faculty, tongue faculty, body faculty, and faculty

⁷ eye-consciousness, ear- consciousness, nose- consciousness, tongue- consciousness, and mind- consciousness

As already mentioned, when we use the word meditate here, it means to habituate ourselves with virtuous activities and qualities. It does not just mean to sit somewhere comfortable, or sit in a mediation posture like a Buddha statue. It means to habituate ourselves in our daily life with virtuous activities and qualities.

The Noble Eightfold Path

In general, the Buddha's teachings are very extensive and vast, but we would do well know how we should practice the Dharma in relation to the three doors, body, speech and mind. For this, it is very good to teach the noble eightfold path.

The noble eightfold path means here the eight paths of the noble ones, the Aryas, the eight noble paths practiced by enlightened beings. The opposite of this can be found in the ordinary world, by ordinary beings, called the eight wrong paths. Our job is mainly to not engage in the wrong paths, and instead practice the right path. If we can engage in the eightfold path of the Aryas, we too can become Aryas, noble beings. On the other hand, if we are engaging in the wrong path, then we are just ordinary beings.

In brief, the purpose of the noble eightfold path is that we can achieve the state of the noble ones. The purpose is mainly to achieve happiness. If we engage in the wrong path, we are going to encounter suffering. Since we are all looking for happiness, we should try to engage in the eightfold path of the Aryas.

Some of us may expect to be able to practice Mahamudra or Dzogchen, the experience of the inseparability of samsara and nirvana. But if we are not able to engage in the eightfold path, then we will not be able to engage properly in the practice of Mahamudra or Dzogchen, or achieve any results from these. Most Buddhists know about the eightfold path, but also, most Buddhists are not familiar with the realisation of this path, and therefore cannot attain the results.

When we talk about afflictions, we mean the polluted part of the mind. The purpose of meditation is to act as a remedy for afflictions. Otherwise it would not be any point in cultivating meditation. What we should do is to examine whether the mind is separable from the afflictions. Some people may think that the mind and the afflictions are not of the same nature. If the mind and afflictions are of the same nature, they cannot be separated. But if they are different, they are separable.

For example, it is said that the mind is like an ocean and the afflictions are like the waves. The waves rise from the ocean, but also go back to the ocean, so they are the same thing. No matter how many waves or afflictions there are, they are the same nature as the ocean. Another example is that the mind and the afflictions are like water and dirt in the water. In this case the water and the dirt are two different things. These two examples give us different perspectives.

The mind rises from the karmic winds, but if we were to leave it alone, the karmic winds will settle down, and the nature of the mind will be clear. The mind cannot seem to be able to do without the afflictions. It is like we have to eat food in order to survive. It is like the afflictions cannot leave the mind alone. When we look at it in this way, the afflictions are like temporary events that can be removed.

The mind and the afflictions can also be explained by the example of the sky and the rainbow. The rainbow is not the same nature as the sky. The mind is like the sky, being without any colour or shape, but many kinds of colours and rainbows can appear in the sky. These are equivalent to the different types of afflictions that can arise in the mind. By understanding it this way, we can see that the rainbow is not separable from the sky, there is no such thing as a rainbow without a sky.

When we look at the mind using these examples, we can understand the nature of mind. From my own point of view, I think we can say that the mind and the afflictions have the same nature. This is because the mind is necessary for the afflictions to arise. It is also in the mind that the afflictions subside. But in the same way that the rainbow cannot affect space, the afflictions cannot affect the mind.

It is very important to understand the nature of mind through these various examples. When we practice meditation, we need to use these examples to introduce ourselves to the nature of the mind.

According to the teachings of the sutra, we have to abandon negative thoughts, and we have to habituate our mind to positive qualities and thoughts. The afflictions are abandoned in stages from the first up to the seventh 'bhumi'. Cognitive obscurations are abandoned from the eighth up to the tenth bhumi.

In the sutra explanations, the view is realised by abandoning the obscurations. In addition to be able to abandon the afflictions and obscurations to realise the view, one can also abandon them through the accumulation of merit, the purification of the mind and the blessings of the guru.

The main thing here is that we need to do meditation in order to habituate ourselves to the eightfold path of the noble ones. This practice is based on being mindful of the three doors, body, speech and mind. There is actually no way to separate the eightfold path from the three doors. If we can make this a part of our daily life, we will for sure succeed in the practice of the noble eightfold path.

The first of the eightfold path is correct view. We have already talked about this. The second is correct thought. Once we have managed to develop correct view, we will be able to have correct thoughts.

We are experiencing suffering here and now because our body, speech and mind are controlled by a wrong view, which causes wrong thoughts, which again causes suffering. What do we mean when we talk about correct thoughts? Correct thinking means to believe in cause and effect, in karma, and have faith in the three jewels and a correct view.

The third of the noble eightfold path is correct speech. Correct speech is very important, because speech is very powerful. The first two of the noble eightfold path are practices that involve the mind. Our speech affects the world around us to a great extent. If we engage in right speech, we will benefit ourselves and others, but if we engage in wrong speech, we will harm ourselves and others. This is the power of speech. News and information are very powerful. If it is given as right speech, it will affect many people lives in the right way. If it is not, it can harm many people. When I am in Taiwan, it is obvious that the news is not quality news. The news is usually talking a lot about bad things, and it is effecting the people there quite badly. So we can see how powerful the news is. Also, education is based on speech.

So, it is very important to have correct speech in our daily lives. But also, consider that the Buddha taught that we can actually lie to protect others, even if we cannot engage in lying for the benefit of ourselves. Take the example of a robber, who is looking for someone specific he wants to rob, wanting to take a person's life and money, and asks us where he can find that person. If we tell the truth, the person can be harmed or killed, so this will be harmful speech. But if we lie, we would save the person's life. Consider also, in our daily lives, when a woman or a man asks the other person whether they look good or not. Sometimes the person will be happy if we lie a little. Perhaps you have asked such a question yourself?

The fourth of the noble eightfold path is right action⁸. Sometimes we find that some people think that their life is not going very well. This is actually based on actions we take in our daily lives. If we keep on doing the right actions, our lives will improve gradually, even if we cannot see the small changes directly. This approach is actually very powerful.

When I stay in Asia, many students come to me because their lives are not going well. They will have various problems, perhaps feeling that spirits are making trouble for them, that they get trouble from authorities and such things. Sometimes they also talk about 'feng shui' not being right. But when I examine, it looks like they have wrong view, and based on this wrong view, they have wrong thoughts, resulting in wrong actions. Because of this, they are having a lot of problems in their lives. But sometimes, when I try to tell them that, it is very hard for them to accept this, making the situation difficult. It would be easier to explain to them that their problems are due to other causes and conditions, instead of telling them that it is their own fault. Because, when telling them that it is their own fault, they cannot accept it because of strong clinging to the self. So, the main thing we need to do in our spiritual practice is to subdue the clinging to the self. In order to do this, we will have to subdue the mind.

If we believe that we can entrust our happiness to somebody else, another external authority, we will never be able to achieve true happiness. We can gain temporary happiness, but not true happiness. This is like the saying in the 'Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life', 'We cannot cover the world with leather, but if we cover our feet with leather, we can protect ourselves',

The fifth of the noble eightfold path is right livelihood. When we talk about right livelihood, it means not having a wrong livelihood such as a butcher. A right livelihood should not harm others or the environment.

⁸ Normally translated as right conduct, but Rinpoche likes 'right action' better

I have a student in Canada, who is a quite wealthy person, who told me that he could make a good deal by shipping a huge amount of meat to foreign countries, making tens of thousands of dollars, but I advised him that this is wrong kind of livelihood, and he accepted the advice.

In our daily life, we should not separate from the principle of right livelihood. It is important what kind of job we are doing. I do not know what kind of job each and every one of you are doing, but whatever job it is, it is important to choose a job that does not harm others or the environment.

The sixth of the noble eightfold path is right effort. There are different kinds of efforts. For example, it is difficult to muster the effort do right actions. On the other hand, it is quite easy to muster effort to engage in wrong actions.

Right effort means to have right interest in the correct qualities. Some people always procrastinate, postpone doing right actions, doing something wrong today, while planning to do something right tomorrow. Some people feel they need to take immediate revenge when they are treated badly by others. If they are not able to do it the same day, or as soon as possible, they are losing sleep. On the other hand, the practices of generosity, prostrations or virtuous practices, can easily be postponed until the next day, without any need for immediate action.

When we engage in right effort, it is important that it is done in a middle way approach, as taught in the scriptures. The effort should neither be too tight nor too loose.

The seventh of the noble eightfold path is correct mindfulness. In the 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life' it is taught that to have a good Dharma practice, both mindfulness and awareness are very important in the practice. We should continually examine the three doors of body, speech and mind, and to check whether we have fallen under the force of afflictions, and whether we are accumulating negative or virtuous actions.

When we do this examination, we should examine ourselves, not others. For example, the wife should not examine what the husband is doing, and the husband should not examine what the wife is doing. The same applies between couples and lovers. However, we tend to examine people who are the most important to us. In Dharma practice, we need to understand that it is most important to examine ourselves. To practice mindfulness should be like carrying a mirror in front of us, 24 hours a day, looking at ourselves. Women usually carry a mirror with them all the time to examine how their face looks, but in this case the mirror is to examine the mind. So, mindfulness and awareness are the most important for practicing the Dharma.

The final and eighth element of the noble eightfold path is right concentration. Concentration refers to meditation, and meditation in this case also means cultivation. We talk about three kinds of meditation or cultivation, analytical meditation, resting meditation, and meditation on what appears to the mind.

The practice of meditation of what appears to the mind, is when we focus on an object, for example a lamp, and place our mind on it. This is also what we do when we meditate on a deity, or whatever aspect of a deity we bring to mind. This is a practice that most people can do.

Analytical meditation involves the practice of analysing the reality of objects, firstly, how they appear conventionally, and secondly, achieve a valid cognition of how they appear ultimately. Once the analytical meditation has been developed to the point where we have achieved certainty in the valid cognition of the object, we can abide in that certainty. This is placement meditation.

We can actually use these three methods of meditation alternatingly in various situations. For example, when the mind harbours various thoughts of this and that, and we are able to recognise the various thoughts that appear to the mind, we can also call this recognition meditation for what appears to the mind. We can also analyse where thoughts come from, where they abide, and where they go. When we analyse like this, this will be analytical meditation. If we analyse whether thoughts come from various sources, like a particular object, a particular condition, or a particular faculty, then this would also be analytical meditation. Once we are able to achieve certainty, for example that thoughts are magical illusions of the mind, arriving at the understanding that they have to inherent existence, we can rest upon this fact by placement meditation.

So again, the word meditation means to put ourselves in the process of habituation, and here we are talking about habituating ourselves to the noble eightfold path. If we do this in our daily life, then after some time, we will be able to achieve the experiences and realisation of the path of the practice of Dharma. Then our karmic afflictions will be slowly reduced over time.

As far as view, meditation and action is concerned, we should neither fall into the extreme of being involved in hedonistic pleasure of the senses nor asceticism, enduring extreme hardships in spiritual practice. For example, if all our energy is spent on a luxurious house, very good clothing, high quality car and so on, then this is the extreme of hedonistic pleasure, and is wrong conduct. Mind you, if we already have these things in our life, then it is a different matter, but spending a lot of time to pursue these things is wrong. The main thing is that we should not dedicate a large part of our life to pursue things and money.

Regarding the extreme of the other conduct, as an example from the past, the Tirthakas, Hindus of India, endured long times under the sun, surrounding themselves with fire in the four directions, while observing the hardship under the hot sun, thinking that by abiding like this, they would achieve enlightenment. The Buddha said that this is not the right path. Some people also practice deities by inserting metal objects through their cheeks and beat themselves with a whip. These are extreme conducts, and this is wrong. There are also Tibetans who practice extreme conduct. They bind their finger with a string, so that it becomes blue, and then they light it up like an offering. This is also wrong practice.

In brief, the conduct of the noble eightfold path should follow the middle way approach. We should also form relationships with friends and the society based on the middle way approach. Also, the relationship between the guru and the disciple should be based on the approach of the middle way. Sometimes, if the relationship is too close, there is a danger of developing wrong view. There is the example of the monk who served and followed the Buddha for twenty years. He was very close to the Buddha. Still, he developed a wrong view after all these years, without progressing on the path.

Our conduct is an important factor in our daily lives, when we are among different people and friends, and in different cultures. We should conduct ourselves in a balanced way, neither too tight nor too loose.

In brief, to develop a right view, we should meditate by habituate ourselves to the noble eightfold path. The conduct should be done in a balanced manner. If we do this, we can achieve experience and realisation along the path of the Dharma. We can also achieve temporary result of happiness, as well as the ultimate happiness. Temporary happiness refers here to a good life and rebirth as humans or gods, a good financial situation, to have good health, and be free of illness. Ultimate happiness refers to enlightenment as the Buddha.

This covers a brief explanation of the view, meditation and conduct, as well as the result. Our understanding of Dharma should not be left as something we have just written down. We should not just leave it as words. When we have understood the meaning of Dharma, we will always be able to remove the superposition of doubts that we have in our mind regarding Dharma. Through the power of learning the Dharma, through the wisdom of learning, we can achieve a peaceful mind, and through the force of the wisdom of meditation, we can eliminate the obscurations and afflictions. Patrul Rinpoche has said that if we do not develop these qualities, then we can meditate in caves or mountains for hundred years without being able to achieve any results. Such a meditation will be fruitless.

Questions and Answers

Q: Meditating up in the mountains, you can feel very close to the nature. I do not quite understand what you are saying.

A: If the afflictions are eliminated, then it will be a correct meditation. In a quiet place we do not have the objects that stir up the afflictions in our mind, so our mind becomes more quiet. But if our afflictions are not eliminated, once we leave those places, they will still be stirred again by these objects. When the mind is again affected by afflictions, the meditation has not been affective.

Q: Why is it not effective?

A: Because the meditation is not done in the right way.

Q: Yes, but in the mountains, you can also feel very natural, very close to the nature in yourself. I have difficulties in seeing quite what you mean.

A: Actually, it is the same case for animals, they also feel closer to nature, but they are not achieving realisation. Sometimes humans, who feel like they do not get along with others, want to stay alone like that, but because they have not understood the nature of mind, they cannot achieve realisation.

Q: But how about Milarepa? He was in an isolated place?

A: Of course, the general idea is that one should stay in an isolated quiet place for meditation, but we need to have the right understanding while doing it. If Milarepa had not had the benefit of Marpa's instructions on how to practice, he would not been able to achieve realisation.

Q: But through practicing the Dharma, he could get very close to something high up in the mountains.

We should observe that Milarepa put in a lot of effort, although he suffered under Marpa a lot, he practiced very hard, and he understood he really had to apply Marpa's instructions. It is true that through his efforts he was able to achieve Buddhahood. If he had not had all these conditions, as well as right understanding and putting in all this effort, then just staying in those places would not give the same result. Actually this particular advice from Patrul Rinpoche was meant for students who have done long retreats, maybe three or even ten years long, and who feel very proud. But this is a wrong, and not a sign of realisation, so this advice is meant for them. Practice is not meant to be a show off to others. The purpose of Dharma practice is to serve as a method to tame the mind.

Q: My question is regarding right effort. I often feel resistance, although I know that it will be good for me and maybe for others, but I often feel that I do not like to do it initially. It is this resistance. This can also be for sitting. I know it is good to do it, but then I feel this resistance. I have also heard other teachers say that right effort should have this element of joyfulness. Maybe you could say something about how resistance and joyfulness relate to each other?

A: This seems to be a problem for most people. The main thing here is that it is also important to have the right wisdom, to understand the purity of three elements of agent, action and object. When we do something we should try to avoid expectation and hope for certain things. Our mind harbour all kinds of thoughts, correct thoughts and incorrect thoughts. These are usually at war with each other. If we have more incorrect thoughts, which is often the case, then the correct thoughts will usually loose, and we will get all these problems that you were talking about. What we need to have is more correct thoughts, so that they can win the war. It is said that we have to have right wisdom to overcome affliction.

The root of this is actually when we say we pay homage to the three jewels, and one of the three jewels is the sangha jewel, our companions that give us positive support. This actually helps us a lot to spend more time in company with friends that support us on our spiritual path. It is a very helpful thing to do.

I am actually quite a lazy person. Although I like exercise, and sometimes I do a little boxing, it is hard for me to learn languages. With this I can be very lazy. I remember 10 years ago, Aksel paid for English tuition for me by an Australian man to come to Karma Tashi Ling, but I did not want to learn. So I think this is difficult for me. Sometimes we can be lazy, so we have to fight. I hope that I will learn more English in the future. In 2001 I had this intention, but still I have not learned it today, 17 years later. And also, I think around 2005, I was in London, where I had been invited to a centre of Sogyal Rinpoche, but I did not have a translator, so I tried to say something. They were very interested in what I had to say, and I wanted to say something, but it was difficult. When I am thinking in Tibetan and translating into English it is difficult for me. Perhaps they understood something of what I said, because they seemed happy with my efforts.

I am now 45 years old, and I have experienced a lot of obstacles. But I believe that if I can face my obstacles, I will gain a lot of power. I do not have any fear. Before, when I was in prison in Tibet for 35 days, it was very difficult, but I was not angry, I had no fear and was not depressed, and did not react with aversion to those who imprisoned me. Also, I think I am a very lucky person. My master is a very good practitioner. He has taught me a lot of things, so I think it has been very easy for me to face life. So I feel I have a happy life. In general, I would say I have encountered a lot of obstacles, but in spite of that I am happy and feel lucky.

Accepting Obstacles on the Path

Each and every one of us encounters the suffering of birth, old age, illness and death, even if that person happens to be the Buddha. But in the case of the Buddha, he did not suffer when he encountered the river of birth, old age, illness and death. We are not exempt from this process, but if we apply the Dharma, then the frustration that ensues from birth, old age, illness and death can be hugely reduced or even overcome. In Tibet there is a saying, if two persons are riding a horse, one being a competent rider, the other not knowing a single thing about horse riding, and both of them fall off their horses, the suffering experienced by these two persons will vary. The suffering experienced by the competent rider will be much less than that of the inexperienced rider.

We should accept everything. I think this is very important. Sometimes we do not accept suffering we experience, but we accept the good things that we for example get from a friend. But if a friend gives us trouble, we do not want to accept this.

It is important to understand that when we live among people, because we are unenlightened humans, we will have unrealistic expectations of receiving only happiness and good things from others. It is the nature of sentient beings to occasionally inflict pain as well as happiness. If everybody would expect both good and bad, this would be more in line with reality. Then we would to a certain extent be able to overcome the frustration that arises from our interactions with others.

Before, when I was young, in Tibet, I learned about good and bad emotions from my teacher, and also about jealousy. I remember that it was difficult to understand jealousy, because I had never experienced it. I knew I sometimes had attachments, and sometimes felt a little bit angry, or experiences of ignorance. These things I knew. But as far as I could remember, I had never known jealousy.

Desire occurs repeatedly, throughout day and night. There is for example desire for good food, better shelter and so forth. A desire to associate with people we like. And a desire to keep away from people we do not like. According to my personal experience, the emotion of anger visits me very seldom compared to desire. The negative emotion of ignorance is very pervasive. Like the oil that permeates the sesame seed. Therefore, it is important to identify spiritual ignorance. Being aware like this, we should see the importance of overcoming discursive thoughts and emotions. We try to overcome them as much as possible by resorting to various antidotes or methods.

Our existence is conditioned by desire, as human beings we find ourselves in the desire realm. As long as we have not divorced ourselves from the negative emotion of desire, we will encounter difficulties with money, as well as lack of money.

I had one student in Malaysia. In the beginning, he was rather poor, materially speaking. He then approached me and asked for advice, which he got and followed, managed to establish a business and did quite well in his ventures. Then he married, got a child, got wealthy, got a job, got everything. But then, because of the negative emotion of desire, which is never satisfied, he had an affair with another woman, while being married to his own wife. This caused a lot of problems. Within a period of ten years, so many changes had occurred in the life of this person, and all these changes were mainly caused by desire and attachment.

