Dharma Teachings

1969 - 1989

Vol III

Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche

Dharma Teachings

Given by Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche

Between 1969 and 1989

Vol.		Classification and Subjects	Page
I		Biography of Kalu Rinpoche - The Chariot for Traveling the Path	1
	A	**Texts actually Written by Kyabje Kalu Rinpotche**	
		Writings of Kalu Rinpotche: English translation - Tibetan Text (02)	101
		The Foundation of Buddhist Meditation	151
		L´Excellent Chemin Suivi par les Fortunés - Fr. / Port.	173
		Points Essentiels de la Voie: Tib. - Fr. -Port.	199
		Les Cinq Lumières: Tib. - Fr. - Port.	205
		Open Letter to the Lamas 1981: Tib. - Eng.	213
		Ondée de Grace: Tib. - Fr. - Port.	225
		Le Grand Navire pour la Liberation: Tib. Fr. Port. + Commentaire	233
		The Eight Thoughts: Tib. - Fr. - Eng	267
		Notes:_There are more texts of practices written by Kalu Rinpotche like the tsok Ngodrup Kundjung, the commentary on Mahakala etc. but they are not made available here.	
		Rinpotche has also compiled and edited, in 11 volumes: *The Complete Collection of Texts of the Shangpa Kagyu Tradition.*	๗-๕
	B	**Kalu Rinpotche explicitly recommended to study the texts:**	
		Gampopa - Jewel Ornament of Liberation: Tib. (03) - Eng. - Port. (04) - Resumed / Dü Dön (05)	
		Patrul R. - The Words of My Perfect Teacher: Tib. (06) - Engl. - Port. (04)	
		Taranatha - Progression Through the Three Levels. Tib. - Eng. (07) - Port.	
	C	**Transcripts of Translations of Teachings Given by Kalu Rinpoche.**	
		1) The Notes of Elizabeth Zerzang - Sonada 1973	271
		2) Compilation of Teachings Given in Vancouver - Canada 1974	345
		Beginning Practice	349
		Dorje Sempa	360
		Mandala Offering	371
		Guru Yoga	379
		Chenrezig Meditation	397
		Six Perfections	412
		General Practice	420
		Importance of Foundations	429

		3) From Shenpen Ösel:	437
		Mind, Karma, Ego and Liberation	439
		Maha Mudra: Essence of all Buddha's Teachings	453
II		4) Compilations by Elizabeth Selandia	467
		Introduction to the Nature of the Mind	485
		Examination of Alaya and Karma	501
		Explanation of the Vow of Refuge	513
		Resolution of Emotional Subjectivity	523
		Teachings on the Bardos of Death and Dying	535
		Introduction to the Vajrayana Practices	549
		Insight into the Mantrayana Practices	563
		Commentary on the Bodhisattva Vows	573
		Elucidation of the Mahamudra	591
		Challenges of Samaya and Dharma	603
		Open Letter from Bokar Rinpoche...15 May 1989	623
		Chenrezig Sadhana	635
		5) Compilation of Teachings Given in New York - KTC 1982	663
		Kalu Rinpoche on Teaching in North America	673
		The Four Noble Truths	677
		The Four Dharmas of Gampopa	699
		Bardo	709
		Mandala	717
		Vows	723
		Women, Siddhi, Dharma	737
		Mahāmudrā	751
		The Crystal Mirror	771
		Vajrayana and Kalachakra - KTD	829
		6) Compilation of Teachings Given in San Francisco - KDK 1982	919
		The Three Yanas	927
		Ordinary Preliminary Practices	941
		Ngondro: Refuge and Prostrations	953
		Ngondro: Dorje Sempa Meditation	961
		Ngondro: Mandala Practice	967
		Ngondro: Guru Yoga	975
III		Lay Vows	989
		The Bodhisattva Vow	1001
		Vajrayana Commitments	1009
		Shamatha: Object Meditation	1019
		Shamatha: Objectless Meditation	1033
		Four Causes of Rebirth in Dewachen	1043
		Mahamudra	1049

		Concluding Remarks	1057
		7) Compilation of Teachings Given In Europe and Internationally	1071
		Lama Gyaltsen's Memories	1073
		The Events of Kalu Rinpoche's Life	1099
		Kalu Rinpoche's Last Moments	1113
		The Story of His Reincarnation	1121
		Contribution of the Dharma to the World	1139
		Human Existence	1149
		Buddhist Perspectives	1157
		Bodhgaya Teaching	1167
		The Next to the Last Teaching	1175
		The Last Public Teaching	1181
		The Emotions in the Hinayana: Rejecting Them	1189
		The Emotions in the Mahayana: Transforming Them	1199
		The Emotions in the Vajrayana: Recognizing Them	1211
		Common Preliminaries	1123
		Links Between Body and Mind	1231
		Mind, Elements, and Aggregates	1243
		Mahamudra - Vajradhara Ling 1984	1253
		Mahamudra - Samye Ling 1983	1261
		Union of Mahamudra and Maha-ati	1269
		Tantra´s context	1277
		Empowerments, Vows, and Sacred Commitments	1287
		The land of Bliss	1299
		Mantras	1305
		Specific Preliminaries	1309
		The Kagyupa Lineage	1325
		Khyungpo Naljor and the Shangpa Lineage	1335
	D	**Extracts of Teachings Grouped Thematically**	
		Scattered Flowers	1351
		Compassion	1365
		Mechanisms of Samsara	1373
		Mind	1383
		Mahamudra - Taipe 1986	1393
		Foundations of the Vajrayana	1397
		The Six Bardos and the Six Dharmas of Naropa	1407
		The Six Dharmas of Naropa	1427
		Chöd	1431
		Tibetan Medicine	1447
	E	**Reorganization and reformulations based on oral teachings.**	
		Luminous Mind - The Way of the Buddha	

7
Lay Vows

All of us are presently experiencing this precious human state of rebirth which we have attained to and which provides us with opportunity and freedom for spiritual practice. It is not something that comes about easily but is won with great difficulty. If we doubt that, all we need to do is to look at the number of beings there are in lower states of existence to realize that human beings are relatively few in number. Generally, human beings appear to all be in the same situation, but from the point of view of spiritual development, most human beings waste their lives. Most spend their lives in idle pursuits, treating the world as something real in and of itself. When we view this reality as ultimately real, we spend our time in a continual struggle to protect and defend that which we hold dear and to guard ourselves against things which threaten us. This kind of human existence, when seen in relation to spiritual development, has absolutely no purpose or heart to it at all.