One of the Western ideals is to claim full freedom. But according to Buddhism, if we give free reign to our discursive thoughts and emotions, this is not full freedom. In Buddhism, freedom is instead to give freedom to our mind, so that our mind can experience the emotional positivity of loving kindness, compassion, harmony and peace.

When the teaching or meditation sessions become very long, one can experience physical pain or exhaustion. Therefore, it is good to alternate, for example between teaching sessions to offer prostrations. This will ease the body and mind from being depressed.

In China, there is a mental asylum where they have a program, where each patient must offer 108 prostrations. They have termed it 'The Wonderful 108 Prostrations', because of the benefit of doing so. This program is introduced without being connected to any particular religion. All the patients in the asylum practice this, and experience some kind of practical benefit.

Q: I have a question about compassion. In my observations of myself, and I think of members of my sangha, I feel that many of us often have sympathy for others. I have known Lama Changchub for some

years, and I feel that Lama Changchub has a very unsentimental form of compassion, while we tend to feel good when we feel sad for others. It seems that my sadness is something that looks like compassion. When I meet people and they are in a difficult situation, I feel sorry for them, and I do things for them, but this makes them helpless. But Lama Changchub never does that, his compassion seems much purer, because he never takes away your self-reliance. How do I recognise foolish compassion in myself, how can my compassion be more similar to Lama Changchub's non-sentimental compassion?

A: Many people are naturally sympathetic and compassionate from early morning. They want to make others happy. It can be very tiring to engage in this kind of sympathetic compassion, to want to be a nice person by making other people happy all the time. If one works to make others happy all the time, then one will experience frustrated compassion, because it is impossible to continually maintain such a sympathetic compassion. If you spend time with a person who is not desperately trying to please others or make them happy, but have a compassionate quality, not too apparent, the fragrance of such a relationship will transfer to you, and you will also become compassionate. That is the meaning of going for refuge to sangha members. When one realises that a teacher or another sangha member possesses such unsentimental compassion, that also says something about the person who witnesses it. About his or her spiritual sensitivity.

I can speak a little from my personal experience. There is no human being that is mistaken about everything, just as there is no human being who is completely unmistaken, free from all faults. Theoretically and intellectually, we know the right path as far as the noble eightfold path is concerned. And we also would like to work on and pursue this path. But since our interests or level of willpower are different, we are not always able to effectively pursue this, although we have the intention to do so. Therefore, it is important to strengthen our willpower, so that we are able to stay away from the wrong path and practice the right path.

The value of human existence is determined by whether we possess compassion and wisdom. If our human life is blessed by both compassion and wisdom, then our existence becomes extremely valuable. But if the dual quality of compassion and wisdom is missing, then our existence will not be as valuable as it could be.

The Taiwanese president has now been in jail for something like ten years. Without compassion and wisdom, then even if you have power and money, you can end up in jail in the future. Also in Malaysia, the current president has big problems. We are not presidents, but if we are without compassion and wisdom, our lives can turn very difficult. So I think we should practice compassion and wisdom in our daily lives. We should use this practice to face our lives. I think this is very important. Sometimes we do chanting and meditation, or some different practice, and this can help our mind develop wisdom and compassion the right way.

For example, the reason behind the particular monastic robe, is that the robe is a support for abandoning discursive thoughts and emotions. It lends support. If you, as a monastic, were to engage in something that is negative and wrong, the monastic robe will create an obstacle for doing that. It is a little bit like the uniform of the police.

For example, you are sitting down there listening to me, sitting on an elevated seat. It so happens because you value how I embody compassion and wisdom. It is not because of some worldly power.

It is essentially important to rely on a very good teacher. If one relates to a wrong teacher, this wrong teacher might display himself as a divine being during the day, but as a devil during the night. It is like the locomotive of the train that pulls all the wagons behind. One needs to make sure where one is being led, that it is in a right direction.

So, I wish that every day will be happy and easy. Do not think too much. Accept everything in your life. Go through all the activities you need to, make sure that they come closer to the right path as much as possible. If you enter and welcome the right path, you will experience difficulties in the beginning. But if you pursue further and further, you can be sure that you will become increasingly more peaceful and happy.

We have been talking about the path as view, meditation and action. It is also possible to talk about the path as ground, basis and fruition. We are now going to talk about both of these things. On top of this, we are going to talk about the three higher trainings: wisdom, concentration and conduct, or discipline. Some of these things are similar. For example, in 'view, meditation and conduct', the view is the same as wisdom in 'wisdom, concentration and conduct'. In general, all topics of the Dharma are related.

When we try to rest in the view of emptiness, we need to understand the basis of what is empty, we need to understand the five aggregates. If we for example are going to shoot an arrow, we need to know where to aim. We need to know where the target is, otherwise we cannot hit the target. In the same way, when we try to understand emptiness, we need to understand what is empty. In this case this is the five aggregates.

If we do not understand the five aggregates, we cannot understand emptiness. So, among all possible phenomena, if we can understand what the five aggregates are, then we can understand ourselves. If we do not understand the five aggregates, we cannot understand ourselves. If we know where we came from, where we are now, and where are we going, then we will know the five aggregates.

We need to understand the nature of things, so that we can be liberated from ignorance. If we do not understand this, we will not be free from ignorance. This is the difference between samsara and nirvana, the difference of having woken up from sleep or not. If we want to wake up from ignorance, we need to know the truth of samsara and nirvana. If we want to understand the meaning of Dharma, it is important to have a good foundation for the Dharma. If we do not have a good basis for the Dharma, then the process of learning and contemplation will not work correctly.

If you go through the teaching I previously gave on The Gateway to Knowledge, you can get good knowledge and understanding from them. It will be good for the body and mind. At the time, it was fresh knowledge given of what I had learned at the monastic university in Tibet. It was an unpolluted knowledge. However, I am still fresh, there is not much change. When we eat clean, unpolluted food, we feel healthy. In the same way, the pure explanations that was given at that point will also be beneficial.

These days most of us like to have delicious food, whether it is being healthy for us or not. In general, the most delicious food is not so healthy. Some food is really healthy, but we do not feel like eating it. In the same way, when good lamas give teachings precisely, according to what the Buddha taught, the teachings they may not be so easy to digest and understand, so we do not feel like listening to them, or we get bored. Other lamas may instead make things more pleasant by somewhat downplaying the teachings, to make interesting to listen to.

There are also cases of certain lamas, who are acting a bit strange, and living a sort of crazy life. They seem to be able to get a large gathering of disciples. There is a Chinese saying that says when lamas are acting very strange, they tend to get a lot of followers, for example, talking a lot of miraculous powers to get more and more disciples.

When the lama is going to talk about the nature of the Dharma, he has to use reasoning, logic and examination. The students also have to engage in the process of examination and logical thinking. This is quite difficult for most students. There are just a few students who are inclined to this.

Whatever process we are engaged in, whether it be learning, contemplation or meditation, there is a saying that the body should be rested, and the mind should reside relaxed in the present, within the confines of the body. This particular instruction is very meaningful in Tibetan, although I am unsure of how the translation is sounding, whether the full meaning is conveyed.

When I first came to Norway, I would sometimes try to tell something which was supposed to be a funny joke, but when it was translated, nobody was laughing, and then I would say something quite normal, and people would be laughing. We all have different feelings, different views, and different culture. Things can appear differently to each of us.

Despite all this, the ultimate meaning, the teaching of the Buddha does not change throughout the ages. This is unlike culture and fashion, that in fact do change over the ages. For example, clothing worn one thousand years ago would be considered very strange if worn today. Since the ultimate meaning the Buddha taught does not change, it can be taught today and gives the same experience as in the past. Therefore, it is very important to rely on the ultimate meaning.

The Aggregate of Form – Seeing that All is Empty

When we talk about the view, all compounded phenomena are impermanent. This is always the case, no matter what, all that is contaminated has the nature of suffering. It has always been, and will always be. These truths are the first and second of the Four Seals. The third seal is that nirvana is peace. This is always the case. This comes from, and is guaranteed and signed by the Buddha himself.

Through the process of learning and contemplation, we can examine what the Buddha taught, whether it is true or not. When we do such examination, we need to use the intellect. When we examine and investigate, we need to know how to do it.

For example, the Heart Sutra teaches the topic of emptiness, and it is taught that 'Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form'. The bases of what is empty is the five aggregates. So, we need to know the nature of the five aggregates. If we cannot understand the five aggregates, we will not be able to get a correct experience of our meditation practice. If we do understand the five aggregates, we will get a proper experience of Shamata and Vipassana. When we engage in Dharma practice, we need to engage in it without any mistakes or error. If we do it with mistakes here and there, we will fall back into samsara.

In the Heart Sutra, the Buddha taught that 'there is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue' and so forth for all the sense elements. But in our daily life, we think that there is an eye, an ear, a nose and so forth, which is the other way around of what the Buddha has taught.

We should therefore look and examine for ourselves whether we have more attachment to what exists, or if we have more attachment to the things that do not exist. It is a high probability that we have attachment to what seems to exist, and this is why the Buddha taught non-existence.

To understand the five aggregates, it is best to first understand the first aggregate, form. Here, the word 'aggregate' means is a collection of many things. When we engage in learning, contemplation and meditation, we engage in the nature of the aggregates, we contemplate that the aggregates are empty, that form is empty. This will show that things are dependent on each other. Emptiness is understood as the essence of dependent origination. Because of this essence, this nature of emptiness, anything is possible, anything can happen.

If something is not empty, then nothing is possible, and nothing can happen. For example, the mirror has no shape or colour by itself, but if we put something in front of it, we can see what appears to be colours and shapes in the mirror.

Form is defined formally as something that it is possible to be in contact with, something that can be examined by consciousness. A form has these two qualities. For example, take the case of our own body; we can touch our body, we can see our body, and we can feel it, so it is a good object for examination. When we examine our body, we can gain certainty that it is empty, and we will understand that this is the nature of all other phenomena. It is therefore important to start with our own body. This is the meaning of the saying that says that understanding the nature of one thing leads to the understanding of the nature of other things.

The body acts as a basis for the suffering that we experience. For example, it can act as a basis for attachment, causing us to experience afflictions. Therefore, it is important to examine the nature of the body. The body is a basis of something that can be affected or harmed by other conditions.

The Tibetan word for form and body is the same. The body is considered to be formed by particles that have come together to constitute what we call a body. When we divide up the concept of a body, we can find the five sense elements. These again, correspond to the five objects. There is also the imperceptible form. This is not the same kind of form as other forms. It can only be conceived of by the six mental consciousnesses. Therefore, it is listed as the last type of form.

All the forms just mentioned are empty. Due to their emptiness interdependent arising can occur, or we can say that because they are interdependently arisen, they are empty in nature. The concept of dependently arising phenomena belongs to the conventional reality of truth, and the concept of emptiness belongs to the ultimate reality of truth. Together they form what we call the same nature with different aspects. It is a bit like making comparisons to get a point of view. For example, when we compare two people with their child, they become its parents.

How do we compare a person with realisation with one who does not have it? A person with realisation can see an object, for example a flower. A person who is not realised will see the same object. The objects are the same, and they appear to be the same. The difference is that the person who has realisation will not have attachment to the object. It is the same object, but it will act as a cause in different ways, the object can cause the non-realised person to fall into samsara, while the other person does not. The person without realisation will experience attachment to the flower, like being bound to the object, and then falling into the samsaric path. A person who has realisation, whatever object they encounter, a flower or anything, are free. Because their mind experiences no attachment, they are not bound by any object wherever they go, they can have a free state of mind. It is a crucial point of practice, whether we have attachment or not.

There are two types of attachment, clinging to attributes and dualistic perception. Attachment as dualistic perception can be perceiving subjects and objects, perceiving good and bad, that kind of thing.

For example, when the faculty of an ordinary person meets an object, in the first instant there will be no conceptualisation, then dualistic perception set in, and once that happens, there will be attachment to it. This process is caused by underlying ignorance. If we are not free from attachment, aversion and ignorance, then whichever object we encounter, we will for sure experience clinging to perceptions of subject and object.

For example, when we think that we see a beautiful flower, there is attachment. When we think that we do not like the colour of this flower, there is aversion, and we start a process of rejection. There is an underlying affliction of ignorance, as we do not know that the nature of the flower is empty, we do not know that the appearance of the flower is interdependent. We cling to what does not exist.

Are we looking at the flower, or are the flower looking at us? Is it the case that the flower comes to us, or is our eye consciousness going to the flower? Is it the colour that is perceived by a human, or is it the colour that is perceived by an animal? The Buddha taught that there are six types of sentient beings, and that they have different faculties. So what perception is real? The actual reality is the reality of interdependent arising.

When we practice the Dharma, each of us has this kind of attachment with different kinds of clinging. We need to be free from attachment and clinging. Once we are free from them, we will be able to realise the true reality of things.

For example, when we look at someone over there, we become ourselves what is over there for the other person. In this case we can see that there is nothing that is unchanging. Seeing that all things are like that, we can understand that form is empty and experience realisation. Have you had any experience of thinking about things in this manner? If you see a beautiful man or woman, you can perhaps think like that.

If we were to employ the logical reasonings of the middle way philosophy, this would be quite tedious, but even if they are very good reasonings to gain understanding, those who are lazy would not like to employ such reasoning. Lazy people can for example engage in the meditations in the higher levels of meditative absorption like 'infinite space', 'nothingness' or "neither perceptions nor non-perception". Those states are in fact very peaceful and happy. For such people, the view of the Chinese monk Hashang may be very convenient and useful. It is similar to the Dzogchen trek-chö practice. There are many kinds of laziness. Some people have a physical kind of laziness. Some people are very lazy when it comes to talking. Some people are lazy when it comes to thinking.

In my particular case, when it comes to learning new things, I am quite lazy. But I am not physically lazy. For example, when I am in the Dharma centre, I keep it clean. I am quite hard working when it comes to keeping things clean. I also take good care of the plants and flowers in the dharma centre. I have three cats, and I take care of them. This is how it is for me.

Emptiness of the Indivisible Particle

Let us go back to the aggregate of form. The aggregate of form comprises the five sense elements of eye, ear, tongue and so forth, having the corresponding sense objects of taste, smell and form. As I mentioned before there is also the imperceptible form. The imperceptible form is considered the form which arises when vows are taken. It is considered a form, because it is subject to harm. For example, if

vows are not kept properly, the vows are harmed. If the vows are broken, the body and mind will be subjected to harm, because it will lead to rebirth in the lower realm as hell beings, animals and so forth.

There are also objects of the sixth consciousness. An example of this phenomena is the indivisible particle. It is the building block of all the forms in the three realms. The indivisible particle is not perceptible with our eye faculty, and therefore it is categorised as a phenomenon of the sixth consciousness, the consciousness of the ayatana. This is a form that can only be perceived in true meditation. For the practitioners of the Hinayana vehicle, this indivisible particle is the ultimate reality. For them, this indivisible particle is not empty, it exists truly. Although one might have attachment to this indivisible particle, one will not be bound to samsara. It is also because of this fact that the Hinayana practitioners, the arhats, have realised the lack of inherent existence for phenomena. On the other hand, the Mahayana teaches that the indivisible particle is not within the three times, that it is beyond past, present and future, and that it does not have any direction, and this is why it is called indivisible. When one teaches this form of emptiness, this is a Mahayana teaching.

In the Hinayana vehicle it is not taught that form is emptiness. They accept that the gross form is empty, but think that the indivisible particle truly exists. The approach and system of the Hinayana vehicle is a bit like the example with a house. The house itself represents form, the darkness inside represents ignorance. If the darkness obscures a rope inside the house, then, because of the darkness of ignorance, the rope can be misapprehended for a snake. But if one realises that the rope is a rope and not a snake, then one can be free from the darkness.

In a similar way, the five aggregates are without a self, the identity have been superimposed on them. Once one realises that there exist no I among the five aggregates, then liberation can be achieved. One does not have to go to the extent to realise that the five aggregates are also empty. That is not necessary for liberation.

Causal Form

To complete our discussion about form, we shall now mention the causal forms. They are the four elements of earth, fire, water and wind. Our body is no other than the four elements that comes from the father and mother, who give birth to the body. The flesh and bones constitute the earth element. The blood is the water element. The body is composed of 70 percent of water. The warmth in our body is the fire element. The breathing of our body and the movements are the wind element. These elements are called the four great elements, because everything that is built up from particles are nothing other than these four elements. When we understand that form is emptiness, we will realise that all other forms, that are also made up from these four elements, are similarly empty.

The Aggregate of Feeling – Going Beyond Hope and Fear

Now, consider the aggregate of feeling. The root of feeling is affliction. For example, we go about doing things to achieve happiness, and we also take measures to avoid things we fear. There is also the suffering of not being able to achieve what we want, and the fear of losing something we have already achieved. Despite the fact that we do not want to experience suffering, when all these things happen, we will do just that.

I think that if we want happiness, we should also want suffering. Happiness and suffering are actually inseparable from each other. So, once we realise the nature of happiness, we also realise the nature of suffering.

For example, if we look at how time works, when the day is gone, the night arrives, and when the night is gone, the day will arise. Suffering and happiness work in a similar way. If we sometime in the future experience happiness, suffering will be waiting for us, but still later, happiness will reappear.

Now, if we realise the basis, the sources of these two, then neither of these things will happen to us. The source of these two is clinging, clinging to the experiences of happiness and suffering.

If we can practice properly, we can arrive at a mental state where we accept that both things will occur.

It is possible for us to reach a state free from hope and fear, where all our feelings are like guests that comes and goes. If we cling to hope and fear, we will experience a diversity of problems. If we do not, neither of these feelings will give us problems.

For example, I have some students in Asia, who are mothers, who are very worried when their own children stumble and fall, but they do not react when other children fall. This is because of too much attachment to their own children. Both incidents are the same, both mothers have a thread of attachment to her own child. A strong reaction of 'mine' provokes a different reaction to a similar event.

When we practice the Heart Sutra, if we sometimes experience happiness or wellbeing, we should look at the nature of that feeling, and understand that this happiness or bliss is empty, that happiness is bliss, and bliss is emptiness. Also, if a pleasant feeling arises in general, we should try to look at it in the same manner. If we engage in our practice in this way, then there is a possibility of achieving liberation in its own place, that the mind can be liberated within its own nature.

We need to engage in repetitive practice in order to understand that the body is empty, that the nature of the body is emptiness, and also that emptiness forms the body.

When we go through the Heart Sutra, we hear that 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form', going through the faculties one after the other in a repetitive way. What we need to do is to penetrate deep into the meaning of 'Form is emptiness, emptiness is form' and be able to abide in this state of realisation. If we for example are circumambulating the stupa, doing 'kora', our mind can contemplate that form is emptiness, and emptiness is form, and we can try to get some certainty and abide in this while we do kora. We never know, before doing kora, we might be sentient beings, but end up as enlightened beings when we finish.

The Aggregate of Perception – The Minister of the 'I'

The third aggregate, the aggregate of discrimination, or perception, is a tough one. This is because it is quite difficult for us to change our perception. For example, those who adhere to specific religious or philosophical schools will mostly hold onto their own perception. Normally, they do not want to change it. Also, individuals have their own perceptions of the people around them and the environment. They do not want to change that.

It is because of this that people do not achieve liberation. It seems that this perception is harder than diamond. It is so difficult to change this perception. Because it is so difficult to change, it gives us problems. It also produces suffering in our body and mind.

Therefore, it is important to learn about the aggregate of perception. This is because the aggregate of perception is very close to the I, or self. In this context, the I is like the king, and the perception is like the king's minister.

So, as we can see, the perception is doing the job for the I. That is why the Buddha taught that we need to abandon wrong views. This relates to freedom from elaboration. The view is like the rays of the sun. The sunrays do not have any particular wish to shine on any particular place or through certain windows, on good or bad people. If someone is liberated from clinging, that person can be like the wind, being able to go wherever he likes.