For example, the average individual feels, "I am a person in this world and this is the ultimate reality." Basing their activities on this assumption, such a person might go into business, hoping to be successful. Putting all their time, energy and commitment into business, they might make millions of dollars and acquire many possessions, becoming quite successful in terms of the world. But ultimately, they have to die, and when they die, they cannot take a single penny of that fortune with them. The mind leaves the physical body. Tibetans say that this is like a hair being drawn out of butter, meaning cleanly, with nothing attached, with nothing following after the mind. The mind goes into the Bardo or after-death state. It is like waking up from a dream; everything that was part of the dream is simply left behind; none of it has been of any ultimate benefit.

Actually, there is one legacy from this life that carries over after death. It is not material possessions but the karmic tendencies that have been established and reinforced through our actions in this life. If these are of a virtuous and positive nature, then the karmic tendencies that these kinds of actions reinforce are ones which will benefit the mind after death; if the karmic tendencies have been reinforced by negative and harmful actions, then the corresponding result will be a negative one or harm the future experience of the mind after death. So the only legacy from this life is a karmic one and the only benefit or harm that we could incur from what takes place during this life is due to the positive or negative karmic tendencies that we have established and reinforced through our actions, virtuous or non-virtuous, positive or negative, during this life.

Relatively speaking, rebirth in the preta realm is a better state of existence than the hell realms—relatively speaking. The animal realm is a superior state of existence when compared to the preta realm. Among the animals, perhaps the most fortunate and superior forms of animal life are those we see around us, cats and dogs, domesticated animals, and the wild animals in

the forests and fields around us. But none of those beings understands how to practice any kind of virtuous activity which would reinforce the kind of positive karma needed to attain to states of further happiness and higher rebirth. On the other hand, the emotional confusion, attachment and aversion, stupidity and jealousy, and pride and avarice which contribute to negative karmic tendencies and bring about lower states of rebirth are inherent in the minds of those kinds of beings.

A human rebirth is a very powerful state where we have the element of free will to choose between a negative action and a positive one. This lends a great deal of power to our activity. But unless we are enjoying that precious state of human existence where we have recognized the human potential and are seeking some means of developing it, we are not in a position to direct our karma.

The Buddha presented a number of different approaches by which beings can develop the means to enlighten themselves. One important element of spiritual practice that he presented was the concept of ordination. Taking precepts concerning our lifestyle can lend power to our practice. There are three levels of ordination, the individual level of the Hinayana, the bodhisattva vow of the Mahayana, and the samaya commitment of the Vaj-rayana. Among all these ordinations, the most basic is that of the lay person.

In the tradition of lay ordination* which has developed in the Buddhadharma, there are a number of ways in which we can take and keep the lay ordination. Generally it consists of five vows or precepts, of which we may take one, any two, any three, any four, or all five. In some cases, the vow of sexual fidelity can be extended to a vow of celibacy. If we take one precept, we are termed lay people keeping one precept. Taking all five precepts is termed complete ordination. If we extend the vow of sexuality fidelity to one of sexual abstinence, this is termed celibate lay ordination.

The first precept is a vow against the taking of life. When we take formal ordination, there is for each precept a single kind of action which violates the precept completely and terminates the ordination. In the case of taking the precept not to kill, if we consciously take the life of a human being, we have violated the precept completely. This is not to say that taking other forms of life is not harmful; it is in fact a very harmful thing to do, both to ourselves and the other creature. If we take a single act of killing and examine its result, without any mitigating factors, this act can produce rebirth for an infinitely long period of time in the hell realms, and five hundred lifetimes of the karmic retribution of being killed or experiencing short life. So in no case could we say that taking the life of any creature is acceptable, but in the formal context of having taken the ordination not to kill, the only act which specifically destroys the ordination (rather than being a serious infraction of that ordination) is to take the life of a human being consciously.

The second vow is not to steal. This is literally phrased, "Not to take that which is not given." This is quite a difficult vow to keep because it is broken by any action in which we take something which does not belong to us, with the intention of keeping it. This involves any act of theft or stealing, however small.

The third vow is one of sexual fidelity; it is a vow not to be sexually unfaithful to your partner. People who are married, or intentionally live together as a couple, would break the vow if they had sexual relations with anyone else. As was mentioned previously, this vow can be extended to one of sexual abstinence or celibacy, the same as a monk or nun would take.

The fourth vow is a vow not to lie. Any lie, particularly one which is harmful or disruptive to another being, is a negative act. But the specific kind of lie which violates this vow is to lie about our own spiritual attainment, to claim to have reached a certain level of realization when in fact we have not. This is a fairly easy one to keep, I think.

The fifth vow prohibits the use of intoxicants and is considered an auxiliary vow. It is possible for us to take any combination of five precepts; we should only take the vows we feel we can keep.

To take even one of these vows and to keep it well throughout our lifetime is an extremely beneficial and meritorious act. During the time of Lord Buddha, there was an Arhat whose name was Katayana, who was noted for his psychic powers and his ability to visit other realms of experience. At one point he visited the preta realm and came across a fabulous palace where a beautiful woman lived. She looked more like a goddess than a preta. He was invited into the mansion by this goddess-like woman, this preta, and he found the place to be splendidly appointed. He was served very graciously by the woman's many servants, and he spent the whole day discussing the dharma with this being.

Late in the evening, the woman said, "Night is coming soon. I'm afraid I'll have to ask Your Reverence to leave because something quite awful is about to happen and I wouldn't want you to be part of it." He was very puzzled, but he left the mansion and went some distance away. When he turned to look back, the entire mansion was transformed into an iron box filled with flames in which this woman was being roasted, while the beings who had been her servants during the day were transformed into demons of hell that inflicted agonizing injuries on her. She passed the whole night in this kind of torment. The next morning, the iron box reverted to the beautiful palace.

Katayana talked with the preta woman and also used his clairvoyant insight to find out what the cause of this particular existence was. He discovered that in a previous rebirth in the human realm, this woman had lived by butchering animals and selling their flesh. She had come into contact with a spiritual teacher who had discussed the concept of karma and pointed out the cause and effect relationship between positive and negative actions and the experience of happiness and suffering. She became very upset and decided that, although she could not afford to give up her livelihood as a butcher, she could take a vow not to take life during the night, when she would not be working. She felt that she could honestly commit herself to that. The kar-mic result of this was that she enjoyed the virtue of having taken and kept the precept for the time that she committed herself to it, and at the same time, she suffered the negative effects of the karma that she was accumulating by killing living beings. The conclusion we can draw is that even one vow, taken

and kept purely, is of much benefit. To take even one of the lay precepts for the rest of our life and keep it purely is a very positive thing.

Within the remaining two levels of ordination, the bodhi-sattva vow and the tantric samaya, it is understood that we are taking and keeping these until we attain enlightenment. In the case of the Hinayana vows of individual ordination, the context can be either one of taking them for our lifetime, which is termed permanent ordination, or for a limited period of time, which is termed temporary ordination. The choice of vows and of tune period is made by the person taking the precepts and is arranged with the person giving ordination. My personal feeling is that in the case of the lay person ordination, partial ordination of one, two, or three vows does not present a serious difficulty for anyone to keep for the rest of their life. I certainly would encourage anyone who has considered taking any combination of these vows to contemplate taking them for the rest of their life. There is also a special kind of ordination taken on a daily basis which is called the Eight Precepts of the Mahayana. This is a temporary ordination which is binding for twenty-four hours. It is possible to take and keep these vows for a lifetime, but it involves taking the ordination every morning and then renewing it the next morning. Because these are temporary vows, we can take them whenever we feel inclined. We need only to have received the transmission of the vows once and we can personally take the vows any morning we wish. In Tibet this was quite a widespread custom. Many people would take these Eight Precepts of the Mahayana on a monthly basis or on auspicious days of the lunar calendar such as the eighth, tenth, fifteenth, or thirtieth days of the month.

In the Eight Precepts ordination, the first vow that one takes says, "I will not take life." Because this is a temporary ordination, it should be understood that the stricture of the precept is more binding. In the lay vow ordination, only taking human life actually destroys the ordination and other acts of killing are simply negative infractions of the vow, whereas in the case of this twenty-four hour vow, taking any form of life consciously destroys the precept. The second precept, "I will not take the wealth of others," is the vow not to take anything that is not given to us. The third precept, "I will not engage in any sexual activity," means that any sexual activity with a member of either sex is completely forbidden.

The fourth precept, "I will not tell any untruth," concerns any lie and particularly those about our spiritual attainment. The fifth vow of these Eight Precepts is against the use of intoxicants. Alcohol is specifically mentioned by the texts, but the understanding is that anything which robs us of our reason or clarity of mind is something which is a breeding ground for all problems in regard to our spiritual practice. The sixth precept concerns the use of high seats or thrones which encourage personal pride. A specific exception to this precept is made for someone who has taken the vow but is teaching the Dharma. Out of respect for the teachings, the person who is teaching is elevated on a throne, but it should not be done with an attitude of pride; if there is any pride or arrogance in that person's mind, then this still constitutes a violation of the precept.

The seventh precept concerns fasting after noon. We take a vow to eat solid food up to the midday meal and not to take anything but liquids after that. This is considered particularly beneficial for our practice because fasting and taking only liquids after lunch means that our body is lighter and our mind is clearer. Our sleep that night will be much lighter; the next morning when we awake, our mind will be much clearer. This precept benefits our general health and also our meditation. Finally, there is the precept against personal adornment and activity such as song and dance. We avoid adorning the physical body for the purposes of stimulating sexual desires. The injunction against singing and dancing creates a calmness conducive to meditation by avoiding frivolity, levity, and distractions of the mind.

In order to take the Eight Precepts of the Mahayana, we request them in the presence of a teacher who has a living transmission of this ordination. Once we have received it in the presence of a teacher with that transmission, we are free to take it in the presence of a shrine on any day that we wish. We prostrate before a shrine with representative symbols of the body, speech, and mind of enlightenment, and in the presence of these symbols, take the ordination on ourselves, at which point it is binding for a twenty-four hour period.

The Nyung Nes (Smyung gNas), which is a two-day fasting ritual of the Thousand-Armed Chenrezig, uses a specific adaptation of the Eight Precepts. This adaptation is utilized because the Nyung Nes is an element in Kriya Tantra, the first of four levels of Vajrayana. Kriya means ritual activity and therefore, in Kriya Tantra, there is emphasis on ritual practices such as keeping silence and fasting. In the Nyung Nes, we keep the Eight Precepts as usual on the first day. On the second day we take the precepts with the additional vow to remain silent, except for the recitation of prayers and mantras, and to fast totally. We take not only no solid food, but not even a drop of water for that twenty-four hour period.

In Tibetan, the word for ordination is dompa (sdom.pa), which means to bind or bring together. Ordination is something quite powerful as a basis for our practice. There is the virtue of taking and keeping an ordination and also, if we have some kind of ordination and are observing it, then when we commit negative actions which go against the spirit of the ordination or are by nature negative actions, a confession and purification of those is far more effective than when we do not.

The Buddha said that someone who takes the lay vow or Eight Precept ordination is different from someone who has not taken these ordinations, even though they may seem to be doing the same kind of action. The Buddha said ordination lends one hundred times more power to our actions than if there is an absence of ordination. If someone who has not taken ordination offers a hundred candles or a hundred prostrations, the same merit is accumulated by someone with an ordination offering one candle or one prostration. This is how ordination lends power to every element of our spiritual practice.

The necessity of the benefit of ordination, of this binding or bringing together, as an element in our practice, can be illustrated by the example of a house

which has many doors and windows and a great deal of wealth inside. The doors and windows are all open, and there may be many thieves nearby to steal the jewels, money, and precious objects inside. There is a danger. If we could put a wall around that building and close up every door but the main door and keep that one guarded, there would be no danger. Without expending too much effort, we are guarded against losing that which is precious, or being invaded by something which is threatening or harmful. So the function of ordination, of this binding and coming together, is to guard the qualities and merits that we have developed so they will not be dissipated or lost, and to guard us against negative influences that may lead in unskillful directions.