The nature of the aggregate of perception is the apprehension of signs or attributes. The Buddha gave many different teachings because people have different perceptions, he gave different kinds of teachings to give freedom from different kinds of perceptions. The Buddha did not give many kinds of teachings in order to create a big group of followers. He also did not teach for the sake of politics. Neither did he teach for the sake of getting power. The Buddha gave these teachings because each and every sentient being suffers from different kinds of illnesses, and it is to cure these illnesses that he gave different teachings. This is similar to the fact that we should use correct medicine for a particular disease.

When we meditate, we may experience that on a certain occasions anger or resentment arises in the mind. When this happens, it would be good to meditate on love and compassion. For example, if attachment or desire arises in the mind, we should contemplate or meditate on the unpleasantness of the body or the object. For myself, I must say that 'ugly' is a very strange concept.

When we feel that ignorance prevail in our mind, we should contemplate on dependent arising. When we recognise that we have strong pride, we should contemplate the six elements, constituting the five forces of earth, water and so forth, as well as the element of the mind, a total of six. For example, the Dalai Lama has pointed out that the people in the four directions are all made of the same elements. So what makes us so special? Everyone is made of the same elements, the same substances, so there is no

difference. The cars in Germany and Japan are the same, they have the same substance, even if the colour and shapes are different. You are white, I am yellow.

Releasing Thoughts and Concepts in Meditation

If we recognise that we have many strong thoughts and concepts, it would be good to meditate on our breath. When we do this, we can count the breaths to help pacifying the thoughts, for example counting from one to 10, or up to 20 and so forth. We put our attention on the nostrils, and start counting. This practice involves keeping our attention there, without forgetting the attention to counting the breath.

There is also another method where we place our consciousness on the out-breath, letting the mind follow the out breath all the way out, all the way to the soles of the feet. On the in-breath the mind then follows the breath all the way up to the nostrils. There are these methods, as well as several others, to practice Shamata mediation, in order to pacify the thoughts. It is also very beneficial to pacify the thoughts if we were to practice some yoga. When we continue to practice Shamata in this manner, then after some time, we will experience lightness of body and mind. This experience is called pliancy or workability of body and mind.

In brief, if we have a right perception, it will help us to achieve the state of enlightenment. On the other hand, if we have a wrong perception, it will cause us to fall into samsaric states. If we are able to recognise the nature of perception, then we can remain happy whether we are alone or in company of others. When we are in the company of others, we will be able to make others happy.

If we have a strong attachment to an object, we will end up arguing with others, who does not like that particular object. They will make us unhappy, as well as making them unhappy. More generally, we can see that there is a lot of arguments and disagreements in the world, and that this actually come down to perception as the root cause. We can see this happening between countries, and between different races and religions. It even happens between husbands and wives, and also among friends. All these disagreement happens for the sake defending one's perceptions.

When we are able to abandon the clinging to our perceptions, it will soften up our character, the more we can abandon and reduce this clinging, the softer the character. To do this, we can apply the statement in the Heart Sutra, 'Form is empty', to perceptions, giving 'Emptiness is no other than perception, perception is no other than emptiness'.

The Aggregate of Formation – The Innumerable

Now we have come to the fourth aggregate, the aggregate of formation, or in Sanskrit, samskara. In general, the aggregate of formation refers to karma, or action. There is also the non-associated formation. The particular feature of this non-associated formation is that it is neither the nature of the mind nor is it the nature of form. So, it is not something that truly exists. All the 51 mental factors are also included in the aggregates of formation. Both virtuous and non-virtuous thoughts belong to the aggregate of formation.

When we look at the various thoughts that we have, we can see that some have a virtuous nature and some has a non-virtuous nature. This is not unusual. In reality, the enumeration of mental factors is infinite, but the Buddha summarised them into 51 mental factors as a brief explanation.

There are 14 types of non-associated formation. For example, when someone has attained the state of Buddhahood, but we cannot say that it is something that has been attained. For example, it is said that the state of not seeing anything is the best type of seeing. And in the same way, that non-attaining is the best form of attaining. As another example, the statement that everybody has equal fortune, is a phenomenon that is existing as a form.

By contemplating in the same manner as before, we can contemplate that the nature of thoughts is emptiness, and that emptiness is no other than thoughts, and thoughts are none other than emptiness.

Mind you, the practice on meditation on emptiness we do here is not a practice of meditating on something that is non-existent. It is not like, when a tiger is coming at us, meditating 'there is no tiger, there is no tiger'. If we do, we end up being eaten by a tiger. Clearly, this does not work. It has to be a practice where we realise what is real, determine the actual case of the situation, and meditate on that.

The Aggregate of Consciousness

The last aggregate is the aggregate of consciousness. In order to understand the aggregate of consciousness, we need to understand the mind. Mind and consciousness are here synonyms.

The five sense consciousnesses together with the mental consciousness makes six. On top of these six there is the afflicted mind. Then there is the sub-consciousness, or the alaya-consciousness, giving a total of eight. Sometimes, in addition to these eight consciousnesses, one also talks about the immediately preceding consciousness.

The first to the fifth consciousness are called the five doors to the five faculties. In general, the nature of the five sense consciousnesses are directed outwards. They do not recognize the internal mind, because they are non-conceptual. They are only able to recognize what is happening on the outside. We cannot recognize what is happening on the inside, therefore we cannot abandon the afflictions and negative karma. For example, you can see me, but can you perceive yourself? If you happen to perceive that I am good looking, then you might get good thoughts, but if I am not appearing good looking, then you might have negative thoughts. But you might not perceive your own self. Another example is the crane, the bird with long legs, standing in muddy water, where it bends its long neck down into the water to see a frog. The frog sees the legs of the crane, and it might tell the crane that its legs are very dirty. But the whole body of the frog itself is very dirty.

Because the nature of our consciousness is directed outward, we can easily perceive if somebody smells bad, but it is difficult to detect our own smell. The power of the nose does not seem to reach the armpit. Sometimes, we do not listen very well to what we are saying, but we hear very well what others say. Because of this, we tend to talk about the faults of others, but hardly about our own. If we were talk about our own faults as much as 20 percent of the time, that would be quite good. It is not easy to experience our own body, but if we are able to achieve a certain level of meditative stability, then we would experience bodily bliss and physical wellbeing. Instead, we often try to dress up nicely to make others feel good.

Because of all this, we end up placing our hope for happiness on external things. We try to do things to achieve happiness and wellbeing by for example wearing nice clothing or nice things based on the expectation of others. In a romantic relationship we try to adorn the relationship with nice things to make each other happy. So we end up relying on outer things for happiness. If we instead are able to find meaning inside ourselves, through meditative stabilisation, then we can actually experience happiness from within.

Our challenge is that the five sense consciousnesses are always looking outward, and we easily end up projecting our hopes and expectations on outer things. It is a fact that we cannot always get happiness from these five senses. We cannot always have a good smell, we cannot always see pleasing forms, we cannot always have good tastes, live in good houses or wear good, comfortable clothing. It is not possible for us to always encounter such conditions. But if we were to change the flow of our inner conceptual mind, then due to the power of this conceptual mind, we would be able to affect the five sense consciousnesses through practice. When we do that, because of the changes that takes place in the conceptual consciousness, then we would be able to make good use of our five sense consciousnesses, instead of just following them. Otherwise, we will be in a situation where our five sense consciousnesses are always going outwards, independent on whatever object there, there will just be a contact that will send signal to the mind that the mental consciousness will make judgements like 'this is good' or 'that is bad'.

The five sense consciousnesses are not able to do anything else than going back and forth as messengers, bringing signals back and forth. So we can see, among all these consciousnesses, it is the mental consciousness that is the most important. I have heard of meditation systems where they block all the five sense consciousnesses. But if you do this, you will experience difficulty. In Tibetan Buddhism there are no meditation methods where one blocks off the five sense consciousnesses.

The mental consciousness has two aspects, conceptual and non-conceptual. Then there is the afflicted mind, the seventh consciousness. The focal object of the seventh consciousness is the alaya consciousness. The nature of the afflicted mind is to perceive an I or self, and generate the clinging to this

self. It has this pride of being I. This is ignorance. The afflicted mind has these four features, seeing the I, clinging to the I, taking pride in the I, and the underlying ignorance. The afflicted mind is always present. It is present as long as we have not achieved the first bhumi. Most likely, we all have this afflicted mentality. We can see that we have this conception of the I, because we do have pride in ourselves, and there is the ongoing ignorance.

Feeling Real Rich

We may feel that we are very rich. This is contrary to how realized beings such as Milarepa experience wealth. When Milarepa looks at others, he thinks that they are very poor. But when people look at him they think that he is very poor. But Milarepa feels that he is very rich. The reason for difference in perception is that Milarepa has contentment, and others do not. This is why he feels that he is always rich. One of the qualities of the afflicted mind is the desire of the self. This desire will never be satisfied.

Some scientists say that if everybody on the planet would be as well off as the wealthy Europeans, then there would not be sufficient energy and resources to sustain everybody on this planet. We would have to move to another place, like the moon or something.

We can see that in the past that there were fights and wars for the sake of land and resources. Similarly, in the future, there might be fights and wars over this, perhaps even escalate to outer space. In the future, it is perhaps possible that we will discover a new planet. Then we would quarrel over who owns that planet. Whoever discover it will lay claim to it, and think that it is mine, because I was here first.

One of the most important things in Dharma practice is to have little desire and be content. Also, we should try to be humble, have a simple mind, and not be too ambitious. If we are too ambitious, we will end up bringing harm to others.

The Subconscious

This covers the nature of the afflicted mentality. We will now talk about the eight consciousness, the alaya, or the subconscious.

The alaya consciousness can be explained as the basis for samsara and nirvana. The reason being, for samsara to be produced, there need to be a seed or cause. The seeds of samsara are placed in the alaya consciousness. In order to achieve the state of enlightenment, we need to fulfil the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. Those two accumulations are also placed in the alaya consciousness, and they are placed in a stable manner, they cannot be lost or destroyed.

When the potential for a habit is placed in the alaya consciousness, it will be very hard to change. For this reason, it is very difficult to eliminate the obscurations. In Tibetan, the literal translation of the alaya consciousness is two syllables meaning 'old' and 'base', The word old is used because it includes everything else. Base is used because it is the support for everything. For example, the basis for the four elements is space. In a similar way, the basis for samsara and nirvana is the alaya consciousness, therefore it is called the basis for all, or in Sanskrit the alaya consciousness.

The nature of the alaya consciousness is such that it is neither virtuous or non-virtuous. The nature of the alaya consciousness is neutral. Because of this nature, it is possible to accumulate both virtue and non-virtue.

The Continuity of the Aggregates – The Nature of Dependent Arising

We have now gone through the eight consciousnesses that are the fifth aggregate. If we were to analyse the nature of the five aggregates further in terms of karmic cause and effect, we can see that the aggregates of the previous life become the five aggregates of this life. And the aggregates of this life become a cause for the aggregates of the next life.

Because we are unable to see the aggregates of the previous life, some of us do not believe in the existence of previous lives. Also, we are not able to perceive the aggregates of the future life. This is because the aggregates of the previous life have ceased, so we are not able to see them, and the aggregates of the future life has not yet arisen. Therefore, some of us do not accept reincarnation, while some of us might do so.

Once, in the past, in Beijing, China, a Tibetan lama met Mao Zedong. Chairman Mao told him that he did not believe in the existence of past life, because I did not see it, so the lama replied to him, 'Do you

believe in tomorrow?' 'Yes, I do', answered the Chairman Mao. 'But you can't see it, so why do you believe in it?' Consequently, Chairman Mao admitted he had a good point.

If the continuity of the aggregates of the past could not extend to today, we could not have the present aggregates. If the present aggregates could not continue into the future, then the future aggregates would not be able to exist.

Other than the explanations that I have given, there is also the explanation of the five aggregates in the sutras, on how the aggregates move about in the various phases, the bardo between lives, into the womb, and then to a next life.

One example of how the aggregates move from one life to another, is as follows, if I were to recite 'om mani padme hung' to somebody who previously did not know it, and he or she listen to the sound, then he or she would learn it, and be able to say it themselves. It may look like the form has moved from me to another person, but there is actually no movement. If there was an actual movement, I would end up forgetting or losing my ability to say it myself, but obviously it does not work that way. Instead, it functions in the manner of cause and effect. Based on the cause of the form that I indicated, the other person gets the result of understanding it. In general, it is difficult for sentient beings to understand how cause and effect works. So it is good to contemplate this every once in a while.

The butter lamp is another example to illustrate this topic. Considering a series of butter lamps being lit after each other. It is not the case that the flame moves from one to the other. The lamp before is the cause of the other being lit.

If we analyse like this and gain understanding, we do not have to be afraid that one day we will lose the continuity of our aggregates and die. They will continue, from one place to another. We should actually prepare to make a good basis for the new aggregates in the next life. Like preparing a lot of fresh butter lamps in advance to ensure the continuity. It is not possible for the aggregates to cease. If the aggregates do reach cessation, that would be the cessation of nirvana.

The third example is the example of the mirror. When we stand in front of the mirror, although our form appears in the mirror, our form does not actually move or transfer itself into the mirror. If that were so, we would lose our form. It is not like we can see in the movies, where they teleport themselves from one place to another.

The nature of dependent arising is actually very amazing. It is the nature of becoming into existence. For example, when I make a phone call from Norway to Tibet. Does my voice actually arrive in Tibet or not? If we look carefully, this can only happen when there are all sorts of causes and conditions coming together. All the details are quite inconceivable.

We can also analyse as in the example of planting a seed, and it grows into a tree or plant. Does the seed actually transfer itself into the shape of a plant or not? We should ask this kind of questions to ourselves, and when we think about and contemplate, there is a chance for understanding the ultimate truth.

Our life is such that sometimes we also ask questions that are not really beneficial. This can be questions like, 'I tried this and that to impress this beautiful girl, by why does she still not like me?' We easily ask ourselves questions like this, but we do not ask questions that are more beneficial, like the questions above. Also, we might wonder and ask questions like why are some people having this or that, being rich, and why am I not. Or we may sometimes wonder why am I being inflicted by this or that illness? Why not other people, why me? Again, these are not very beneficial questions.

When we see somebody consume something sour, like a lemon, saliva will also start to flow in our own mouth. But it is the other person that consumes it, not us. So how does it move to generate a similar experience? There is also the example of voice that leaves the mouth and generates an echo in some locations. How does it happen? How can the sound that leaves the mouth come back? The reason for these kinds of occurrences is that based on previous aggregates of forms and so forth, the future aggregate arises.

There is also the example of the magnifying glass. We can ask how the magnifying glass functions, how it is able to direct the fire from the sun to a spot to burn something. The continuity of the five aggregates is possible because of the combination of afflictions, karma, and consciousness. This is similar to

the condition of the magnifying glass, using the sun to generate fire in the grass. We cannot really say if the fire arises from the sun, the grass, or the magnifying glass.

All these examples are various methods that help us to understand the nature of dependent arising. The Buddha gave eight examples to explain the nature of dependent arising. I think I can come up with a ninth example, if I were to yawn, then another person seeing that will also start yawning.

As we have seen, it is actually not the case that the aggregates flow from one end to the other, it is based on the condition of the previous aggregates that the current or future aggregates will exist. The Buddha said that those who are wise should know this.

In brief, this is how we can understand that the nature of the five aggregates is emptiness. And because of emptiness, we can have the five aggregates. In the famous saying, 'Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, emptiness is no other than form, form is no other than emptiness', the first one, 'Form is emptiness', acts as a negation, negating the arising of self. Form can arise from four possibilities, from itself, from other, from both or neither. This is all explained in the philosophy of the Middle Way, asking questions like 'Does something arise from itself? Does something arise from another?'

We have now talked about the nature of the five aggregates, how they arise, and how they move from one state to another. The important point here is to understand that although it appears that they arise, the fact is that there is in fact no arising, and although they appear to cease, there is in fact no ceasing.

Existence and Non-Existence

Normally we accept existence or non-existence. One of the reasonings that is used in the Middle Way philosophy is the example of planting a seed. When we plant a seed of a tree or plant, we can get many fruits. We can ask, at the time of planting the seed, are those fruits already present within the seed? If the fruit is already present, there is no need for the tree to bear fruit again. If the fruit is not present, it is not possible to bear the fruit, because the fruit does not exist. The fruit cannot both exist and not exist at the same time.

If we say that something does not exist, and that it still somehow can exist, then we should be able to have flowers growing in the sky, but this is not possible. There is also the example that there cannot be hair on the back of a tortoise. These are the types of examples we are presented in the philosophical school of the Middle Way. If we do not engage in reasoning like this, we cannot achieve realization of emptiness. In the same way, we use analysis for the three other possibilities, to conclude that the self cannot arise from itself, from another, from both or neither.

The purpose of the first line, 'Form is emptiness', serves to liberate us from the view of permanent existence. The second line 'emptiness is form', frees us from clinging to nihilism. The third one, 'emptiness is no other than form', serves to liberate us from the view of both permanent existence and nihilism. The last line, 'form is no other than emptiness', serves to free us from any other possible views other than the view of permanence and nihilism.

We also need to analyse from different perspectives, some yogis like Milarepa probably had a lot of potential accumulated from practicing in their past lives. In their previous life they may not have achieved realization, but in this life, as the continuation of their previous journey, having met with a good guru and put in good effort, and also due to various causes and conditions, they achieved realisation.

In the same way, as Guru Rinpoche said, there are different types of people with different faculties, some with lesser faculties may be weak or dull minded, but through their strong faith in the guru they are able to achieve realisation. There are also those of very high intelligence, and through that they are able to achieve realisation. But it is quite difficult for those who are in between, who are neither very intelligent nor dull, Guru Rinpoche said. It seems likely that most people belong to the intermediate category. Therefore, not many people achieve enlightenment.

Questions and Answers

Q: You explained about the eight consciousnesses, the five sense consciousnesses, the mind consciousness, the afflicted consciousness, and the alaya consciousness. These are all the ordinary consciousnesses, the deluded consciousnesses. My question is, is rigpa outside of this, and how can I recognise rigpa?

A: We are able to conceive our own mind. We have this cognitive ability that is able to be aware of whatever might be. This is the natural clarity of the mind. This is what is commonly called rigpa, but your question might have been about rigpa in the context of Dzogchen. In this case, one way of explaining it is that at enlightenment, the alaya goes through a transformation where it transforms into wisdom itself, that is the actual rigpa. The current state of the sub-consciousness is that it is contaminated by ignorance, and once the transformation is free from ignorance, then it becomes rigpa, or wisdom. When we talk about the tathgatagarba, Buddha-nature, the difference between samsara and nirvana is whether one can recognise the Buddha-nature or not. There exists a debate on whether the mind-consciousness and rigpa are of the same nature or not, there are in fact all sorts of debates on this topic. According to the explanation of Dzogchen, all phenomena of samsara and nirvana are complete within the mind itself. Therefore, it is like being in the state of enlightenment. It is like the sun shining in the sky, free from clouds. But if you just want to receive a simple explanation, we could just say that consciousness transforms into wisdom.

Norway is a very good place for meditation. Sometimes I am in Shanghai, which is a very big city, very busy, with a lot of people. Sometimes we get stressed. Also, I am building up a monastery there. It cost a lot of money, but many students there are doing good business, and are able to help. So, actually, I have a lot of stress. Also in Tibet, I have a monastery, it is one school for the monks, and another school for laypeople. It has been necessary to face a lot of obstacles. But also, I am very happy, getting good food. Because all Tibetans like food, so do the Chinese. Some people give me different cars, like Lexus and BMW.

But everything I have sometimes give me a lot of stress. Maybe it would have been better without, without monastery, without school, without cars, without house, without centre. Sometimes I think like this, remembering being very happy before, in Tibet. I did not have anything, but it was very peaceful. Also, now, I have four centres in Taiwan and three centres in Malaysia. This is hard work every day. Maybe you get your weekends off. I do not have free time in weekends, Saturdays and Sundays are always very busy, because a lot of people are coming. In Asia, people are very hospitable. Some people that come to the centre in Malaysia stay until 12 o'clock in the middle of the night. And after 12, they go out to a restaurant to have good food, perhaps going to bed at 2 o'clock at night. I usually go to bed around 11, but it is sometimes too noisy to sleep, because it is like a party, with people talking and laughing. I do not know what they are talking about, but I think that they are very happy. The reason people are up late in Malaysia is that it is very, very hot. You cannot go outside in the day-time, but night time is very beautiful and peaceful, and the temperature is pleasant. Therefore, many sleep during the day, and use the night to go out and be happy, or have a party. Sometimes I enjoy this kind of life. Also, we have big pujas. When I was in Taiwan, one year I had a puja with about 1800 people, in Malaysia we also have big pujas.

I now speak Mandarin very well. This means I can help a lot of people. They can understand the Buddha-dharma and help themselves, their family and business. It is also helpful for love, everything, you know. Dharma can help you in all aspects of your life, not only enlightenment. Love, when it is not selfish, can become much better between husband and wife. Also, business becomes better when it is not selfish. By increasing compassion and wisdom, the Dharma can be of help for everything, I think. Only thinking in terms of enlightenment can make the Dharma seem very far away. The Dharma is something that should be practiced within the context of our daily lives, and this also becomes the process in which enlightenment takes place. Because enlightenment is free from suffering; free from bad karma, free from bad emotions, and also free from ignorance. Life is peaceful, I think.

Sometimes people tell me, I don't like this world. I do not like human beings. I want to go to the pure land. I say, if you think like this, maybe Amitabha will not accept you, because your mind is too dirty, you can end up polluting the pure land. Instead, if you one day choose to think that everybody is very good and the world is a very nice place, that could be the actual pure land.

For example, we will not start to argue and fight with a small child if it does something wrong. In the same way, it is a matter of how much wisdom and love that we have for others. Someone, who knows how to accommodate others can be called a bodhisattva. If we cannot accommodate others, it is not possible to be a bodhisattva. Some people may think that this or that person are no good, and want to stay away from them, but it is not bodhisattva conduct to want to be away from people. Bodhisattvas do not stay away from people.

Daily Practice

We have the aspiration prayer, 'May I always have bodhicitta, and never be separated from bodhicitta', but at times it seems that we are praying, 'may we never be separated from money', 'may we never be separated from our partners', or 'may we never be separated from power'. Even if we want to practice being a bodhisattva and pray, 'May all sentient being be free from suffering' and do on, we sometimes get angry and lose bodhicitta. Now we suddenly may want to beat other people, with a face becoming like a wrathful deity. This is not so good, I think.

In the morning when we get up, we should pray and take refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We can just say, I hope that I can help people today, and that I can help myself. Just like this, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha will give me power, good energy and karma, and good wisdom and compassion, so that I can face everything today without being angry, without attachment, without any other bad emotions. If we can pray like this in the morning, there will be a lot of auspiciousness in our life. I just say the day can be 'tashi delek!'

At the end of the day, when we lay down to sleep, we can think about what we did today. If we did bad things, we can get up and do perhaps 100 prostrations, then we can sleep. If we have done good things, perhaps we can get up and have some ice cream. We can reward ourselves like this sometimes.

If we always think about about what we have done, good or bad, then we can change and improve. If we are willing to change, then we can improve. If we do not want to change, then we cannot improve our mind, our speech, our bodily actions. I think it is very important to be patient in order to be successful. If we cannot be patient, we will not achieve anything in our lives.

I remember when I was seven years old, that I should be patient with my teacher. From when I was seven until I was 23, my master was teaching me many things. At this time, I did not have a good house or good clothes. Sometimes I got good food, sometimes I got bad food. Many times, mice were eating my rice, noodles and tsampa, leaving their shit behind. It was a difficult time. We did not have any fruit, we did not have any vegetables or meat, sometimes only tsampa. I remember one friend who did not have warm clothes. My parents had given me a very nice sweater for the winter, but I was thinking he is very cold. My master started teaching at 7 o'clock in the morning in the big house, and it was, very, very cold. There was no electricity, no heating, no cushions, only sitting on the floor - very, very cold. I was looking at my friend shaking, being too cold, so I gave my sweater to him. Perhaps not like Milarepa, but very close. It was nice.

Even if I experience a lot of obstacles, I do not have any fear. I think I will have an easy life. The Buddha went through six years of suffering austerity. I would say maybe I went through 16 years. My master did not want us to go out from the monastery, meaning not going to Kandze city, which was my birth place. If I had gone back to my home, I would have had everything. But the road was not good. From Kandze to Dzogchen Monastery it took two days at that time. Today it takes 2,5 hours by car. The road is now very good. It has been a big change.

Now in Dzogchen monastery everything is very nice and beautiful. But 20 years back it was very difficult. I think that if you want to practice, you should be patient. Then things will happen in your life. Have a peaceful mind.

If you practice very well, then when you die, you can be very peaceful. You can think of it as a beautiful ending, saying good bye, wishing everybody good luck, without crying. My father had a very good practice. He was not a monk, but he practiced all the time for 20 years, in the morning and in the night, every day. He was very compassionate. When he died, he had no tears. He only said to me, 'Oh, I am really ill!', Sangpo, 'I am very ill, maybe I will die, I am ready to die, but I am not dying. It is very strange'. When he died, his body remained for three of four days, many lamas saw his face. It was very peaceful. There was no bad smell. His body was taken to the Dzogchen Monastery. My master came out of retreat for my father to perform phowa. I think he had a very beautiful life.

We are together here. The karma has connected us with the Dharma. Not power, not money, not romance. We are here to learn the Dharma. Meditation is important. In our daily life, what we do is more important than formal practice. Be kind, always wake your mind up. Thank you!

Commentary on Patrul Rinpoche's Hitting the Essence in Three Words

Introduction

All beings, pertaining to the three planes of existence, pursue happiness. Still we often pursue this by means and methods that produce suffering. On the other hand, the Buddhist methods that we use to pursue true happiness, and also to abandon causes and conditions that induce suffering, are valid. In Buddhism, one regards the means and methods that are propounded by these teachings as a supreme means to overcome frustration and attain genuine happiness.

If we cultivate or possess the spirit of bodhicitta, or awakening, then this will suffice on this path. But if we lack that, we are missing something spiritual significant. If we were to be separated from the precious mind of bodhicitta, it will be like a rotten seed, not being able to sprout, and we will not be able to experience ultimate peace and happiness.

Cultivating the precious mind of bodhicitta is essential in the beginning, in the middle, as well as in the end. Therefore, at the very outset of a Dharma discourse, we should start by generating the precious mind of bodhicitta.

The theme that we are going to delve into is view, meditation and conduct in Vajrayana. The immediate transmission of the lineage of this specific teaching goes back to my principal root guru, Padmasambhava. I have not only received Vajrayana teachings on these specific instructions, most of the other Vajrayana teaching instructions I have received, I have received from the same master. This means that the transmission goes back to my principal root guru. It is good thing to have gotten the transmission of all the Vajrayana teachings from a single master. The reason being that it is rather easy to develop a sacred outlook with regard to one specific master. Through fortune I came across these wonderful teacher, who is not only knowledgeable about the teachings, but who also put these teachings into concrete practice. He does not do wrong things, therefore it is very easy to develop a pure perception, and so develop devotion towards him. Since I have been his student, I have gotten all the Vajrayana transmissions, I will follow in his footsteps, my behaviour will not be unruly or undisciplined. Therefore, you can trust me. You do not need to fear that you will lose your feeling of spiritual connectedness with me.

When it comes to sharing or distributing Vajrayana transmissions, it is easy to impart oral or reading transmissions. It is also easy to impart Vajrayana empowerments. But it is rather difficult to impart Vajrayana instructions or explanations, in which one has to elucidate the tone of the Vajrayana instructions. Therefore, there are many teachers, who impart Vajrayana transmissions through reading oral translations, and also bestowing Vajrayana empowerments. There are fewer Vajrayana masters who are capable of expounding the inner hidden meaning of the Vajrayana instructions. In Vajrayana we talk about liberating instructions and ripening empowerments. These are very important.

Generally speaking, if we have not completed the preliminary practices, we are not given the advanced form of the Vajrayana instructions. So today is an exceptionally case. I think that you are exceptional students, so I trust that you are perfect vessels into which the precious Vajrayana instructions can be poured. Also, Karma Tashi Ling is not a new Buddhist centre, it is rather quite old. Many of you have come to Karma Tashi Ling and received preliminary instructions. You have therefore to some extent laid a sound foundation to be suitable vessels. The transmission of the Vajrayana instructions can therefore be imparted today, and this teaching will be based on the original teachings given by the learned master Garab Dorje, which was elucidated by Patrul Rinpoche.

There are many distinguishing factors of the vehicles of Sutrayana and Vajrayana. However, when Vajrayana teachings are being presented, it is taught that this vehicle is exceptionally powerful. The reason being that Vajrayana represents a huge amount of skilful means to trigger spiritual awakening. Another distinctive feature of the Vajrayana is that one can attain spiritual awakening without exhausting oneself too much, without going through spiritual asceticism. Generally, Vajrayana transmissions are given to the student who has exceptional intelligence. Let us suppose that we belong to the category of exceptional intelligence.

Homage to the Master

In the very beginning of the root text, the author pays homage to his spiritual guide. The reasoning being that in the Vajrayana path, the lama is viewed as the embodiment of all the three jewels and all Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The lama is also viewed as the embodiment of the three kayas or bodies of the Buddha. The development of pure perception or sacred outlook with regard to all phenomena is based on our spiritual guide, or guru. Therefore, Patrul Rinpoche in his commentary, establishes the validity of the Vajrayana view, meditation and action by bringing in the names of his three gurus, saying view is the Dzogchen master Longchen Rabjam. The name Longchen Rabjam means 'infinite expanse'. Infinite expanse, or dimension, means that the multitude of the appearances pertaining to the relative truth is actually contained within the expanse of the dharmata, the ultimate reality.

There is an expression in Vajrayana, which states that all appearances are the mental proliferation or projections of our own subjective mind. Because of this, if we modify our subjective mind, we can also modify the objective appearances. Through the attainment of the realisation of the nature of our mind, we can also attain the realisation of the nature of all appearances of all phenomena.

In Vajrayana, another expression states that by knowing one thing, liberates everything. The one thing refers to knowing the nature of one's own mind through hearing, listening, contemplation and meditation. It is said to be like a self-sufficient king, because if we realise the nature of our own mind, this is sufficient for understanding the nature of everything. The nature of mind is not confined to certain specific beings. It permeates equally each and every living being.

The Dharmakaya

When we talk about the view, there is a viewer and what is being viewed. In this case, what is being viewed is the intrinsically abiding Buddha-nature, or the nature of our own mind. We all have the reality of the Buddha-nature. But everybody is not capable of seeing their own Buddha-nature. The reason it is so difficult to see our own Buddha-nature, is because we are conditioned to view objects in a dualistic manner. It is not possible to view the Buddha-nature in a dualistic manner.

At this stage, the crucial thing stage is to attain a decisive understanding of the Buddha-nature as emptiness, or primordial purity. This emptiness is no other than the ultimate personality of the Buddha, the dharmakaya. The Buddha-nature is also sometimes referred to as primordial purity. This primordial purity or emptiness is not a constructed emptiness; it is an intrinsic emptiness from the very beginningless beginning. That is why it is called primordial purity or emptiness.

This spiritual dimension of intrinsic emptiness can be referred to as the natural state of the dharmakaya, the ultimate reality of the Buddha. The ultimate reality of the Buddha, the dharmakaya, defies the duality of attainment and non-attainment. The question of obtaining the ultimate state of dharmakaya is inapplicable, also, the question of not obtaining the ultimate state of dharmakaya is likewise inapplicable. The essence of Buddha-nature is essentially empty, however, its nature abides as clarity or luminosity. It is not one-sidedly empty, it is co-existent with clarity and luminosity.

The Sambhogakaya

Likewise, the natural quality of the clarity of our mind is sambhogakaya, the enjoyment body of the Buddha. These spiritual qualities of the mind do not decrease nor increase. They are as they are. Ordinary, unenlightened sentient beings possess these two qualities of the Buddha, which neither increase nor decrease. Ordinary light, as constructed by people, being a composite phenomenon, is subject to decrease. However, the light that is issued from something that is uncreated knows no decrease or increase. For example, the sun is naturally radiating light, but this light knows no decrease nor increase.

The natural clarity of the mind is the natural expressivity of the essential emptiness of the mind. They are not different things. Emptiness expresses the aspect of the clear light.

The Nirmanakaya

The third quality of the nature of our mind is the all-pervasive compassionate mind. This is represented by the third body of the Buddha, the nirmanakaya, the emanated form of the Buddha. The word for compassion in Tibetan is tok-je. Tok generally refers to our mind, je means lord. Lord can be king, i.e. the king of the mind, which is no other than the compassionate mind.

In this context, the all-pervasive compassionate mind is quite different from the compassionate mind we develop on the lower levels of the Buddhist path. Here, the all-pervasive compassionate mind recognises the oneness of each and everything, the oneness of all diversity. Therefore, this mind knows no limit, hence it is said to be infinite.

The reason it is called infinite all-pervasive compassion is because it transcends dualistic perception of subject and object. For example, ordinarily we experience the positive emotion of love and compassion. But for us, this positive emotion is mostly sentimental or romantic love and compassion, which is rooted in dualistic perception. A dualistic positive emotion that is rooted in dualistic perception, will in the end lead to frustration, whereas the emotional positivity of love and compassion that is not based on dualistic perception, will not evolve into frustration. However, we are quite unaware even to this third quality of the Buddha-nature of our mind. We only know ordinary love and compassion and so forth, which are based on dualistic perception. Therefore, we are not able to liberate ourselves from the fixation on dualistic perception. So, the spiritual qualities of our own Buddha-nature is deeply hidden, like a treasure within the depth of our being, but we are not able to acknowledge or recognise it.

View, Meditation and Action

Generally, human beings like to divide things up, to classify things into categories and so forth. We love to attain something that is significant of high value, but in reality we lose ourselves into many non-essential things that prevents us from attaining that which is the most significant. For example, we all inhabit the same planet Earth, but as human beings we have succeeded dividing the globe into many countries or nations with borders. This division into many nations is the working of our dualistic mind, but from the nature of the earth itself there is no dividing factors, earth is one as a whole.

In these instructions, we are first instructed how to establish the valid view. And then how to combine it with a continued meditation practice. The view is said to be Longchen Rabjam, the infinite expanse, or infinite spiritual dimension. This view needs to be sustained through continued meditation. Therefore, meditation is said to be Khyentse Öser, rays of wisdom and compassion.

Applying this view in meditation, reveals insight, making the meditation become Vipassana meditation. From this understanding of the view ensues the light of compassion. This compassionate practice is the practice of Shamata, or tranquillity meditation. Generally speaking, insight meditation, or Vipassana meditation, can be understood as something that is very stable, steady and balanced. When we practice the union of Vipassana and Shamata, our meditation will be luminous and clear as the light of the sun, and at the same time very steady, stable and balanced.

In the Vajrayana pit instructions one talks about sustaining the nature of awareness. This means that we should remain in the understanding of the original view and not forget it. The clarity and the stability of the mind is intrinsic to the nature of our own mind. It is important to understand that. Therefore, if you exert extra effort into making the mind clear and stable, such an attempt will according to the Vajrayana teachings distance you from your own intrinsic clarity and stability.

The third of view, meditation and action is action. Action is Gyalwe Nyugu, another spiritual guide or master. Gyalwe Nyugu literally means the sprout of the Victorious Ones, referring to the Bodhisattvas. It actually points towards the actions of the bodhisattvas. These actions are summarised as the six paramitas. Ordinarily, the six paramitas are practiced on the sutrayana, but since these instructions pertains to the Vajrayana, tantric Buddhism, the six paramitas should be practiced without hope or fear with regard to how we conduct our life. Ordinarily, hope and fear induces us to create emotional negativity as well as karmic actions.

The Six Paramitas

So, when we practice the six paramitas without hope and fear, they become truly the six paramitas, transcendental virtues. But if we practice the six paramitas with hope and fear, then they do not become transcendental virtues. If we practice the six paramitas, without this transcendental insight, with dualistic hope and fear, then we will be stuck on this shore of samsara, and not able to transcend to the shore on the other side. But if we practice the six paramitas in a non-dualistic manner, then we will be liberated from this shore and transcend beyond to the other shore.

Take the first paramitas, the practice of generosity, or giving, as an example. If we give something to somebody hope or strings attached, perhaps hoping that the person will complement our gift, or anticipate something in return in the future, then this giving is not transcendental, it is not a pure gift, and it will be contaminated by the impure mind. Even if we were to offer something to the Buddha as a gift, anticipating blessings from the Buddha, this would not become a transcendental virtue.

The reason we may do this is that hope and fear are deeply rooted in the grasping of the self. Whatever we do, worldly or spiritual, if our conduct is rooted in hope and fear, which again are rooted in self-grasping, then it will become a cause that plunges us into samsara. It will not become a cause for liberating us from samsara.

Introducing Directly the Face of Rigpa Itself

If we were to practice the synthesis of view, meditation and action, as expounded in Dzogchen teachings without self-grasping, we will attain supreme enlightenment without any difficulty. There is no question about it. Even if we fail to attain supreme enlightenment, which is the ideal spiritual goal of those who follow this path, we will still experience happiness and content mind. Clinging to the self will decrease, and, therefore, hope and fear will decrease as well. Our life will become very peaceful, and we will be harmonious and happy.

The threefold view, meditation and action, is being introduced through the three words, or statements. The first is 'Introducing directly the face of rigpa in itself'. This is the definitive meaning of the Dharma. The second statement is connected with the practice of meditation, and reads, 'Deciding upon one thing, and one thing only'. This is meditation. The third concerns the action that brings about fruition, the statement reading, 'Confidence directly in the liberation of rising thoughts',

These instructions are very succinct and very profound. They start with how to practice the view. We are instructed first to relax and release our mind as a preliminary on meditating on the view. Not only should we relax our mind, we should also relax our body and speech as well. The reason we should first relax our mind, is to let go of discursive thoughts that is projected onto the objective appearances. The coarse aspect of discursive thoughts generated towards objective appearances induces us to create karma. This karma gives rise to frustrations. Then we will get trapped in the wheel of samsara, and wandering around, experiencing lack of independence, being under the power of afflictive emotions and polluted karma. It is like a dog being led on leash by the owner, our mind being the dog. I just use the example of a dog here, because I see a lot of dogs in Norway, being walked around on a leash by their owners, not being free. Perhaps we can use this example to understand how our mind can follow bad emotions and karmas. Actually, the Buddha told us clearly that the mind is emptiness, but usually we are attached, creating the 'I' and 'other', creating fractions.

According to these teachings, good positive thoughts as well as negative thoughts are the natural expression of the essential emptiness of the mind itself. Therefore, even if there are no 'good' or 'bad' thoughts, we like to divide up thoughts and categorise them into good and bad. Then we like to get rid of the bad thoughts, and cultivate the good thoughts. When we meditate, we usually welcome the good thoughts, but reject the bad thoughts. This is not a good practice for our meditation. If we do this, we do not understand the Dzogchen view. Understanding the view is very important.

View

The view is an infinite expanse, or infinite dimension, which facilitates everything, good and bad. Without understanding this infinite expanse, we divide things up into different boxes, and then we react to them to generate further discursive thoughts and afflictive emotions, leading to creation of karma. Therefore, without proper understanding of the view, we are not able to meditate, because there is nothing to meditate on. To understand the view, we need to be properly introduced to it and recognise it. During meditation, we then abide in the view, which knows no limitation, being of infinite dimension. Lacking a proper understanding of the view in meditation, our conduct will not contribute towards the enhancement of the meditation.