It was earlier mentioned that the fifth vow against intoxicants is an auxiliary one; the four basic vows are the precepts not to take life, not to steal, not to commit adultery or to keep sexual abstinence depending on the choice of the person, and not to lie. The fifth vow not to use intoxicants specifically mentions alcohol, and the reason why intoxicating substances are discouraged is because they rob the mind of its clarity and give rise to emotional confusion in the mind. While in Tibet, we did not have substances such as marijuana and psychedelic drugs, but though the texts speak only of alcohol, it would seem that the effect of drugs is the same, that there is some robbing of the clarity and precision of mind and a lack of the ability of the mind to make judgments in situations. So it would seem that these substances, while they are not specifically mentioned, come under the same general category of intoxicants.

In the Vinaya texts concerned with monastic discipline, there is one known as the Text for Individual Liberation which contains stories explaining the foundations of the monastic discipline. In each instance, when the Buddha issued a certain precept, there was a story connected with why the situation had developed to the point where the Buddha felt it necessary to issue some kind of directive to his monks. In the beginning, the Buddha established the four monastic rules: not to take life, not to lie, not to have sexual activity, and not to steal. There was no talk of intoxication until a monk encountered a problem due to intoxication, which forced the Buddha to make a proclamation.

This particular monk was out begging on his rounds one day when he was invited into a woman's home to have the midday meal. After she had served him, she presented him with an interesting proposition. "Now that you are in here, I've got the door locked and I'm not going to let you out until you either have sex with me, or kill the goat that I have in my yard, or drink this bottle of alcohol. You've got to make a choice; it's one of the three. Otherwise, I am not going to let you go."

The monk thought to himself, "Well, I certainly couldn't kill another being willfully and it's specifically stated by the Buddha that a monk does not have sexual activities so to have sex with the woman would be to break my ordination as well. But there is no talk of alcohol, so it seems that that is the safe way out." So he said to her, "Well, out of the three choices, I won't have sex with you and I won't kill the goat but I'll drink the alcohol." So he drank

this alcohol, but unfortunately he became so drunk that he ended up having sex with the woman and killing the animal anyway. It was at that point that the Buddha instructed all of his monks to avoid the use of intoxicants, because there was the danger of it robbing the mind of clarity and giving rise to further problems.

Individuals who contemplate doing the Three-Year, Three-Month Retreat may choose to take the novice monk's or nun's ordination, or the full ordination of a bikshu or bikshuni (a fully ordained monk or nun), before going into this retreat. This is the idea from the Hinayana point of view. They would enter the retreat as novice monks or nuns, or as fully ordained monks or nuns, and would continue to be ordained afterward because that particular ordination is generally a lifetime or permanent ordination.

Someone who is a lay person going into the Three-Year, Three-Month Retreat will be required to take a celibate lay ordination on a temporary basis. The five lay vows, with the vow of sexual fidelity extended to one of celibacy, are taken and kept for the period of three years and three months. Following the retreat, the individual may choose to take a further level of ordination, novice ordination or the ordination of a fully ordained monk or nun, and that, of course, would be wonderful. They may choose to keep the celibate lay ordination for the rest of their life following the retreat, and that would be excellent, too. Or the individual may choose to give back the celibate lay ordination and take some alternative lay ordination of one, two, three, four, or five vows. It is entirely a matter of personal choice.

Of course it is worth mentioning that someone who is taking any of these precepts should be intent on keeping them. We should only take those that we feel in good conscience we can commit ourselves to keeping. Within that context, we make our own decision of which particular vows we want to take and can keep.

* Editor's note: The lay vows are Hinayana in origin. They become part of the Mahayana when they are taken and kept with the intent to benefit all beings.

Questions

If a person took one or two parts of the lay ordination at one time, could they take additional parts later?

Yes. You can keep enriching the ordination as you go on. You should take just the vows you want to keep and then add to them as you can.

There are many activities we do which we know will result in the death of beings. An example of this would be driving a car, which kills many insects. How is this related to the vow of not killing?

The specific lay vow not to kill, while it implies the conscious taking of any life, is only totally broken by the willful taking of human life. So from a very practical or legalistic point of view, someone who has taken the vow not to kill only breaks that vow completely if they willfully take the life of a human being.

Now that does not mean, as we have stated, that other acts of killing are karmically neutral. Much depends on the motivation, because there are different ways of killing. We can take life out of anger, out of desire, or out of stupidity. To take life out of anger is the worst way in which to take life; it is the most serious karmic act. The second most serious kind of killing is that done out of desire, where the motivating factor is not so much wanting to kill that being out of anger but wanting to gain something by that being's death. The least serious land of killing is the stupid act of killing, where we really do not understand that killing a being is a negative act which causes that being to suffer. If we kill a being out of insensitivity or total apathy to that being's situation, then that is far less serious karmically.

In the case of actions that cause death while they are being committed, where there is no intention on our own part and no awareness of the actual death taking place, it seems as though karmically speaking these are more or less neutral acts. We really cannot expect it to be a powerful negative karmic act, because for an act to be complete, the Buddha described different elements or different aspects of that action. The first element is the motivation to do a particular act, in this case to kill the being, and that is absent. The second element is the object, the being, and that is present. The third is the actual act of killing, motivated by the desire to kill, and that is absent. The completion of the act, which in this case does take place, is that the animal dies. However, all of the branches are not complete, so it is not a karmically complete act. Something that happens as a matter of course, for example killing insects when we drive a car, is by no means good, but it happens. It is not something for which we are personally karmically responsible, because there was no murderous intent and there is no knowledge of the actual death taking place. It is something we are reasonably sure is happening but we do not know for sure. What is most important in our having taken the vow is the conscious motivation: "I will not take life; I will do my very best not to take any kind of life." That is the single most important factor.

If a person has his house broken into and, in defending the family whose lives are threatened, kills the person who broke in, what happens to the vow?

While to kill another being even in self-defense is not a karmically neutral act, it is certainly far less serious than to go out looking to kill somebody. If we are not the aggressor, there is far less negative karma involved, but that does not mean that there is none. To consciously take the life of another being, for whatever reason, is a karmically negative act and there are consequences for it. But it is a very different thing to be the aggressor out of malevolence than to be put into a position where it is either kill or be killed.

How could one overcome the consequences of killing in self-defense?

Whether we are speaking of this kind of negative karma or any kind of negative karma due to any kind of negative action at all, it is said in the traditional texts that the one virtue of non-virtue is that you can purify it. If we are very honest about acknowledging and confessing what we have done,

repenting of it and committing ourselves not to do it in the future, then that will constitute a purification of what has gone before. This is the one virtue, if we can call it that, of having committed a negative act; that by confessing and repenting it, we purify ourselves of the consequences.

In the vow of sexual fidelity, do we promise not to have sex with anyone but our partner, or are there other proscriptions having to do with time or place, as described hi the Jewel Ornament of Liberation?

While the proscriptions against sexual activity found in the Jewel Ornament are intended as guidelines for correct karmic sexual behavior, this specific vow concerns only our fidelity to one partner.

Can we take a partial vow against intoxicants, with a view that we can drink in moderation under certain conditions, or, if that is our wish, is it best not to take the vow at all?

If you wish to make a stipulation which, for example, would allow moderate social drinking, that would be appropriate as long as you have discussed it with your teacher, the person from whom you will receive the vows.

If you do not wish to take a lifetime vow of celibacy, but, because of not having a sexual partner, wish to take the vow day by day, is there a way to do this?

A daily vow does seem to be appropriate in this instance, in which case, the third of the Eight Precepts of the Mahayana would be taken on a daily basis. Ideally this would be done as many days in a row as possible.

What is the difference between novice and full ordination?

The difference between novice and full ordination for either a monk or a nun is basically the number of precepts. In most cases, these are relatively minor or secondary precepts. The basic ordination of the four major vows remains the same for celibate lay person, for novice and for fully ordained monk or nun. In the case of a novice monk or nun, there are thirty, or in some traditions, thirty-three vows which are part of that ordination. These are relatively minor vows when we consider that the basic ordination of four vows, not to kill, not to steal, not to lie, and not to have sexual activity, remain the same. In the case of a fully ordained monk, or bikshu, there are some 253 vows, and hi the case of a fully ordained nun, there are some 480 precepts, but, again, these are all smaller or more secondary precepts when compared to the basic four.

Is it possible to receive full ordination as a nun in the United States?

I am not sure if there is anyone who actually passes on this transmission of bikshuni ordination in the United States. This particular transmission of the bikshuni ordination never became part of the Tibetan tradition, because it was never brought as a living tradition from India to Tibet. The novice nun ordination was brought to Tibet, as was the novice monk ordination, and the

full ordination of a monk, but the bikshuni ordination did not come to Tibet. You could not, therefore, receive it from a Tibetan teacher.

You could receive it from a Chinese teacher, because the Chinese tradition of Buddhism still has a living transmission of the bikshuni vows, and in fact there are a number of American women who have taken novice nun's ordination, and plan to go to Hong Kong to receive the Chinese transmission of the bikshuni vows, which is a valid transmission of these vows.

The important point is whether we can keep the precepts. If we want them, and know that we can keep them, then the means are available. It may not be readily available on the North American continent, though there may be some Chinese teacher living in North America who can transmit these, but nevertheless there does exist in the world a living transmission of the bikshuni vows.

If your heart is intending to share joy with another person and you are expressing your love for that person, how can anything you would do that would be mutually consenting be considered karmically negative?

This is a complex issue. The karmic recommendation concerning sexual activity attempts to provide some kind of stability, so that our sexual activity does not become the main driving force in our life and a source of emotional stimulation and agitation. Therefore, general codes of sexual behavior which are more or less in accord with the general norm in the human realm are recommended, to try to keep the sexual aspect in proportion with the rest of life. I suppose a certain confidence in the Bud-dhas and Bodhisattvas as intelligent and omniscient teachers is required to accept that there is some validity to what may seem to be a rather curious or unnecessary stricture. What you say is quite true. If there is basic love and sharing between two people, it would seem that very little that is harmful would ever come of that. It still seems reasonable, however, that we would do well not to be sexual near a stupa, or in a temple, or in the presence of our teachers. This seems to show a reasonable respect.

Many people feel that the prohibition against oral sex is an antiquated cultural attitude that was brought to Tibet and doesn't feel applicable to the American situation. Do we need to abide by this stricture?

There is some basis for this prohibition in the teachings of dharma. However, it seems to me that these are relatively minor points which we could let alone, and just let sentient beings in samsara be sentient beings in samsara. I am not going to be too particular about the whole thing.

I wish to take the vow not to kill, but I kill millions of cells in my work of making medicine. These cells come from pieces of skin and tissue. Are these cells part of a sentient being? I worry that I should not take the vow.

In speaking of microscopic life, the Buddha mentioned the bacteria and micro-organisms that are part of any healthy living organism. He described 84,000 creatures living in every human body, and that would seem to indicate that the state of a normal human body at rest is a state of health, without any

disease which might increase or decrease any organisms or introduce new organisms. The Buddha did not describe anything beyond these simbu or bugs, the microscopic life in the body. As far as the actual tissue of skin, what we seem to be talking about is something that is simply compounded of molecules and atoms and subatomic particles. It does not seem to be something to which we could ascribe sentience.

It seems appropriate for you to take the vow, particularly in view of the fact that the only act of killing which formally breaks the vow is taking human life. If, in doing your work you inadvertently take the life of something microscopic, there is a certain amount of negative karma involved in that activity, but it does not break the vow and your initial resolve not to take life would make it sufficient for you to take the vow.

8
The Bodhisattva Vow

The Indian Buddhist master Shantideva remarked in one of his works that this precious human existence, with the opportunity and freedom for spiritual development, is very difficult to come by, and if we have come by this opportunity and do not make use of it, how can we ever expect to come by such an opportunity in the future? The point of this is that the human rebirth that we now experience is not something random that comes about meaninglessly or effortlessly; it is something which arises with great difficulty, something which comes about very rarely. We have the opportunity and freedom to develop ourselves, ideally, to attain Buddhahood, or at the very least, the state of bodhisattva realization. Given that there is this rarity of the precious human state of existence, if we do not appreciate that rarity and that opportunity, and make use of it when it does exist, then when we pass from this life and the mind goes on to future states of existence, how can we expect that that kind of rare opportunity will come about again?