Meditation

The line that starts with 'First, relax and release your mind' points towards the practice of Shamata, or tranquillity meditation. Tranquillity mediation helps us to prevent the mind being drawn in by objective appearances. The next line, 'Neither scattered, nor concentrated, without thoughts' points towards the

practice of Vipassana. The next, 'While resting in this even state at ease' points towards the unity of Shamata and Vipassana.

Whether we are engaging in Shamata or Vipassana meditation, engaging in stillness or insight, during meditation or post meditation, whatever thoughts or emotions that come across our mind, whatever appearances we perceive, we should never forget that all of these appearances, thoughts and emotions are the natural expression of our dharmakaya mind. This is quite important. First, we relax and release our mind, then we release all proliferations and mental engagements in discursive thoughts, emotions and objective appearances.

When we manage to relax our mind, and release all discursive thoughts, then, while we are enjoying the relaxation of the mind, devoid of discursive thoughts and emotions, we simply let the mind rest in that infinite state, devoid of conceptual constructions or fabrications. Do not react to any of this, do not construct any thoughts or emotions or concepts, but if they arise on their own, view them as the natural expression of the emptiness of the mind of dharmakaya. While in this state, we should suspend altogether all kinds of conceptual constructions and elaborations, and then relax our mind within that non-conceptual state.

Silencing the Chattering Mind with a Powerful Phat

When we relax and release our mind in this meditative state, we may occasionally sound a shattering 'phat'. The sounding of the phat should be very brief, yet powerful, shouting it out with force. It is like somebody were to strike our head with a big piece of wood, and we become unconscious. The thing is to render the conscious mind into the sub-conscious mind, or to render the discursive mind into the mind that does not entertain conceptual thinking. It is like a powerful knock-out that defeats your opponent. With one powerful phat you defeat the discursive chattering mind. The purpose is to silence the discursive, chattering mind for a brief moment.

The mantric syllable phat contains a lot of blessing, and it is also a key instruction. In the root text it is said to be amazing. In Tibetan, 'E ma ho!' means amazing or wonderful. It is wonderful because you can temporarily suspend the chattering discursive mind, the mind that obsessively chatters and engages in discursive thoughts.

This sound is made up of two letters, 'pha' and 'ta'. The first letter, pha, is the syllable of withdrawing, therefore it is the syllable of skilful means. The second letter, ta, is the syllable of severance, of cutting through. Therefore, the sound of this letter is connected with wisdom. So, if we properly sound the mantric syllable phat, the result is that we will be able to create a gap between the discursive thoughts in our mind. This is a wonderful thing. When we are transported to that state of mind, we experience a dimension of the mind free from obsessive discursive thoughts. This experience is emptiness, not a dull emptiness, it is a vivid emptiness that is free from all kinds of obstructions. When we experience this spiritual dimension, we feel the sensation of everything being penetratingly transparent, crystal clear, without any obstructions.

This experience of penetrating transparency is beyond vocal expression and conception. We may attempt to describe it, but it is primarily beyond conceptual thoughts. Our conception cannot figure out what this experience is.

Guided Meditation

Let us now take the opportunity to meditate for a brief moment. I will guide you through the meditation. Initially, relax your body as well as your mind. Do not try to project your thoughts, and do not try to withdraw them either. If thoughts are already projected, do not try to push them back. If you learn the art of neither projecting nor withdrawing thoughts, you will gradually learn to experience the thoughtless state of mind, where there are no concepts. Experiencing this state of thoughtlessness, of non-conceptuality, then rest within this state for a brief moment. If, in the midst of mediation, conceptual proliferation arises, then, in order to suspend further proliferation, utter a very forceful and short phat. In wake of the phat, you are transported to the spiritual dimension of nothingness, free from conceptual proliferation. This dimension of nothingness is not a dull nothingness, it is a vivid, brilliant nothingness, and let yourself just rest within that brilliant dimension that defies mental conceptions and vocal articulations.

It is good to repeat this meditation over and over again. The main thing is not to pursue the objects of the discursive thoughts when we meditate. We should trust that the object of our perception will not negatively influence our own mind. We just simply let it be, leaving the object of perception and the

apprehending mind as it is, without any interaction. If we manage to suspend discursive thoughts and emotions in this manner, even for a brief moment, a few seconds or minutes, it is said that samsara has stopped, as far as ourselves are concerned, for that brief moment.

Beyond the Real and Unreal

The Dzogchen teachings talk about the difference between mind and awareness. For example, when we recognise our self-awareness, rigpa, the grosser aspects of mind simply disappear like bubbles on water. It is like the clouds or mist in the sky that simply evaporate and disappear within the expanse of space itself.

I personally feel that they are not necessarily non-identical, they could also be said to be identical, because the discursive mind is the natural expression of mind itself, and therefore an integral part of the nature of mind.

It is said that all phenomena have the dream like quality of illusions. The question of whether phenomena are real or unreal becomes non-applicable. We cannot question whether a dream is true or false, or an illusion is real or unreal, the question is a wrong question. Look at the example of the barren woman. If somebody poses a question about the son of a barren woman, the question will be invalid. Likewise, if you question the reality or unreality of the dreamlike quality, that question is invalid.

The rigpa, self-awareness, does not give birth to the discursive mind. Neither does it prevent the discursive mind. As far as the self-awareness of rigpa is concerned, it treats the discursive mind and non-discursive mind equally. From the example, if we engage in a debate about the physical attractiveness of the child of a barren woman, these arguments will be invalid. As another example, there is one world. If we are staying someplace in this world, let us say here, and say I am going to China and then coming back to Norway, you will understand me, but if we go out to the moon, and look at the world, travelling on Earth loses its meaning. Likewise, when you become awakened, there is no birth and no death.

When our spiritual being is rooted in the self-awareness of the rigpa, we will, from that perspective, know no birth or no death, no increase or decrease, no coming or going and so forth. But if our being is rooted in the dualistic consciousness, alaya consciousness, then our mind will know birth, death, increase, decrease, coming and going and so forth. It depends on the dimension of operation. It comes down to whether we have realised the view or not, the view without references. There is a quote that states, 'if you recognise the suchness of the reality', then this itself is Buddhahood, but if you do not, this will be a deluded sentient being. In the same line, if we recognise rigpa, this is the attainment of dharmakaya, whereas if we do not, that is samsara, or alaya consciousness.

Questions and Answers

Q: We have the eight consciousnesses, just now you were talking about recognising rigpa, but I really struggle and find it difficult. At a previous teaching you talked about the foundation consciousness, the alaya consciousness and the seeds. I struggle with the concept of foundation consciousness and how to realise rigpa. I wonder if you could clarify that?

A: There exist what is called the 'alaya-vasana' and the 'alaya-vijnana', fundamental consciousness and fundamental awareness. The fundamental awareness, alaya-vijnana, is intrinsic, it is primordial. It has existed since beginningless time, and it is uncreated. Therefore, it is non-composite. Whereas the alaya-vasana, or the fundamental consciousness, are influenced by our discursive thoughts and emotions, because the propensity of our discursive thoughts and emotions are deposited into the fundamental consciousness. But these propensities cannot be deposited into the alaya-vijnana, fundamental awareness. For example, the empty sky can be said to be the basis for all appearances, as all appearances are found within the fundamentally empty space. But you can also talk about the sky or space being intrinsically empty. Likewise, the alaya-vijnana is the transcendental reality, because it transcends proliferations, whereas the alaya-vasana is not a transcendental reality, therefore it is fundamental consciousness from where conceptual proliferation can take place. Do you understand?

Q: That part is clear, but the part where we recognise rigpa, which is outside of what you explained. How shall we recognise it?

A: If you recognise the fundamental consciousness, alaya-vasana, then this will naturally be transformed into fundamental wisdom. As long as alaya-vasana remains undetected, the potential to deposit further discursive thoughts and emotions, karma, will always be possible. Whereas if that alaya-vasana is transformed into fundamental wisdom, alaya-vijnana, then the base where one can deposit karmic propensities is not there anymore. So there is nothing to deposit. Take the analogy of the rainbow

appearing in the sky. The nature of the sky is intrinsically empty, whereas the rainbow appears very vividly and colourfully. When the rainbow disappears, where does it go? The rainbow is a product of a number of factors coming together, but when it disappears into the expanse of space, where does it disappear? Some people teaches that fundamental consciousness is actually the Buddha-nature, but this is not in line with the teaching of the Buddha. At the moment a person becomes enlightened, fully spiritually awakened, we can discuss whether the alaya-vasana exists or not. As long as there are contributing causes and conditions, responsible for sustaining the alaya consciousness, the alaya-vasana consciousness will be there. But when these contributing factors are withdrawn, the alaya-vasana consciousness will collapse and simply disappear. It is like alaya-vasana consciousness is there because of the principle of interdependence. One can then pose further questions like 'Is the dharmakaya and alaya consciousness identical or not?' or 'Is rigpa, the –self-awareness and discursive mind identical or not?'

The Nature of Mind

We have earlier spoken about the first words of the instructions that strikes the vital point, which is about the direct introduction to the face of rigpa. Actually, it is a difficult task to directly introduce the student to the ultimate spiritual view. The reason for this is, prior to enlightenment, it is very difficult to recognise the view.

For example, there is a quotation from the sutra, which says that when one claims that one has perceived the sky, one can question the manner in which one has actually perceived it. When we actually perceive the sky, our perception should be devoid of shapes, colours and so forth, excluding these defining characteristics.

Accordingly, the Buddha tries to refute existence by establish the non-existence of existence. Then he proceeds further to establish this non-existence to be non-dualistic, or in other words, a transcendental reality. And from this non-dualistic reality, he further refines it into non-elaboration. According to these teachings, it is stated that the tögal, or non-elaboration, is the actual suchness, or reality, of the nature of our mind. So, we need to understand the nature of existence and non-existence, and in a progressive order, understand the nature of non-dualistic reality, and the nature of non-elaboration.

If we pay attention to our own mind, we will perceive that the mind is free from any defining characteristics, in terms of colours, shapes, sizes, dimension and so forth. This is actually perceiving the emptiness of our own mind. Since our mind has no characteristics, we have to perceive it in an imperceptible way, because we cannot feel the texture of our mind, like touching a texture with the finger. The nature of the mind is beyond existence and non-existence. Still, it is capable cognising, because the nature of this mind is clear light and luminosity.

According to this teaching, our mind is the creator of samsara as well as the creator of nirvana. When we speak of introducing directly the face of rigpa, this is actually what it means. The mind is created as the natural expression of rigpa. The mind and rigpa as such are quite different, but this difference is only in aspects, essentially, they can be regarded as being identical. For example, the ocean and its waves are different in their aspects, but they are essentially the same. Likewise, with heat and fire. The wind is the main contributing cause for waves to arise on the surface of the ocean. Likewise, karmic winds will stir the mind, and the discursive mind will arise from the rigpa. It is not that the mind creates trouble, not even the conceptual mind or the discursive mind and thoughts, or the negative emotions for that matter, what creates the trouble is when we fixate and cling onto the discursive thoughts and emotions as well as the mind itself. It is the clinging that creates the trouble.

We can for example experience clinging and fixation onto our own conceptual thoughts or emotions, by viewing positive thoughts as something that is superior, and negative thoughts as something that is inferior. Then we try to cultivate the positive thoughts, and suppress or abandon the negative thoughts. In these teachings, the very attempt to cultivate good thoughts, and to get rid of the bad thoughts, is viewed as a sign of fixation on the idea of something being good or something being bad. There is a saying that goes: As long as there is a fixation, no matter what, one has not arrived at the right view.

This concludes the brief introduction on introducing the mind directly to rigpa itself.

Deciding upon one thing, and one thing only

We now proceed to the second point that strikes the vital point, 'Deciding upon one thing and upon one thing only'. This is connected to meditation. Initially, it is important to grasp the theoretical meaning of the view. Otherwise, it will be difficult to meditate, lacking a proper theoretical understanding of the view.

The word for meditation in Tibetan is 'gom', and it means to familiarise oneself. What we are supposed to familiarise our self with is the spiritual view. If we have not been properly introduced to, or properly grasped the meaning of this view, then our meditation will become ineffective.

Deciding upon one thing and one thing only, means to do one thing, namely to view whatever manifest, such as thoughts, concepts, ideas, feelings and so forth, as the integral expression of the nature of our own mind. Therefore, there is nothing to adopt and nothing to abandon. In order to cut through the primary vein of samsara, or the root cause of samsara, it is important to decide upon this one thing, and this one thing only.

The purpose of engaging in meditation is to pacify the discursive thoughts that are evoked by clinging to the dualistic perception of the viewer and something viewed. In this meditation, we should progressively come out of the dualistic fixation of there being a viewer and something viewed. We should transcend the confinement of the viewer, the action of viewing, and the object viewed into experiencing transcendental reality.

I think it is somewhat similar to when we watch a movie. There is the darkened theatre, the screen, and the projector behind, and the movie being projected. If the screen, or any other contributing cause is lacking, then, even if there were a projector, it would not be possible to project the movie, and we would not be able to see it. In a working cinema, everything that is in the projector will get projected on the screen. The projector has to be fed with movies beforehand in order to project, but if the projector is not fed with the material of the movies there will be nothing projected.

The above example may illustrate how our karmic propensities are deposited into our fundamental consciousness, or the base consciousness, *alaya*. As long as these propensities remain within the fundamental consciousness, they remain in a neutral form, neither positive nor negative. But once these neutral propensities get activated, they get activated into either a positive or negative projection, being like positive or negative seeds.

Uprooting the Cause of Samsara

Our wandering in samsara begins with ignorance, which then gives rise to dualistic perception or fixation. Our dualistic perception further proliferates into complex discursive thoughts. These complex discursive thoughts further proliferate into complex emotions. The emotions proliferate into karma, and in this way, we go through the process of ignorance, dualistic fixation, thoughts, emotions and creation of karma. The karma begins with the mental state; therefore, karma is qualified by mental action, termed volitional action. The mental volitional action further induces physical and vocal actions; thus, we create karma.

Due to this proliferating process, we evolve into the five aggregates, and based on these, we experience all the shortcomings and frustrations of samsara. The root of all this can be traced back to the volitional ignorance. Therefore, intrinsic awareness, in Tibetan, *rigpa*, is immensely important in order to overcome the fundamental, or volitional, ignorance. The term *rigpa*, translated into English as self-awareness or awareness, also has a meaning of clarity as a cognitive ability.

The development of samsara and its frustrations is based on the principle of conditionality; therefore, if we uproot the fundamental cause of samsara, ignorance, all the remaining branches of the ignorance will also get destroyed. This is the meaning of the statement 'knowing one liberates all'. If you fail to know this vital point, then even if you were to know many other things, it is not regarded as knowing anything. According to this reasoning, we can say that all sentient beings prior to enlightenment know nothing. This is spoken by the Buddha.

Recognising Thoughts and Emotions as the Nature of Mind

Let us suppose that we are properly introduced to recognising the view, and that when we try to enter into meditation to sustain this view, to really understand it, discursive thoughts and emotions arise. Whether our mind now will proliferate, causing us to experience anger, attachment, even happiness or

misery, or continue to rest calmly on the object of meditation, it is important to recognise the dharmakaya, the base of the original dharmakaya.

If we experience that our mind is resting calmly, abiding on the view as the object of meditation, we should recognise this as the nature of the mind. Also, if there arises thoughts and emotions, we should not feel that we have moved away from meditation, we should view thoughts and emotions as the natural expression of mind itself. This natural expression is an integral part of the mind. Even when we are experiencing thoughts and emotions, we are not removed away from meditation, as long as we recognise that these are just the natural expressions of our own mind.

Metaphorically, it is like the flight of a bird in the sky; no matter how far it travels, it cannot not fly beyond space. In a similar manner, all thoughts and emotions are contained within the fundamental nature of mind. The fundamental nature of our mind cannot be harmed whatsoever, even if there arises negative thoughts and emotions, because it is essentially empty. It is like nothing can harm the very space, even bombs and so forth.

The Indivisible Unity of the Mother and Child Clear Light

Since beginningless time, we have been caught up in the wheel of samsara, wandering around, experiencing all kinds of frustrations. But none of these samsaric experiences can create a dent in the fundamental nature of our mind, they cannot disprove the fundamental purity or emptiness of the nature of our mind.

The key point here is therefore, while we dwell in samsara and undertake this meditation, whatever we experience in terms of the first noble truth, of frustration and misery, and whatever we experience in terms of the second noble truth, of emotional complexes and karma, as long as we view these things as expressions of the nature of our mind, the nature of mind will not be harmed. It cannot be harmed. This is looking directly at the face of dharmakaya.

Up to this point, the instructions mainly reveals how to identify the original view, and also how to combine that with meditation, and this primarily helps us to minimize or pacify our latent grasping onto dualistic perception.

So, when we meditate in this manner, dualistic fixation will begin to loosen up, lessen its intensity, and accordingly, we experience meditative signs, for example meditative experiences of blissfulness, clarity and non-conceptuality. When we have these meditative experiences, we have to exercise further caution. If we fixating on these very beautiful meditative experiences, we can also be bound by clinging to these.

At this juncture, we experience what is known as the meeting of the mother and child clear light of luminosity. The mother luminosity is the primordial abiding clear light, the clear light of dharmakaya. The child luminosity is the clear light that we cultivate through meditative discipline. To make the meeting of the mother and child clear light happen, the lama needs to introduce the student to the child clear light. When the child clear light is brought up through repeated meditation, the child clear light will recognise the fundamentally abiding mother clear light, enabling the meeting of the mother and child clear light. When there is a unity of the mother and child clear light, this is called the experience of the indivisible unity of the mother and child clear light.

Unifying Formal Meditation and Post-Meditation

In short, while we are meditating, whatever thoughts and emotions proliferates in our mind, we should not try to reject certain thoughts and cultivate others, we should let them be as they are. Just simply let them go.

So, it is important for us to decide upon one thing and one thing only. If our mind is abiding peacefully, see its nature as dharmakaya, the absolute personality of the Buddha. If the mind stirs, we do not try to reject them, but recognise them as the natural expression of the nature of emptiness of our own mind. When we meditate in this manner, if there arises gross thoughts and concepts that disturbs our meditation, we can also suspend these thoughts and emotions by uttering a brief yet very powerful phat, as explained earlier.

Generally speaking, when we meditate upon the view of the Dzogchen meditation, there is no demarcation line between the meditation session and post meditation period. Ideally, we should be meditating regardless of whether we are in a formal meditation in session or in post meditation. We should be able to meditate through and through, during session as well as post meditative session, in other words, simply sustaining the continued view of the rigpa both during meditation as well as during post meditation.

However, this will not happen by itself in the beginning. Therefore, we need to focus on meditating in the meditation sessions as well as during the post meditation period. In the beginning, we need to meditate by taking refuge in an environment that is devoid of commotions and distractions.

Self-Liberation of Discursive Thoughts in the Second Instant

The root text reads 'Abide by the flow of what is only dharmakaya, decide with absolute conviction that there is nothing other than this'. This refers to whether the mind is resting or agitated with thoughts, concepts and emotions, its nature is dharmakaya in both cases. It is important to arrive upon a certainty of this, and simply sustain in that mediation.

I think that this practice is very important for both you and me. Sometimes, when we get a lot of stress, then we can just look at the stress, and sometimes shout phat. Or sometimes, if we feel lonely, just look at the loneliness, this feeling, and go phat. It will help. And sometimes, if we are getting angry, we can shout phat as well. Sometimes if we feel a powerful attachment, just say phat. Sometimes this is very good, but do not do it outside, because this can lead to some problems.

When there arises discursive thoughts and emotions, such as aversion or anger, the first instant of anger will not bind you to the wheel of samsara. In the second instant, when the anger is prolonged to the second and third instants and so forth, that there arises fundamental fixation. This is what binds us against the wheel of samsara.