It is said in the teachings of both sutra and tantra that in order to attain to the level of complete enlightenment or to travel the path of the bodhisattvas, there must be an element termed bod-hicitta, the enlightening attitude.

In order for this quality of bodhicitta, this enlightening attitude, to develop within the practitioner, a certain understanding is necessary. For one thing, we should have some understanding and appreciation of our own mind in which this experience of bodhicitta takes place. As well, we should have an understanding of ourselves and all other sentient beings as unenlightened creatures in the cycle of conditioned rebirth. In short, we should have at least some understanding of the state of samsara, unenlightened existence, and of the potential for nirvana, the enlightened state of being. Then true bodhicitta can begin to develop in our mind. Otherwise, it is like shooting an arrow hi the dark in the middle of a thick forest. We really have no idea what direction in which to aim and we will have no idea if we have hit the target or not.

The experience of bodhicitta is an entirely personal one. It is our mind which is experiencing the quality of bodhicitta. At the present time we have a vague concept of our mind. We think of my mind, but what is actually thinking this? Is it mind itself or is it something different from the mind? We need to understand more about what we are actually experiencing when we think about our own mind.

Because it is the mind which is generating bodhicitta and experiencing it, it is also this mind which postulates its own existence. We need to be able to distinguish between what constitutes the nature of mind itself and the mental constructs that arise from that mind. The Buddha said that we can begin by examining our physical body. For the purpose of this analysis, he divided the physical body into an exterior system of skin, hair, flesh, bones and so forth, and an interior system of the internal organs. When we examine these different parts of the body, none of them individually or collectively is capable

of conceiving of an I, of a self, because mere physical substance does not have consciousness. No part of the body, no organ in the body, is capable of coming up with this impression of an I and believing in this impression of an I, because that organ or part of the body lacks consciousness.

The Buddha said that this was true but what is important is for us to validate it through our own experience. When we look throughout the body, do we find that which we can call the self or the I?

If we cannot find it in the physical body, then perhaps we should look at the mental side of our experience. Is this mind which we experience outside the body or inside the body? Is it located in any part of the body? If there is an I, we should surely be able to find it and describe it. If we do not find it, then we might come to the conclusion that mind is empty, that there is no such thing as mind itself.

Ideally, this search is something that would be validated over a long period of time from the personal experience of the meditator constantly checking back with the guru or meditation instructor to get some kind of direction. We would come to a personal understanding of either the existence or nonexistence of some thing that we could call the mind or the self.

The Buddha described the self as purely a mental construct. The mind is conceived of in a way which is experienced as a self or ego. But actually speaking, mind is no thing in and of itself. We cannot find anything ultimately real that we can describe as a self, something tangible, solid, real and internal, something that has shape or form or color or size or location.

The Buddha described the nature of mind itself as empty like space, devoid of any limiting characteristics. Just as space has no form or color, size or shape, neither does mind itself. The Buddha went on to say that the mind is not simply space, empty space, because it would not be effective; it could not think or experience the way it does if it were empty. Empty space, as we know, has no consciousness, no ability to be effective or to experience.

A second characteristic of the mind, according to the Buddha, is its luminous or clear nature. The luminosity of mind has nothing to do with a visual experience; it is the inherent ability of mind to know and experience.

The Buddha also spoke about the dynamic quality of mind, which causes it to be unimpeded or unobstructed in its manifestation. Were the mind impeded in any way, the potential to experience could not translate itself into experience, thought, memory, sensation, perception and so forth. However, there is an unimpeded, untrammeled quality to the way in which the potential of mind can actually express itself as consciousness. The mind can actually perceive form and sound, can make distinctions and precisely experience things for what they are. In describing the mind in this way, the Buddha was describing something which, in being essentially empty and intangible, has no limitations. Space is all-pervading; so is mind. If we are talking about a mind which is essentially empty, having no shape or form or color or size or location, we cannot then say, "Well, this essentially empty mind of mine ends here; beyond this, it does not exist." Space does not behave according to those properties; neither does mind. Wherever the mind pervades, the

luminosity of mind is present. Wherever luminosity is present, the unimpeded or dynamic nature can translate that luminosity into experience. Consciousness is not limited by time and space, ultimately speaking. This is why, even on our present somewhat limited level of experience, we can think of a place like China and an image of that place comes immediately to mind. The mind does not worry about the fact that there is a large distance between here and there.

The nature of mind itself is termed Tathagatagarbha in Buddhism. This is the Buddha nature, the potential for enlightenment, which is shared by each and every living thing. As long as an organism has sentience or consciousness, it partakes of this same mind nature. The fundamental nature of mind itself, ultimately speaking, is not something which we can describe in terms of size, or evolutionary level; we are speaking of something so basic that every living thing experiences it inherently.

We describe this pure nature of mind as pure mind, the Tathagatagarbha or Buddha nature. We might think of this for the purpose of a metaphor as clear water, which is inherently pure pristine awareness. What we now experience is an admixture of purity and impurity, of clarity and confusion, of enlightenment and unenlightenment, as though mud had been mixed into the water, temporarily obscuring its clarity.

The most fundamental level of this is simply an unknowing, an ignorance in the mind; the mind is not directly aware of its own true nature, Tathagatagarbha, but instead experiences a level of confusion which is so fundamental that we can only speak of it as co-emergent, simultaneous with mind itself. As long as there has been mind, there has been this ignorance; there always has been this lack of direct awareness of the nature of mind itself. That is the single most fundamental level of confusion in the mind that we might distinguish and it is technically termed co-emergent ignorance.

Due to this fundamental unknowing, this basic distortion in the mind, further distortions take place. The essential emptiness of mind is perverted into the solid experience of a self or ego, something central and solid, which takes the place of the direct experience of the essential emptiness of mind itself. Instead, the mind posits a solidified distortion of the self. What would be the direct experience of the illuminating potential of the mind is instead distorted into the experience of something other than the self, something other than the subject. At this point, we are working within a dualistic framework. There is a complete separation of self and other, subject and object. The experience of these two poles is that they are entirely separate and independent of one another. This level of dualistic fixation is the second level of confusion we might distinguish in examining our minds, and it is technically termed bak-chag (bag.chags) in Tibetan, which means a habit or habitual tendency. The mind is in the habit of experiencing in terms of self and other. Until we actually attain enlightenment, dualistic clinging remains an element in our experience.

Emotional conflict is the third level of confusion or obscuration that we can distinguish in the mind. There is the experience of emotional reaction based on the subject's attitudes toward the object. The most basic of these

emotional reactions are three in number. There is the attraction or attachment of the subject to an object that it finds pleasing. There is the aversion or aggression toward an object that it finds threatening. There is also apathy or stupidity in the mind because there is an ignorance of, or lack of attention to, what is really taking place. The ignorant mind is concerned with a superficial relationship between the subject and object, without understanding the essential nature of mind. From the fundamental emotions of attachment, aversion, and apathy comes a complexity of emotional experience. The texts speak traditionally of 84,000 emotional situations which can arise once these three are established as the primary emotions.

Finally, there is the level of conscious activity or karma. Actions which are motivated physically, verbally, or mentally by this emotional confusion can be positive or negative. It is through establishing and reinforcing these positive and negative karmic tendencies that we continue to contribute to the confusion and suffering which constitute the cycle of conditioned rebirth.

In describing this admixture that we experience, there is Buddha nature, the fundamental nature of mind itself which we have termed the Tathagatagarbha. There is also the impure aspect, the level of ignorance, dualistic clinging, emotional confusion, and karmic tendencies reinforced through the actions motivated by that confusion. That is the situation that we experience now, as sentient beings, as unenlightened beings in the cycle of rebirth. We might think of this as mud that has been mixed into the pure water to obscure its original transparency. We have terms for speaking about these various facets of our experience in the Buddhist teachings. We use the term alaya which means origin or fundamental level, and we distinguish between the alaya and the alaya vidyana. The alaya is the fundamental transcending awareness which is the nature of mind itself, the pure mind; the alaya vidyana is the fundamental level of discursive consciousness or confusion from which four levels of obscuration arise. Our experience now is a mixture of the pure and the impure alaya. The process of spiritual practice eliminates the impure alaya, to allow the pure alaya unhindered expression. The term Sang-gye (Sangs.rgyas) in Tibetan is the translation of the Sanskrit term Buddha. Sang means to eliminate, gye means to express. The spiritual process becomes one of removing the hindering factors, so that what is inherently there can express itself without any obstacle.

Of all the emotions which motivate our actions as unenlightened beings, anger and aggression are the most destructive. Not only does anger constitute a main cause for perpetuating the confusion of the cycle of rebirth, but it is also the strongest contributory cause to rebirth hi a hell realm. There, the suffering that is experienced is a direct result of the aggression in the mind and the karmic tendency established by aggression. In the Maha-yana, the emphasis is upon the development of love and compassion as not only the antidote to that anger but also the means by which the powerful energy that would normally express itself as anger can express itself as love and compassion. We are in a sense transmuting the anger, so instead of becoming the single most destructive force it becomes the single most constructive force in contributing to our attainment of enlightenment.

There are two aspects to what we term bodhicitta, or the enlightening attitude. First is the development of loving kindness and compassion. Second is the shunyata experience, the emptiness of mind and all phenomena. In our present situation, what perpetuates our confusion is our impression that everything we experience is very real. The mind is considered to be something ultimately real in and of itself. We experience the mind as a thing, something solid, and we experience everything that the mind comes into contact with as things in and of themselves. We take the conventional reality to be the ultimate and we remain caught in the cyclical process of samsara, conditioned rebirth. This is what keeps the mind passing from one state of confusion to another.

When we understand the nature of mind and experience the emptiness of mind, then there follows an understanding that the entire phenomenal world is an expression of the mind and nothing ultimately real in and of itself. It has only a conventional validity without any ultimate reality. At that point we cannot help but become enlightened, just as before we could not help but be unenlightened. The attainment of enlightenment is based upon the understanding and experience of the essential emptiness and intangibility of the mind and upon the understanding that any aspect of our experience in the phenomenal world has been a conventional reality without any ultimate reality. This experience of the ultimate nonreality of the mind and its experiences is the ultimate experience. That is what we term the ultimate or absolute aspect of bodhicitta.

In speaking, then, about bodhicitta, we can distinguish the ultimate or absolute aspect, which is the shunyata experience of the emptiness of mind and all phenomena; and the relative or conventional aspect of bodhicitta, which is the loving kindness and compassion that we develop in response to other beings. These go hand in hand and when we are taking the bodhisattva vow we are taking it with respect to both of these aspects. The way that we preserve our bodhisattva vow is through developing these two aspects in our own experience.*

Through understanding and experiencing the nature of mind itself as essentially empty, we come to a further understanding of all phenomenal experience of the mind as essentially empty as well; phenomenal experience arises from the mind and, partaking of its essential emptiness, it cannot be real. The way we come to experience this is to understand that, while the ultimate nature of mind is its essential intangibility, nevertheless there is a misconception that there is some thing called mind and, as a consequence, that sentient beings in the cycle of rebirth suffer confusion.

We begin to see that each being is experiencing what amounts to a dream. When we go to sleep and dream, there is an entire world that we inhabit; when we awaken, we understand that that was just a dream that had no validity on any ultimate level. Dreams are temporary conventional fabrications of the mind, which the mind projects and then experiences as though they were something other than itself. Ultimately, every state of existence that we or any other being in the universe experiences, arises from mind and is experienced by mind as its own projection.

The growth of our personal realization of the emptiness of mind leads us to the conclusion that it is due to a lack of direct experience that we continue to suffer and remain caught in confusion. We understand that, just like ourselves, each and every being is under this mistaken impression that something exists where there is no thing; that some self exists where there is no self; that some truth exists where there is no ultimate truth. Due to those misconceptions, every sentient being continues to operate within confusion. This is the fundamental cause of suffering and confusion that beings experience. As we begin to see things from that perspective, we find that love and compassion for other beings is steadily growing.

If we describe mind as something intangible, then it is not something which is born or ever dies. It always has been the case that there is space; it always has been the case that there is mind. It always will be the case that there is mind, just as it always will be the case that there is space. Space and mind are not things that behave according to the usual properties of things which are created at a certain point and exhaust themselves at some future point. There is an eternality to the nature of mind itself.