As good meditators, we need to recognise the arousal of discursive thoughts like anger and other things at the second instant, when we recognise it, we are not bound by it. When we recognise it in the second instant, the power of the discursive thought of anger weakens. In Dzogchen terminology this is called self-liberation. The discursive thought of anger liberates on its own in its own place, without needing to liberate it. It liberates by itself due to the mindfulness of the second instant.

We cannot block the arousal of discursive thoughts and emotions; they will certainly arise, but we can pay closer attention to them when they arise, and not allow them to proliferate and evolve into dualistic fixation. This is a very important Dzogchen key-instruction. It is a bit similar to whether the sun is blocked by a dark cloud or a white cloud. As far as the blocking of the rays of the sun is concerned, it is the same. In a similar manner, if there are positive or negative thoughts in our mind, they will both block the natural radiance of the nature of our mind. It is something like when you are riding a horse; it does not matter if you fall off from the right side or the left side of the horse, as far as the pain that comes from hitting the ground is concerned, the pain is the same. This is just a rough example; no example is precise.

So, while we are experiencing frustration, we can learn to look at the nature of this frustration. When we experience peace or happiness, we try to look at the nature of that peace and happiness. If we do that, we are mediating, and we will also realise that the polarity of happiness and misery is the natural expression of the nature of our mind.

So, in brief, whatever arises, within the expands of our mind, need to be closely looked at, especially its nature. We do not need to particularly meditate in this case. We only need to realise that whatever arises within our mind is nothing other than what arises as the nature of our mind. We can be somewhat like a hermit mediator in the wilderness of Tibet. He or she meditates on the peak of the mountain, completely excluded from the rest of the world. He or she knows nothing about the world's economy, whether it is going up or down. Therefore, they do not have any fixation with regard to the economy of the world.

Continual Non-Meditation

If we find we are having a lot of discursive thoughts and conflicting emotions, it would be a very good thing to see these as the natural expression of our mind. And if we are experiencing a lot of joy and happiness, we should see this in a same manner. In this way, we convert whatever we experience in terms of feeling into the heart of meditation, so that we are not separated from the object of meditation whatsoever.

Patrul Rinpoche, who wrote this text, was once asked a question by a certain meditator, who said he did not know how to meditate. Patrul Rinpoche responded by saying that the mind that thinks 'I am not able to mediate, and I know nothing about meditation', is in fact meditating by looking at itself in this manner. For example, if the thought 'I am hungry, I need to eat something' arises, and we look at the nature of this thought, the thought will be converted into meditation. In short, meditation is not exclusively

confined to sitting meditation. Meditation can be extended while you are standing, walking, lying down, in all kinds of different physical positions.

From this point of view, there is nothing that we cannot meditate on. In fact, from this point of view, we are always meditating, as long as we bring attention to the nature of what we are thinking and doing. But the most important thing is that we must develop further into what is known as the state of non-meditation.

As far as an ordinary person is concerned, sometimes the mind experiences rest, or the mind simply rests in meditation. But during mediation, the mind can also become agitated. This is how things are, this alternation will happen for both good and bad meditators. So, what qualifies a good meditator if both good and bad meditators experiences rest and agitation of mind? A good meditator is able to recognise the nature of the resting mind as being the dharmakaya, as well as recognising that agitation and distraction also are expressions of the nature of mind itself.

In this kind of meditation, we simply let the body be in its own place, the speech being in its own place, and the mind be in its own place. This means that we should not try to fabricate movements of our body speech and mind, just let them be in their own natural place, while continually sustaining the thread of being aware of the nature of mind.

Actually, if we do not interfere too much, the body, speech and mind are able to take care of themselves. It is something like when we walk, we do not have to think about which leg to move forwards and so on. As soon as there arises a thought to go somewhere, our legs start to walk steadily. But if we were to fixate on which leg it is best to place first or second, this would interfere with our walk. This is also the case of breathing. We breath in and out naturally. We do not have to consciously draw our breath, if we let our mind start to interfere with our breath by controlling it, then we will quickly have a problem with our breathing.

Natural Liberation Without a Trace

Our meditation should be like the eagle soaring in the sky. When the eagle is soaring high in the sky, it casts no shadow and does not leave any traces of where it has flown. In our case, we can say that we leave a trace, traced by our karmic footprints, but when our disturbing thoughts and emotions are liberated in their own place, there are no traces left, and we will fly high up in the sky, free as the eagle.

It is also said that liberation should be like writing a letter on the surface of water. While you are writing on the surface of water, the water simply erases it without leaving any imprint. These are all examples on how we can be liberated instantaneously from disturbing thoughts and emotions on the spot, without leaving any mark. Sometimes, this is also termed naturally pacifying disturbing thoughts and emotions in its own place, letting them liberate by themselves.

To summarise, this is what is meant by 'Deciding upon one thing, and upon one thing only', in terms of meditation.

In brief, when we encounter appearances and sound, and become aware of them in our own mind, this meeting should be viewed as the natural expression of the nature of our mind. In general Vajrayana teachings, it is stated that appearance, sound and awareness should be viewed or transformed into the threefold deity, mantra and the wisdom mind of the deity, but in this teaching, the threefold appearance, sound and awareness should be viewed as the natural expression of the nature of the empty mind.

It is a bit like this. Whatever different physical postures we assume, these postures are not separate from the body itself, they are rooted in the body. The different body positions are just different aspects of the body. Likewise, whatever discursive thoughts and emotions arise within our mind, cannot transcend beyond the nature of the empty mind. We need to comprehend this fact, that in this kind of meditation, neither negative nor positive thoughts and emotions will deteriorate our nature of mind. The nature of mind is beyond deteriorating or improving. We should also comprehend that in this meditation, it is not a question of whether we attain enlightenment or not.

As you can see, the vital point is quite simple, but in order to make it understandable, there are given many examples and analogies, so that we are able to communicate something about this subject. We resort to all these manners of speaking and explanations mainly as an aim to introduce the students to the empty nature of their own mind. It is like this. I hope you understand.

Questions and Answers

Q: I wonder, when I meditate on something and I experience disruptive thoughts, I think that these are produced by my mind. Maybe things get better, but the next day the thought comes again, and the next day. It can go on like this for a long time, do you still think a self-liberation method is something I should continue to do, or are there other methods, perhaps more in the direction of transformation?

A: In this meditation, we are not trying to block the discursive thoughts and emotions. We are taught to give liberty to our mind, so that if thoughts and emotions arise, we let them arise. What is being taught here, is that we allow our thoughts and emotions to take their own course by giving them full liberty. It is taught not to fixate on them, not to dwell on them. The importance is to sever the fixation, not to sever the thoughts and emotions. The problems come as soon as we fixate on those thoughts and emotions, not because there are thoughts and emotions.

Q: But these thoughts come anyway, you can call this fixation or not fixation, they just come, then I abide in them, and after some time I feel better, perhaps they disappear, but then they come again the next day and prolong for a very long period. This can be about some disturbing things that happened previously.

A: I think it is actually like this, you know, like day and night. Somebody may try to stop the night, because the night is dark, and they do not like the dark, only wanting sunshine every day. But this will never happen. Do you understand? Day is like the good thought, night is like the bad thought. Like the night follows the day, the bad thoughts follow the good.

In this kind of meditation, one should not anticipate 'no thought' or only 'good thought'. This is unrealistic. As long as 'good thoughts' arise, also 'bad thoughts' will arise. It is like day and night, or misery and happiness. They are dependent on each other. The important key point is, in spite of either of these arising, not to dwell on them with fixation, because fixation is what binds us to these thoughts.

So, in this meditation, as it is taught, all thoughts and emotions, good and bad, and everything in between, is the natural expression of the nature of mind. Therefore, they are an integral part of the nature of mind. So, there are no good thoughts to be adopted and cultivated, and no bad thoughts to be abandoned and eliminated. Because if all thoughts are the natural expression of the mind, then that is how it is.

For example, daytime and night time cannot transcend beyond space, daytime and night time happen within space, likewise good and bad thoughts, or good emotions and bad emotions, none of them can transcend beyond the mind; they occur within the expanse of the mind, and then they dissolve within the expanse of mind.

Therefore, if we want to reduce, or temporarily pacify disruptive thoughts and emotions, we should create an ideal circumstance, as is taught in the text. We should make ourselves an ideal environment, with little commotion or distracting factor. When we surrender to such an ideal environment, and meditates, then we will be less prone to disruptive thoughts and emotions. Therefore, taking refuge or surrendering to an ideal environment for the sake of meditation is important in the early stage.

The Buddha looked hard into finding an ideal example for the realisation of the view. He said he could not find a better example than the outer sky, external space. There is a meditation in which we blend our consciousness with the external space. The external space knows no direction, centre or circumference. The external space is free from all defining characteristics. So, we mingle our consciousness with the external space, and remain in the state of the external space, sustaining the meditation. This will positively influence our mind.

Discursive thoughts and emotions that arise in our minds are like apparitions of the mind itself. These are the projections of the nature of our mind. They are the natural expression of the nature of our own mind. The example mentioned above, of the waves on the ocean and the body of the ocean is very good.

Q: Yes, so the simple answer would be to practice more in a right way with the same method, and not to combine with other methods?

A: Your question can be answered by the third vital point, 'Confidence directly in the liberation of rising thoughts'. When we know the art of liberating a single thought or emotion, then that same art can be applied to all other thoughts and emotions. This means that, the more thoughts and emotions we are bombarded with, we can meditate in the same way, because now we have the right tool to liberate each

and every thought. As we recognise the arising of more thoughts and emotions, and they self-liberate as the natural expression of mind, the natural brilliancy of the nature of mind is further enhanced.

If we do not perform the art of liberating instantaneously each and every arising of thought and emotions on the spot, it will be like the following analogy. There once was a professional thief in China, and one day he went out to steal. When people began to notice that he was about to steal something, everybody began to alarm each other by ringing a bell. Since the thief knew he was a thief, not an innocent person, he immediately blocked his ears with his two fingers, to prevent himself hearing the alarming sound of the bell. He thought that this would protect him from being recognised and caught. In this kind of meditation, we are not trying to block the natural expressivity of the nature of our mind, our thoughts and emotions. Because, even if we succeed in blocking our thoughts and emotions temporarily, sooner or later, they will resurface, and then we would have to block them again. Therefore, this would be a very exhausting technique. Whereas if we learn the art of liberating the arising of each thought and emotion spontaneously on the spot by itself, then this method will not be very exhausting.

To directly understand the view, is to view that the nature of our own mind is no other than the Buddha himself, that the nature of our mind is the fully awakened Buddha-mind. This is the view. Sometimes the term vision has a more powerful impact. A vision of the truth as it is. If we confine our view to that of being ordinary, unenlightened sentient beings, that is something like recognising ourselves as thieves. This is not being innocent; this is feeling guilty. Not comprehending the view or not recognising the view is similar to identifying ourselves with the unenlightened state of mind. Whereas, having the vision of the view is understanding that fundamentally, our nature is Buddha-nature.

It is like our Buddha-nature is presently deeply buried under ground. There can be gold buried in the earth, as well as gold that has been dug up. As far as the quality and value of the gold is concerned, it is the same whether the gold is buried or extracted from the earth. Likewise, the gold of the Buddha-nature is buried deep within our psyche, but whether it is made to manifest, extracted or not, as far its value and quality is concerned, that does not change. The quality and value is the same. There is a text called Uttaratantashastra by Maitraya, which is one of five treatises where the subject matter exclusively is about Buddha-nature. I have taught on this treatise before, here in Norway.

Q: This is just a quick question. I live in an apartment and I wonder if I do this phat, and my neighbours hear it. Is that a big deal, or is that okay?

A: If it is okay for your neighbour, then it is okay. If you are okay, then everything is okay. But if it is not okay for your neighbour, then there will be a problem. It is usually okay, I think. In Tibet, a lot of people are very afraid to shout phat like that. They misunderstand. When the great lamas teach chö practice, common people think it is very serious, thinking a lot of ghosts can catch them, or something like that. Like the ghosts were sleeping, and that the phat wakes them up. So, some Tibetans are very afraid of saying phat. But this is a misunderstanding. It is very funny. In chö practice, there is a lot of shouting phat, but in this practice we only do it sometimes while meditating.

In the midst of our meditative practice, if we encounter certain obstacles, like dullness, a lethargic state of mind, then we can sound a brief and powerful phat. This will help us to scatter the dullness. Also, if we experience the opposite of dullness, excitement or agitation, then we can also shout phat to suspend the continuity of that agitation for a brief moment.

Sometimes, if I am very tired, or I have a little head ache, or feeling no good, I do phowa practice, sounding a strong 'Hi!'. This is helpful for me, using the hi and phat like that. The hi should come from the naval area, while visualising the central channel. The phat should come more from the upper part of the chest. It is beneficial to learn to do this. Like it is stated here in this root text, 'First relax, and release your mind, neither scattered nor concentrated, without thoughts, while resting in this even state, at ease, suddenly let out a mind-shattering 'phat!'.

The phat does not only have to be shouted when there is dullness or excitement, or our minds are plagued by discursive thoughts; we can also voluntarily disrupt our meditation by uttering the shattering phat. The reasoning being, it will leave the meditation more refreshed. Like it is said in the second point, 'Rest in the aspect of awareness, beyond all description. Stillness, bliss and clarity: disrupt them, again and again'. If we do not interrupt the meditation, we might become fixated on beautiful experiences like blissfulness, clarity and non-conceptuality. So, to suspend the fixation, we have to disrupt our own

meditation with a shattering phat. If we deviate from actual meditation, because of clinging onto such beautiful experiences, we will deviate into the four formless samadhis. Our meditation will become a cause to experience the birth within the plane of existence known as the four formless realms. For example, clinging to the meditative experiences or non-conceptuality may be mistaken for infinite space, causing rebirth is one of the samadhis of the four formless divine beings. Likewise, we might be mistaken with regard to blissfulness and clarity.

We should understand the beautiful meditative experiences that we encounter along this meditative path, such as blissfulness, clarity and non-conceptuality, as merely milestones. We should not get stuck to these milestones, thinking they are the final destination. If we do, we will deviate and go astray from the actual path. Making this mistake is like taking the sculpture for a person.

Someone who is pursuing the higher spiritual path should aspire to attain supreme enlightenment, not merely experience blissfulness, clarity and non-conceptuality. So, we have to advance further than these milestones, if our aspiration is for supreme awakened enlightenment.

Confidence directly in the liberation of rising thoughts

Whether we are engaging in the process of listening, reflexion or meditation, it is essential to generate the motivation for supreme enlightenment, bodhicitta, for the benefit of all living beings. We are now going to talk about the view, meditation and action of the great perfection, Dzogchen. In order to practice the Dzogchen view, it is very important to be connected with the Dzogchen teachings on 'trek-chö', or cutting through. It is important to remember that when the Dzogchen view is being introduced, this is by introducing rigpa directly to the mind itself.

What is meant by introducing directly the face of rigpa itself? It does not mean that you will lose the rigpa if you do not meditate, or that you will attain the rigpa if you meditate. The main thing to understand is that the origin of our mind is nothing else than the absolute personality of the Buddha, dharmakaya.

So, during meditation, whether the mind is abiding peacefully or is distracted and agitated, in either case, in this meditation, both the resting mind and the agitated mind should be identified as the nature of dharmakaya. When the view is being put into concrete meditational practice, the key instruction for this is, 'Deciding upon one thing, and one thing only'. It means that our experiences of different appearances, as well as the internal thoughts and emotions, should all be viewed as the varied expression of the nature of the empty mind, the dharmakaya. This is the view of the trek-chö teaching.

So, having been introduced to the view of Dzogchen, recognised it to a certain extent, and combined it with meditation practice, we now arrive at the action part of 'view, meditation and action'. Action is concerned with fruition. This is the third part of the root text, 'Confidence directly in the liberation of rising thoughts'. If we are not confident in the manner thoughts and emotions are liberated, our liberation cannot be very decisive.

Dzogchen and Madhyamika

If we want to fully comprehend the view of trek-chö, cutting through, of the Dzogchen teachings, it is crucially important to study the philosophical view of Madhyamika. In the sutra vehicle, the Madhyamika, or Middle Way school, presents the four reasonings in order to establish the unborn nature of reality, in order to establish the un-arising nature of all phenomena into dharmakaya. But in the Dzogchen approach, such Madhyamika reasoning is not being employed in order to establish an understanding of the unborn nature of all phenomena. In the Dzogchen approach we are taught to directly apprehend the face of rigpa, or mind itself. In brief, when we undertake the practices connected to view, meditation and action, as well as fruition, whatever discursive thoughts we experience or feelings we feel, these discursive thoughts and feelings can be brought to the path of the Dharma. Whatever appearances we experience or encounter, particularly adverse circumstances, if we can bring them onto the path of Dharma, then our practice will be practically beneficial.

For example, like the prescribed medicine acting as a remedy against for a specific disease, the prescription of Dharma, acting like medicine, is needed to bring benefit to our mind.

Ordinarily, we end up creating karma based on mistaken view or mistaken perception. The technical term for this is afflicted wisdom, or polluted wisdom. No one is exempt from being conditioned by afflicted wisdom.

Based on the presence of this afflicted wisdom in our mind stream, we experience various kinds of frustrations, difficulties and fears. A mistaken view arises if we do not understand the reality of interdependent origination, the principle of emptiness and karmic causations and so forth. Knowing that a mistaken view is responsible for creating many of our difficulties, we can be motivated to learn what is not mistaken view.

In the Madhyamika philosophical teachings, the view is sometimes referred to as the union of appearance and emptiness. In the Dzogchen teaching, it is referred to as the union of awareness and emptiness, or sometimes also as the union of clarity and emptiness. In Vajrayana, tantric Buddhism, the technical terminology is the union of bliss and emptiness.

The Guru and Disciple Relationship

All these views can be regarded as unmistaken views or perceptions. The important thing is to cultivate an unmistaken view with regard to karmic causality. In order to recognise, or realise a proper unmistaken view, it is crucially important to encounter a very good spiritual guide. Padmasambhava has said that surrendering to a spiritual guru without examining that guru, is like jumping off a cliff. Perhaps it is the case that such a guru is jumping off the cliff himself, and the disciples are merely following in his footsteps. Such a guru may harbour spiritual complacency or conceitedness, mistakenly meaning that he or she has attained a good realisation of the view of emptiness. This can result in all kinds of mad actions, and the disciples, who out of blind faith did not check the guru out properly, simply follows in his footsteps. Such a relationship between disciple and guru can be very ruinous for both.

But the disciple-guru relationship is not one-sided, it is not only the disciple that is encouraged to check the guru, the guru is also encouraged to check the suitability of the disciple. Padmasambhava said that if the guru fails to check the capability of the disciple, it is like the guru is drinking poison. Such an inappropriate disciple-guru relationship can also prove to be very ruinous for both the student and the teacher, and especially for the teacher, because it will erect more stumbling blocks on the path of the Dharma, in terms of obstacles and hindrances and so forth.

Ngöndro Practice

The actual realisation of such a view does not necessarily come from being very learned and articulated or powerful in terms of worldly powers. We may also say that realisation of such a view will not necessarily occur exclusively from meditation. It says in the Vajrayana texts that the realisation occurs from purifying obscurations and developing the emotional positivity of devotion towards our spiritual ideal, our spiritual guide, or guru. Other than these two means, there is no way of realising the view.

The purification of obscurations, gathering of the accumulations, and the development of devotional positivity towards our guru comes from the spiritual practice of 'ngöndro', or the preliminaries. Ngöndro practice is very exhausting, as we have to repeatedly practice the ngöndro preliminaries 500.000 times. I have many Asian students, thousands of them in fact, but among them perhaps only 10 has completed the whole set of ngöndro practices.

Even if the practice of Dzogchen meditation is very simple, one has to lay a very solid foundation through preliminary practices. So, it would be good to review the preliminary practices, and to undertake these practices to a certain extent. One can also lay the foundation by hearing, listening and contemplating these teachings.

Vajrayana Buddhism is in general very meticulous when it comes to guiding the student on the path of the Dharma. On each level, or step of the path, it presents specific methods. The problem with this lies on the part of the student, because they will not be able to follow the gradual path while fulfilling the required preliminary practices. This also indicates the need to exert what is called joyous effort in Dharma practices.

Liberation upon Recognising the Non-Duality of Thoughts and Emotions

We will now go through the third part of 'Hitting the Essence in Three Words', termed 'Confidence directly in the liberation of rising thoughts'. After going through the third part I would like to sum up the whole of the root text by presenting key instructions, so that you can practice this Dharma in combination with your daily life.

The text says, 'At that point, whether attachment or aversion, happiness or sorrow – all momentary thoughts, each and every one'. 'At that point' refers to when you are trying to meditate on the view,

whether there arise emotions, attachment or aversion, or feelings of happiness and so on, or all kinds of different momentary thoughts, whether you are doing formal or informal meditation, or during post meditation period, each and every one of these experiences should be viewed as the dynamic expression of the nature of the empty mind of dharmakaya.

When we are in the midst of meditation, and have succeed in resting our mind on the nature of rigpa, without any thoughts or feelings, we will experience that thoughts and emotions spring up temporarily from this very expanse of stillness, because meditators are able to detect, not only the springing up of thoughts and emotions, but also the stillness of the rigpa.

When we recognise the arising of thoughts and emotions from the stillness of the empty mind, that mere recognition of arising thoughts and emotions will not actually be enough to sever the root of the delusion. We also have to recognise that the nature of those thoughts and emotions is non-dual, that the arising thoughts and emotions are nothing but the expression of the dynamic energy of the empty mind. If we recognise in this manner, the root of the delusion will be severed. With such a distinctive recognition, where we recognise the non-duality of the thoughts and emotions and the empty Dharmakaya mind, the delusional thoughts and emotions will not perpetuate, because their continuity will be interrupted.

Upon recognising arising thoughts and emotions being the expression of the nature of the empty mind, the text states that 'Upon recognition, leave not a trace behind. For recognise the dharmakaya in which they are freed'. In order to recognise the dharmakaya in which they are freed, the example given here is just as writing vanishes on water. When you write something on water, the character will disappear as soon as it is written. In a similar manner, the self-arising of the illusionary thoughts and emotions self-liberates as soon as they arise on their own.

Thoughts and Emotions as Food for Sustaining Rigpa

The manner in which thoughts and emotions get liberated at this stage, can also be termed as experiencing the unity of clarity and emptiness, because the nature of thoughts and emotions are clarity. All small rivers flow towards the ocean, likewise, all arising thoughts and emotions dissolve back into their source, the infinite, boundless empty mind.

These thoughts and emotions come about because of the dynamic energy of the dharmakaya mind. If we do not indulge in them or identify with them, but just let them be as they are, then, through simply letting them be as they are, they will dissolve back to the ground of the empty dharmakaya.

As far as the arising of thoughts, concepts and emotions are concerned, such arising cannot be blocked. It is in fact skilful not to block them, but let them arise, and let them liberate on their own in a continual manner.

Here, the text says, 'And just as writing vanishes on water, arising and liberation become natural and continuous. And whatever arises is food for the bare rigpa emptiness'. So, whatever arises, referring to thoughts, feelings and concepts and so forth, become sustenance for the bare rigpa emptiness. They are not obstacles for the bare rigpa emptiness, rather they become food for the sustained rigpa. Therefore, the text says, 'Whatever stirs in the mind is the inner power of the dharmakaya king'. Because the mind is dynamic, stirring thoughts and emotions are the expressions of this dynamic mind.

Familiarisation of the View

It is important to familiarise ourselves with this kind of meditational approach. Over time, due to the power of meditation, or familiarisation, we will be able to convert the arising of discursive thoughts and emotions into meditation. Instead of the arising thoughts and emotions removing us from meditation, they will actually bring us into meditation. Not only that, we will be able to bring powerful mental poisons onto the path of the Dharma.

The yogi, who practices this kind of meditation on the view, employs the five sense faculties, seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting, like any other, ordinary living being. Because certainly, their sense faculties operate like the senses of any ordinary living beings. And the yogi of this practice, perceives form like any other ordinary living being. There is no difference in perceiving the form whether you are ordinary being or someone who is practicing the Dzogchen view. Likewise, there is no difference in experiencing the sensation of pain or comfort and happiness. The difference is that the perception of a sound or form by an ordinary being, who is not familiar with this kind of meditation on the view, will be followed by rejection or acceptance. This gives rise to an emotional complex, like craving and aversion and so forth. But when a good meditator, who meditates on the view, perceive forms, sounds and so forth, their perception of form

or sound will not be followed by the notions of rejection or acceptance. These thoughts and emotions get liberated on their own, simultaneous with perceiving them.

The Three Modes of Liberation

In Dzogchen, it is pointed out that the manner in which thoughts and emotions get liberated is immensely important. Therefore, the Dzogchen master, Vimalamitra, stated three modes of how thoughts and emotions can be liberated on the spot. These are three levels of liberation. The first mode of liberation is 'recognising the arising of discursive thoughts', simultaneously to this, the discursive thoughts get liberated on its own. The second mode of liberation is 'self-liberation', the discursive thoughts get liberated by themselves, without any effort. The third mode of liberation is termed 'liberation that is neither beneficial nor harmful'.

These three levels of liberation of the arising of thoughts and emotions are explained with three examples. Thoughts liberated upon recognition is similar to meeting a person you have met before. Self-liberation of the discursive thoughts by their own, is like a snake uncoiling from a knot. The liberation of thoughts and emotions, without there being any benefit or harm, is like the example of the burglar entering an empty house.

With the attainment of the first mode of liberation, there will still remain a small trace of dualistic fixation, because even if one attains liberation of thoughts and emotions, there remains a concept of a recogniser and something that is being recognised. So, there is a small fixation on duality. During the second mode of liberation, there still remains a very subtle obscuration known as the cognitive obscuration, or the obscuration of the knowledge. The final and third mode of liberation is the ultimate mode of liberation, it is the perfect mode of liberation.

If we do not understand the difference between these three modes of liberating thoughts and emotions, then our meditation on the view can become a contributing cause to experience the samadhi of the formless realm. For example, if we were to identify the first level of the mode of liberation to be the ultimate mode of liberation, this conclusion will become an obstacle. We will get stuck there, and will not make any effort to move onto the second and third mode.

In order to progress, we have to develop certainty. Looking at the first example, the first mode of liberation, of meeting a person we knew before. When we are meeting such a person, and are very familiar with who it is, then we have gained certainty. Likewise, when we meditate on the view, we need to attain certainty on the view, as if we were meeting somebody very familiar. Like this, we will gain certainty that our mind is like the Buddha. We also gain certainty by regarding the arising thoughts and emotions as being the natural expression of the empty dharmakaya mind.

It is easy to mistake the worldly samadhis of the formless realms of existence for the actual Dzogchen Samadhi meditation. There are four planes of higher worldly existence of the formless realm. For example, when we enter into deep Samadhi, the sense faculties get temporarily blocked, so we are not conscious of the objects of our senses. The worldly samadhi of the formless realm termed 'Infinite Space' experienced here can be easily mistaken for an ultimate realisation. When all objects dissolve from the sense faculties, what is left behind is the background, which is empty space. If we enjoy resting in this infinite space, thinking it is the ultimate realisation, this will become a contributing cause to experience this plane of existence of the formless realm. The second meditative experience that can arise when we do such mediation, is that sensations terminates temporarily. Again, this temporary cessation of feelings, as the second worldly Samadhi of the formless realms, sometimes termed 'Nothingness', can easily be mistaken for an ultimate realisation.

According to the great meditators, when we attain the first mode of liberation, 'liberation upon recognising thoughts and emotions', is the ordinary liberation of the ordinary meditator. In this meditation, we can experience an immense clarity of the mind, because there are no appearances being perceived through the sense faculties in the earlier stages. Therefore, the consciousness has become increasingly clear and bright. But this meditative experience also belongs to the worldly meditative Samadhis of the formless realms. Another meditative experience that can be experienced, which is quite similar to the formless realm, is termed 'Neither Existence nor Non-Existence'. When we experience such meditation,

objective appearances are being wiped out, the conscious mind being very bright and luminous, but this is still not the ultimate intention of the mediation, it is just one of the meditative experiences along the path of meditation.

So, it is important to recognise the manner in which we attain liberation. Of the first, second and third mode of liberation, the first mode of liberation is the lowest. An ordinary meditator can attain this, but it can easily be mistaken for the ordinary samadhis of the formless realm. In the second mode of liberation, we do not need to bring about any effort to liberate our thoughts and emotions. They get liberated on their own, on the spot. There is a quote from Padmasambhava which says 'With meditation, enlightenment is there for everyone, without meditation, enlightenment is there only for me'. 'With meditation' refers to fabricated, deliberate meditation, 'without meditation' refers to spontaneous meditation, without any deliberate effort.

We have created the wheel of samsara with our mind, but in order to abandon it, we do not need to create the wheel of nirvana, or, in other words, something that is opposed to samsara. Because, if we create such a nirvana with the same mind, that nirvana would be quite similar to nirvana. With our discursive mind, we have succeeded in creating samara, but now we are not fond of samsara any longer, and want to get rid of it by creating nirvana. But if the creator of nirvana is the same discursive mind, that nirvana is not much more than samsara.

In this kind of meditation, it is important to recognise the self-arising and self-liberation of thoughts and emotions, without the need to use an external remedy to liberate them, so that they can liberate on their own. As an example, when a snake uncoils, we do not need to help the snake uncoil, the snake is both able to coil and uncoil its knot. We can ask ourselves, when it uncoils, where does the knot go?

So, it is important to recognise the mode of self-liberation, how thoughts and emotions liberate by themselves. In the midst of meditation on the view, no matter what kind of discursive thoughts and emotions arise, whether they are subtle or coarse, every one of them will get liberated on their own. They simply vanish. It is something similar to when snow falls on sea water, there is no need to help the sea water get rid of the snow, the snow simply dissolves and vanishes into the sea water. A strong wind can create big waves on the ocean, but we do not need to bring the wave down; the wave will come down naturally. This is how it is.

The third mode of liberation is termed 'Liberation without there being any benefit or harm'. The example for this is the burglar who enters the empty house. The burglar is not benefited, because there is nothing to steal. The house is not harmed, because there is nothing to lose. This is accomplished by evolving high into this kind of view. Then we can experience the third mode of liberation. Here, we do not entertain any notion of hope and fear, particularly not any fears that we have something to lose, that somebody might harm us, or fearing that our own discursive thoughts and emotions will harm us.

Ordinarily, we hope that good thoughts and emotions will do us good. We fear misery, and hope to experience happiness. So, hope and fear is always there. In other words, we have powerful fixations, or grasping. But when we properly realise the Dzogchen view, this strong powerful grasping becomes increasingly very weak. It is like the example of a corpse at a cemetery. Even if the corpse at a cemetery is surrounded by hundreds of murderers, the corpse fears nothing; because it is a corpse, it simply lies there. It has no conceptual thoughts like 'I will be burned in a fire' or 'I will be eaten by wild animals'. All the hopes and fears become liberated into the body of the dharmakaya.

The speech is said to be the echo of mind. When a Dzogchen meditator passes away from this life, his or her body disintegrates into atomic particles, and the mind gets liberated into the expanse of dharmakaya. As far as speech is concerned, he or she usually do not leave behind a testament. Patrul Rinpoche was sceptical by the testament left by certain Dzogchen masters. He believed that when a realised Dzogchen master dies, his body disintegrates into atomic particles, which means disappearing into the rainbow body, and the mind gets liberated into the expanse of dharmakaya, and his speech never leaves any testament. However, the Three Words that Strikes the Vital Point is said to be the testament of the Dzogchen master Garab Dorje. The difference is that they do not leave any testament as far as themselves are concerned. They leave a testament to benefit others.

‘Without this meditation, there will be delusion’, means that if we do not grasp the meaning of the different manners we attain liberation, and still persist in meditation, it is no guarantee that our meditation will liberate our mind, or that our meditation will not become a part of the delusion. If we comprehend this instruction, and also clearly remembers the different levels of how we attain liberation, then we are in the state of non-meditation, which is the dharmakaya. The text says, ‘When you have it, there is no meditation.’

Question and Answer

Q: This is not exactly what you were talking about, but I am unsure of the difference between terms like rigpa display, expression rigpa and rigpa adornment. Can you explain the differences?

A: I think these are English synonyms used by different translators, but in order to understand this, it is important to understand the sugatagarbha, the Buddha-nature. Because the Buddha-nature is the root of everything. Rigpa is also a synonym for the Buddha-nature. The Buddha-nature has three distinctive attributes. It is essentially empty, its nature is clarity, clear light, and it is unobstructed. These three distinctive attributes are not dualistic, they are different aspects of the same reality, like the two sides of a coin.

The term Buddha-nature is used to talk about it as an object. The term rigpa is used as a subjective experience. Rigpa cognises. Rigpa means knowledge, but it also means to cognise. Rigpa cognises the Buddha-nature, so that rigpa becomes subjective and the Buddha-nature becomes objective, but actually there is no subject or object. Just for the sake of communicating the reality we have to resort to conceptual, dualistic language. Rigpa means being aware, aware of certain objects. That object is the Buddha-nature. But the Buddha-nature is not an object, and rigpa is not subject, but for the sake of communication, we have to resort to language limitations. In this case rigpa also becomes dualistic, because when we say rigpa, it simultaneously implies ma-rigpa. Ma-rigpa means negating rigpa, which means not knowing. If we know Buddha-nature, that is enlightenment. If we do not know Buddha-nature, that is un-enlightenment. The Buddha-nature is also sometimes termed dharmakaya. Dharmakaya is another synonym for Buddha-nature.

All the wisdoms of the five Buddhas are all different aspects of the single Buddha, or different aspects of the Buddha-nature. The Buddha-nature is sometimes described as being emptiness, clarity and unobstructed compassion. But these three are not separate features, they are dependent on each other. They are integral. The combined term for this is ‘svabhavikakaya’. In our case, when we are unenlightened, these three bodies of the Buddha, the three kayas, are correlated with our body, speech and mind. Our three-fold body, speech and mind are not separable, they are different aspect of one person. Likewise, the three kayas of a Buddha are not separable, they are different aspects of an enlightened being.

The word for the synonym terms adornment of rigpa, expression of rigpa, and display of rigpa in Tibetan is ‘tsal’. It means that thoughts and emotions are the dynamic playfulness of the mind, expressions of the empty mind. The nature of mind is not stale, it is completely dynamic, and this dynamic expresses the energy of mind as all kind of thoughts and emotions. Maybe the ordinary mind can be both like a god and a devil. Maybe it would be easier to understand the mind this way. If you claim the original purity of the mind, then you end up becoming a god yourself. But if you get stuck with the secondary impurity, then you end up becoming a devil.

Checking and Experimenting

Sometimes it is difficult to understand physical things. But the mind is even more difficult. Because the mind is without colour or shape, it is difficult to talk about it. When we meditate, we should look at our mind, without there being a subject or object. But if we separate our experience into subject and object, meditation will be difficult.

Practice is important. Sometimes we visualise that we are Padmasambhava. But if we do this as a limited kind of meditation, we cannot be Padmasambhava. We can meditate for 100 years without improvement. Because when we wake up from our mediation, we are still ourselves. This means that if we meditate on the paramitas, wisdom or rigpa, we will understand more of the practice. If we think that the mind is Buddha, and that the Buddha is mind, we should use our wisdom to look, check and experiment. This is an important point.

Hashang is a monk who came to Tibet and propounded a certain Buddhist view. There was not much difference between his view and the Dzogchen view, apart from one crucial thing: In the Dzogchen view

there are room for experimentation, but in Hashang's view, one is discouraged from experimenting with the mind or the view itself.

I remember, when I was 12 or 13 years old, while I was in the Dzogchen monastery, on the top of the mountain there was a very famous cave. I was very young when I went there for retreat. In daytime, everything was very beautiful and okay, but at night time I was feeling a little afraid; the wind was blowing stronger, there was a lot of noise, and black shadows, looking like animals or ghost or something, were moving around. So, I went inside the cave and shut the door behind me. But it was difficult to meditate when I was afraid, thinking there was something outside. At the time, I did not have any light. All the time, I was felt it was very difficult. After some time – one hour, two hours – I was becoming more and more afraid. Then, I thought I should go outside to see what was happening. So, I brought with me a stick, thinking there was an animal or something wanting to take me. But when I checked, I found out that this shadow was a rock, and that shadow was some bushes. After I saw that everything was okay, that there was no ghost, no animals, and that everything was safe, I went back into the cave, and meditation was much better.

Overcoming Dualistic Fixation

We should understand emptiness and gain certainty about the view. This is very important. If we sometimes have lots of thoughts coming all the time while meditating, we may think our meditation has a bad quality, but then the next day, if we experience that there are no thoughts and everything is very peaceful, we may think we are performing high quality meditation. But if we do like this, then our whole life will be like this: good and bad, bad and good. It will never end, like day and night continually following each other. This is the same with feelings; feeling happy, unhappy, happy, unhappy. Sometimes I think that human beings are very boring, because sometimes we experience happiness, sometimes we experience suffering. It is like this all the time; yes, no, yes, no – like an answer to something.

It is very difficult to overcome dualistic fixation, and transcend beyond. We are very familiar with the reality in a setting with subject and object, existence and non-existence, real and unreal, but we are not able to transcend beyond this kind of dualistic thinking. If we were to introduce transcendental reality, it becomes difficult both speaking about it and understanding it. It is a little bit like a small baby, knowing only two people, its own parents. In a similar manner, we know reality, polarised into the duality of 'this and that', but we do not know anything about the unelaborated, transcendental reality beyond that.

The realisation of the arhats from shravakayana is said to be like the water contained in the footprint of an elephant. The spiritual realisation of the Buddha is said to be like the whole ocean. So, if we compare our spiritual realisation with the spiritual realisation of the arhats, theirs become very big, but the Buddha's realisation becomes incomparable. The spiritual realisation that we ourselves is maybe close to one percentage of that. For example, we may entertain all kinds of discursive thoughts and emotions about what is clean and what is unclean. There is also a strong fixation on what is happiness and what is unhappiness. Also, a strong fixation on what is impermanent and what is impermanent. A strong fixation on self and other. Therefore, there is a strong fixation on self.

Helping Ourselves doing Conventional Practices

When we work on the Buddhist path, it is good to follow the progressive Buddhist path. In the big cities of this modern era, especially in Asia and Europe, people are very busy, and it is difficult to find the spare time to complete the ngöndro practice. Therefore, some lamas give a special right to their disciples, not having to complete the preliminary practices, and delve directly into the Dzogchen practice. But as far as the Dzogchen practice itself is concerned, no-one is exempt from completing the preliminary ground practices. It is also important to gather the necessary theoretical knowledge of what we are meditating on, and then try this out in our mind, reflect on it, contemplate on it, and then, when we gain certainty, combine it with meditation. The Dzogchen teaching is not like food served in a restaurant. We have to be the chef ourselves, cook it, and eat it as well. Even the lama cannot be a chef and prepare the Dzogchen view to spoon-feed us. We have to feed ourselves. The lama can only help us, but he cannot force-feed us with a spoon.

The Buddha said that the Buddhas do not wash away our sins with their hands and water. The Buddhas do not remove our suffering using their hands. The Buddhas also do not transfer their spiritual realisation directly onto the student in a literal manner. But then, how can he help us, if he cannot clean our sins and remove our suffering with his bare hands? The Buddhas can help us by revealing for us the

techniques of the Dharma, that is peaceful in its nature. If we work with this technique, we will be able to help ourselves. Because, as said, there is no way of the Buddha independently washing or cleansing away your sins and literally removing your suffering, particularly mental suffering. They will help you through revealing the Dharma, the technique by which you can help yourself. This does not mean that the Buddhas are lacking in loving kindness and compassion. They have tremendous love and compassion, but in the final analysis, we have to help ourselves.

For example, a dirty mirror cannot properly reflect an object placed in front of it. Likewise, if there are a lot of blockages and conditioning in our minds, we will not be able to reflect reality as it is. Therefore, it is important to purify those blockages and conditionings, especially by resorting to conventional Dharma practices, where we accumulate merit through various conventional practices. Of course, no doubt we would like to experience the clear light of the mind, and of course we would like to have the vision of thigle in the expanse of the dharmata, but as long as our energy is blocked by different levels of obscurations, it is very difficult to give rise to the thögal vision, the leap over vision, unless these obscurations are purified through the conventional aspect of the Dharma practice.

The practice that enables us to purify the obscurations through accumulating the network of merit, can be done throughout our daily activities, and it needs to be done regularly. For example, relative conventional Buddhist practice is to go for refuge to the three jewels, or engendering the will to become enlightened to benefit all living beings. These are all means to accumulate the necessary merit. Early in the morning, when we get out of bed, we can form the altruistic attitude of 'Today, may I be able to deploy my threefold body, speech and mind for the benefit of others'. All these things help us to create the network of merit. Our altruistic aspirations can include to help somebody, mentally, physically, vocally and so forth, as well as helping them to create merit, for a person with merit will get a higher vision of the absolute truth. For a person without merit it is very difficult to have a vision of the absolute reality.

Therefore, these conventional practices should not be overlooked, because they help us to bring forth the deeply buried Buddha-nature. For example, at the end of the day, when we are about to fall asleep, instead of feeling guilty with regard to what we have done in the past, or feeling anxiety about the future, we can mentally review what kind of good deeds we have performed during the day, and what kind of bad deeds we have done, and then, if we discover that we have done some good deeds, take delight in it and dedicate the merit for the benefit of all beings. If we discover that we have done wrong deeds, we should respond to it with a feeling of regret, pledge that we are not going to repeat the same mistake again. In this way we purify our wrong deeds. This will ensure that we can fall asleep without the effect of the wrong deeds. We do not carry the negative karma into our sleep and the next day. So, the formal practice of bodhicitta comes down to developing an altruistic mindset of 'May I be able to render my body, speech and mind serviceable, so that I can offer service to others. May I not render my body, speech and mind unserviceable for others'.

Colophon

We need to bear in mind that we have to apply these three words that strikes the vital points of view, meditation and actions. This is immensely important. All the crucial points of other aspects of the Dharma will also become a stepping stone, and lay a foundation towards the actualisation of the view. Realising the view will then become the sole cause of meeting the original face of dharmakaya. At this point, there will naturally have a compassionate heart for all. This is the meaning of the following statement in the root text, 'For the View which has the three vital points, Meditation, the union of wisdom and love'. From the insight into this view, ensues the union of wisdom and love. The wisdom is the knowledge aspect that has the vision of the view. The love is the emotional aspect that is radiating outwardly, towards other living beings. And these two, the wisdom aspect of the cognitive mind and the loving aspect of the emotional mind, are inseparable.

The final fruition of this meditation on the view is to attain what is known as the non-localised nirvana, sometimes referred to as the non-abiding nirvana. Their radiance of loving kindness and compassion will not allow enlightened beings to one-sidedly enjoy the extremity of the peace of nirvana for themselves. Also, the realisation of the wisdom by gaining insight into the view, will prevent such an enlightened being from falling into extreme peace of nirvana. In this way, the fruition of this practice on the highest level dawns as what is known as the non-localised nirvana. When the root text reads, 'Is accompanied by the Action common to all the bodhisattvas', it refers to the actions of the bodhisattvas,

which are the six transcendental virtues, or the paramitas. The practice of these enables such a person to gather the network of merit and wisdom, and thus further enhance the realisation of the view.

This text is very brief, but the content is very profound and extensive. Patrul Rinpoche says that this theme is the heart essence of the lineage. He regards this pith instruction to be a revealed treasure. This treasure is being brought forth from the depth of the transcendental insight of the treasure revealer, 'tertön', of dharmakaya. A treasure revealer needs to have the quality of deep insight, not just any treasure revealer are able to reveal such a concealed treasure, and realise the ultimate Dzogchen view. So, he is saying that such a treasure cannot be compared to an ordinary treasure, dug out from the earth or inanimate objects like rocks. Ordinary treasures revealed from ordinary minds can only give temporary relief from the difficulties and pain of living beings. Whereas this treasure will completely relieve the frustration of samsara. The treasure of this transmission will help us to directly meet the original face of primordial purity, or the view. This treasure will help us to strip the original purity of the rigpa bare naked.

Further, he says that the genesis of this treasure comes from the great Dzogchen teacher Garab Dorje, and this treasure is therefore the final testament of Garab Dorje when he entered into parinirvana, in other words, when he departed from this life. Then, from the expanse of the sky, from the rainbow of clouds came the voice, which was bestowed on his immediate disciple Manjushrimitra. Then the transmission of this testament came down, all the way to another great Dzogchen master, The Great Longchen Rabjam. He further transmitted it to one of his distant disciples, Jigme Lingpa, while appearing in an emanated form. Finally, the transmission of the lineage came all the way to the direct guru of Patrul Rinpoche, and then to Patrul Rinpoche himself. Therefore, the transmission of this lineage has the attribute of the blessing of the three lineages that came down from these three great masters. Thus, in this manner, the original transmission of this lineage was passed down until now. Therefore, as we have had the chance to come across it, expound on it, and listen to it, we should think about it and put it into practice.

Patrul Rinpoche was one of the lamas that was brought up in Dzogchen Monastery in Kham in Tibet. I myself has actually studied, reflected and meditated at the seat of Dzogchen Monastery in Kham, Tibet, for many years. Therefore, this instruction possesses, as the root text says, 'The essence of the wisdom mind of the three transmissions. It is entrusted to my heart disciples, sealed to be secret.' Perhaps we view ourselves as his heart disciples or not. If we do not, we should render ourselves to become his heart disciples by studying, meditating and reflecting upon these instructions. Actually, it says 'to my heart disciples, sealed to be secret', This means it should be kept secret from those who are only curious about the Dharma, but not from those who actually want to put it into practice. Even when we expound on these instructions, it is rather quite difficult to understand the meaning. In some way, the meaning is self-secret, even when it is explained. The Buddha summarised the ultimate meaning of emptiness in the Heart Sutra. Many of us chant the Heart Sutra, but very few of us know its theoretical meaning, let alone the realisation of the Heart Sutra. In that respect, even the Heart Sutra is self-secret. One does not need to keep it secret, because the meaning is not revealed very easily. It keeps itself secret.

The text now concludes with the following few lines, 'It is profound in meaning, my heart's words. It is the words of my heart, the crucial key point. This crucial point: never hold it cheap. Never let this instruction slip away from you.' If we adhere to this advice, we will become suitable vessels, we will become heart disciples of this great master. The reason behind such a statement is to show that this instruction is tremendously valuable, and we should not just leave it just as theoretical knowledge, but think about the view, meditated on it, and bring it out into our daily action.

For example, in China, parents take rather good care of their children, not only when the child is small, but also later, helping their children by paying all expenses. But by spoiling their children with too many material gifts, then, when the child grows up, it becomes spoiled and takes for granted what they have received from their parents, not seeing the value of the help they are getting. Likewise, Patrul Rinpoche has spent many years in solitude, meditating, contemplating, and thus attained the realisation of such a view. His spiritual realisation is being transmitted through composing these instructions to us, so we should treasure them as invaluable, behold them with utter care, and put them into practice.

This concludes the elucidation of the root text Hitting the Essence in Three Words that strikes the three vital points of view, meditation and action. I hope that you will be able to understand and meditate on the threefold view, meditation and action as it is presented here. Perhaps you can read the root text as a prayer for some time. You can combine it in your regular sitting meditation and read it with the prayers, until it sinks into your mind.

Patrul Rinpoche said that if the Buddhas of the three times were to have a meeting and discuss what would be the most effective instructions to impart for the benefit for all living beings, they would not be able to find an instruction that is more practical beneficial than the instructions presented in this text.

Guru Yoga

Since we now have encountered, and established a spiritual connectedness to this transmission, we should put some effort into actualising the clear light mind of the rigpa. How can we formally meditate on these instructions in formal sessions? We can begin the formal meditation sessions with the usual practice of going for refuge to our spiritual ideals, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and then cultivate the will for supreme enlightenment, bodhicitta. Then we can practice the cultivation of immeasurable loving kindness, compassion, joy, peace and equanimity. Then we can do a short guru yoga, which can be summarised in one simple line, in Tibetan 'lama chenno', which in English means 'the lama knows'. You can recite it three, six or nine times.

Earlier, we talked about the causal conditions that gives rise to the realisation of the view. It has been stated that other than the methods of accumulating the network of merit and purification obscurations, plus devotion towards our spiritual ideal, the guru, there is no other method for realising the view of primordial purity. Therefore, our meditation practice on the view should be preceded by refuge, bodhicitta, and guru devotion by reciting Lama Chenno.

Invoking the compassionate wisdom mind of the guru with this mantra can be viewed as a supplication towards our spiritual guide. Whether we manage to attract the blessings of the guru or not, depends very much on the devotion we cultivate in the supplication. The supplication, the guru mantra, can be sung melodiously with a melodious tune. We do not only try to invoke the guru from the outside, we also try to invoke the deep confidence within ourselves towards our spiritual guide. There are a few different melodies, depending on the different schools and traditions.

The Nine Cycles of Breathing Exercises

Following the invocation of the guru, it is a good idea to purify the stale air with the nine cycles of breathing exercises. The instructions in the text tell us to relax our body, speech and mind, and purifying the stale air through the nine cycles of breathing will help us to render our body, speech and mind at ease, in a state of relaxation.

Within our grosser nervous system, there is a structure of a subtler nervous system. This is the central channel, and the right and left channel. In order to do the purification of the nine cycles of breathing exercises, we employ our index finger, clenching the rest of the fingers into a fist, and then block either the right or the left nostril, breathing in and out through the open nostril. If we place the tip of our thumb on the base of the ring finger of our right hand, and then clench the remaining four fingers over it, we make a fist, labelled a vajra fist. The back of this hand is then placed at the base of the thigh, and the arm and upper body is straightened. Some teachers teach this positioning of the hands in a very elaborate manner, but we do not have to go through that. We can simply do it like this.

The key point of the instruction is to close our eyes and mouth, and then take a deep in-breath through the nose. Closing our eyes and mouth will help us do this. Breathing out again, pushes out all the stale air within our nervous system. Then we breath in again, going through the same cycle.

We start the deep in-breath through our left nostril, by blocking the right nostril with the index finger. Then the inhaled in-breath is pushed out through the right nostril. This also has the practical benefit of clearing your nose. It is a good idea to have a tissue paper, just in case. We ventilate the stale air three times by breathing in through the left nostril, and breathing out through the right nostril. Then we reverse the order, and repeat in the same manner, altogether, now, six rounds of breathing. To do this, we have to shift the position of the index finger. During the third round, we do not block either of the nostrils, just

breath in and out through both nostrils, again repeating three times. During the third set you can place the back of both hands on the bases of the thighs, and straighten the body as before.

We visualise that the tip of the right and left channels starts from the right and left nostrils. The air energy that is inhaled, passes through the left and right channels, all the way down into the bottom of the central channel, where the ends of the side channels go into the central channel. The air that is brought in now moves up through the central channel, all the way to the top of the head. When the air moves, we should place close attention to the ascending and descending winds within the subtle nervous system of our visualisation.

Following this, we allow our body, speech and mind to relax, and then just sit at ease. This method will to a certain extent pacify the grosser or coarser aspects of the discursive thoughts and emotions. The physical posture is a little bit different from the usual meditation posture, having both palms covering the knees. Unless the grosser aspects of the discursive thoughts are pacified, it is difficult to meet the original face of rigpa. Because the grosser, as well as the subtle, aspects of discursive thoughts and emotions obstructs us from seeing the original face of rigpa.

When meditating, we will either experience stillness or some kind of disturbance. As before, both the stillness of the mind and the movement of the mind should be viewed as the face of rigpa, the natural expression of dharmakaya, the original view.

We can occasionally shout phat to deliberately disrupt our meditative experiences of clarity and non-conceptuality. Shouting phat helps us disrupting any conceptually fabricated meditation, which is not a spontaneous meditation. The sound of the mantric syllable phat also has the practical benefit of separating the husk from the grain, meaning separating the obscuring factors from the original face of rigpa.

In this manner then, we can try to sustain the original view of the rigpa that is being introduced and recognise it as much as we can. In beginning stage, it is important to distance ourselves from all commotions and things that distracts our mind. It is also helpful to simplify our lifestyle and activities as much as we can.

We can also perform a one-week solitary retreat doing this, or even a one- or two-year retreat, where we do not have to engage in other activities, devoting the whole time to this practice. We will need to distant ourselves, and abandon all forms of commotion and distractions until we attain stability in this meditation. Once this is attained, we will not be affected by commotions and distractions.

When we attain stability in this meditation, the dividing line between formal meditation and post-meditation collapses. Whether we are meditating or not, we will always be in a continuous state of meditation. We also have to take into consideration how we conduct our body, speech and mind in our daily life, because activities in post-meditation can serve as support for developing the view. At the end of the formal meditation we go through the practice of dedication, where we dedicate the network of merit and wisdom that we have gathered through our practice towards the attainment of supreme enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings. We can also do the aspirational prayers.

In brief, our realisation of the view should not be divorced from the three vital points, and our meditation should not be divorced from wisdom and compassion, or love, and our actions, especially during the post-meditation period, should not be divorced from the six transcendental virtues of the bodhisattvas, the paramitas.

Taking a break, we can stand up in a loose posture, simply throwing our arms from side to side around our body, loosening up, while we mentally let go of every concern, worry, fixation and so on. First we stand up, and place our feet firmly on the ground, with a bit of space between them. Then, we straighten the whole body. We now tell the mind to loosen up the body, to relax and be at ease with itself. This relaxation is also good for general health. There has been done a study on this exercise, and they discovered that this exercise reversed the aging of the arteries. When you do this exercise, be careful not to tense the upper part of the body, the shoulders and neck – just let them completely loose. Let your body be so loose that it is almost not able to hold you upright. Many people experience muscular tension, especially in the upper part of the chest, around the neck, or around the shoulders, due to too much thinking and worries. So, just swing your arms loosely from side to side, letting them fold naturally around your body. Close your eyes while you do this for five minutes.

Taking Refuge Vow

The nature of the refuge vow is the commitment to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. We commit to relying on the Buddha, and we commit to become a Buddha oneself. We commit to the Dharma as the path. We commit to see the Sangha as the fellow travellers on this path. When we go for refuge to the Sangha, we commit to communicate skilfully with our fellow travellers, seeing them as friends, not as ordinary friends, but as Dharma friends on the path to enlightenment. Join your hands at your heart. Early in the morning as soon as you get up from bed, or while you are still in the bed, recite the short refuge prayer 'Namo Buddha, namo Dharma, namo Sangha', at least three times.

The refuge prayer can also be combined with offering physical prostrations on the bed or in the room. Prostrations involve touching your hands at your forehead, throat and heart, or the three chakras, crown chakra, speech chakra and heart chakra, symbolising the enlightened body, speech and mind. If you place your folded hands on the crown of your head, this symbolises the crown chakra, touching the throat symbolises the opening of the throat chakra, touching the heart symbolises the opening of the heart chakra. Whereas if you touch your hands at the forehead, throat and heart, this symbolises the surrendering and purification of the body, speech and mind. We can perform full-fledged prostrations, stretching out our whole body on the floor, or we can offer half-prostrations.

Towards the end of the day, when we have gone to bed, just before we fall into slumber, we can do the practice of going for refuge by reciting the short or medium length refuge prayer, possibly also combining it with three prostrations. Those of us who have gone for refuge, should adhere to this minimum of practice each day, reciting the refuge prayer three times in the morning and three times before we go to bed. The recitation of the refuge prayer reminds us of the enlightened attributes of the enlightened beings, who are our spiritual ideals. It also helps us to develop devotion to relate to them from the heart.

When students perform the refuge ceremony, they repeat three times: Namo Buddha ya, namo Dharma ya, namo Sangha ya. And then three times: Namo Guru dev, namo Deva dev, namo Dakini dev. And then 'lek-so'.

At the very instant the students say lek-so, they receive the transmission of the refuge vow. We should try to preserve the transmission of the refuge vow that we have received throughout our life. Basically, we have committed to the three spiritual jewels, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Buddha as the teacher, the Dharma as the path, and the Sangha as the spiritual fellowship. As part of the refuge ceremony, I will cut off a few strands of your hair. You will be asked in Tibetan, 'Are you happy that I am cutting off a few strands of your hair?', and you can answer 'I am very happy'. Cutting a few strands of hair is very symbolic. It symbolises cutting through the obscuration from seeing the primordial purity of the mind. There are three levels of obscurations, emotional obscurations, cognitive obscurations, and the deeply hidden dispositional obscurations. Then you will be given a refuge name. You should remember it. The refuge name is your Dharma name, and you may want to be able to tell it to somebody later.

I think that taking the refuge vow is to orient ourselves towards the safe direction of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Ordinarily, when we talk about going for refuge, it is understood as converting to Buddhism, but actually, it means orienting ourselves toward the safe direction of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. As said, it also involves committing to become a Buddha ourselves. In order to commit to become a Buddha, we commit to work on the path of Dharma, which is going for refuge to the Dharma, and to be able to work on the path effectively, because we cannot do the work just by ourselves, sometimes we have to work in fellowship with likeminded people or talk to someone who has more experience than ourselves, like your teachers. This is the meaning for going for refuge to the Sangha. When we say going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, what we are saying is, I am committed to become a Buddha myself, and to work on the path of the Dharma, in fellowship with other likeminded people.

Conclusion

I am very happy to have come to Norway, seeing Lama Changchub, Karma Tashi Ling and the Sangha group. I would like to say thank you to Lama Changchub to invite me to come here, and to the Karma Tashi Ling Sangha, and you also to you, who have come here to listen to the Dharma teaching.

I think Norway is a very good country. You have a good government, and a good environment. Everything is very good. You also have a very compassionate lama, Lama Changchub. There is also a big

change here, you now have a big temple. So, I hope there will come a lot of people here in the future to practice and learn the Dharma, and that the Sangha group will develop in the future.

Life is short, but you should learn how to practice, not only from teaching, but sometimes I think you should remember to learn from the compassion of your teacher. If your teacher is very compassionate, you can learn it too. So, when you rely on the spiritual guide, or lama or guru, even if the lama happens to be very articulate and well versed in the Dharma, you should not primarily aim to learn about the theoretical aspect of the Dharma that the lama embodies. The student should mainly be concerned with learning the spiritual qualities of loving kindness and compassion, as well as the wisdom that the lama embodies.

The main thing is to put the Dharma into practice. The criteria for being a good practitioner is not whether you can articulate, or are well versed in the Dharma or not, the criteria for whether you are a good practitioner or not, is whether you can integrate your knowledge of the Dharma into your daily life and practice it or not.

I am very happy with you all, and I hope that in the future I will be able to learn more English, so that I can teach in English. Actually, I was thinking that 18 years ago, but still, my English is not that good. Still, I know, that when I start to learn, I can learn very fast. When I now teach in Mandarin, it is the same as when teaching in Tibetan. It is very easy. But English is more difficult for me. During these four days of teaching with a translator, I understand about 80 percent of what is being translated. When Boyce was here, I could determine the quality of his translation, and I could detect if something was left out. Also, Lama Changchub is a very good translator, but sometimes he also forgets what I have said. Translation is a difficult process. Many teachers that come here speak English very well, and it is only me that he must help. He also teaches on his own, and speaks English very well. So, I hope that in the future, I can speak English very well too. Thank you, everybody!