We might then ask, "Then what is the process of rebirth, which implies birth and death continuously, over and over again?" There is a conventional level of illusory appearance which presents itself to the mind, making it appear that birth and death are taking place. On an ultimate level, however, the nature of mind itself is not something which is subject to a process of birth and death. The physical body that we now experience and through which the mind experiences the world is a result of karmic tendencies in the mind coming to a complete ripening. This is termed the embodiment of complete maturation, but it remains something ultimately unreal in the sense that it is impermanent. The physical body dies, but the mind does not. There is a continuity of mind which carries on from one state of existence to another.

The physical body in the god's realm or human realm results from virtuous karmic tendencies which have been reinforced by positive actions in previous lifetimes. But we can see that things are not quite as simple as that; it is not an entirely one or the other situation, because there may be positive and negative intermingled. A being may take rebirth hi the human realm, in a relatively superior state of rebirth, but have a very short life, much physical and mental suffering, meet many obstacles and so forth. These are results of negative karmic tendencies mixed in with the positive. On the other hand, the negative may be predominant and the being may experience a lower state of rebirth in a hell realm or preta realm. Physical embodiment is the complete ripening of karma which brings about a solid physical organism for a set period of time.

Our mind which is now experiencing this particular state of physical rebirth has previously experienced countless other kinds of physical rebirth. We cannot speak even in terms of millions or hundreds of millions; this has been an infinite process of rebirth from one state to another up to the present time.

Because there is this infinite scale, we can understand that each and every being in the universe has at some point been in direct connection with us. The Buddha described this by saying that every being in the universe has

been our parent, not once but many times. Because there are infinite numbers of beings and because the minds of these beings have been undergoing an infinite cycle of rebirth, the karmic connections that have been established have brought every one of those beings into contact with every other one. The Buddha said that if we were to count the number of times that a single being has come to us as our mother or father, the grains of the earth could not produce a like quantity.

In every one of these states of existence where we have been in intimate contact with every other being, we have received the benefits and kindness that we have received from our own parents in this life. The current situation is that a vast majority of these beings who have been our parents are now experiencing lower states of rebirth in hell realms, preta realms and animal realms; they are experiencing the direct result of their negative karma and suffering greatly. The rest of these beings who have been our parents are in higher states of existence, but are directly contributing to their future suffering by continuing to reinforce negative karmic tendencies through their confused and negative actions. When we are presented with that kind of a picture, we naturally develop a loving and compassionate response to all of those beings.

To summarize, then, the bodhisattva vow is given in the context of these two aspects of bodhicirta, the absolute, the understanding of the emptiness of mind and all phenomena; and the conventional or relative, the love and compassion which is generated toward all other beings. We take the vow in the spirit of developing those two aspects of bodhicitta in our mind, and accomplish this by following the practice of the Six Paramitas or Six Perfections of the Mahayana: generosity, morality and ethics, patience, exertion, meditative stability, and wisdom. The last two, mental or meditative stability and wisdom, reflect the view of the Mahayana. The first two, generosity and morality and ethics, constitute the deportment of the Hinayana. The central two perfections of patience and exertion apply to both categories. The six perfections together will guide us to develop love and compassion and the shunyata experience, the two aspects of the bodhisattva vow.

*Editor's note: To take the Bodhisattva Vow, the reader should seek a qualified lama.

9
Vajrayana Commitment and the Fourteen Root Downfalls

We can examine the idea of commitment and involvement in practice on three levels. There is an outer Hinayana level of practice, concerned with our individual lifestyle as an expression of the search for enlightenment and liberation; there is an inner level of motivation pertaining to the bodhisattva vow and discipline of the Mahayana; and there is the secret or hidden aspect of tantric samaya. The basis for all of these levels of involvement and commitment is the vow of refuge which is the support upon which all these others can be built in the practice of Buddhadharma.

The vow of refuge implies a faith and confidence in Buddha, both as the enlightened state of being and as a person who has attained to that state of enlightenment. The more we understand about the concept of Buddhahood, the more equipped we are to develop faith and confidence through appreciating the incredible qualities which arise from this attainment of enlightenment.

The physical form of an enlightened Buddha is marked by thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of physical perfection and these set it apart from an ordinary human's form or even the form of a god in the cycle of rebirth. The speech of such a fully enlightened being is endowed with sixty qualities that make it a vehicle for perfect communication of the teachings. The consciousness that a fully enlightened Buddha experiences is marked by many qualities which set it off from an ordinary human state of awareness. The more we understand about these physical, verbal, and mental qualities of enlightenment, therefore, the more excellent is our position for developing faith and confidence in Buddhahood as a spiritual goal and developing confidence in the Buddha as a teacher speaking from that state of enlightenment.

Even if we do not have a detailed intellectual understanding of these qualities, it is possible to have the conviction that we are taking refuge in something which represents the ultimate in spiritual development. This is the basis for taking the vow of refuge, even if it is only in the context of this lifetime; we can take refuge from now until we die.

The positive aspect of taking refuge in Buddhahood and the Buddha is the development of our faith and confidence. Taking refuge also brings one prohibition. We are encouraged not to take refuge in worldly gods. No attempt is being made here to decry other religions. The word god in this context means a being still within the cycle of rebirth. By definition, worldly gods are samsaric gods. If we take refuge in beings who have not transcended the cycle of rebirth, we have not sought the ultimate.

The second source of refuge, the Dharma, falls into two categories. There is a scriptural or traditional aspect of the Dharma and an experiential aspect. The scriptural aspect refers to the authoritative teachings of the Buddha's tradition, specifically the teachings of the Lord Buddha which were presented from this enlightened perspective solely to benefit beings. The benefits are temporary, allowing beings to find greater peace of mind, or more ultimately, allowing beings the means to free themselves from suffering and confusion and attain enlightenment. All of the 84,000 collections of the Buddhadharma, this vast and profound system of teachings, comes under the classification of scriptural Dharma.

On the other hand, there is the personal, experiential aspect of the Dharma, in which we generate the same experiences within ourselves that are described in the teachings. For example, we can receive teachings for meditating upon compassion, and by using these teachings, can actually generate supreme compassion as part of our experience. We can receive teachings on how to develop our faith and our devotion and, through that, develop a sincere and uncontrived devotion for the Three Jewels and for our gurus. Or we can receive teaching on the shamatha practice and the development of tranquil mind, and experience that stability ourselves. In any of these cases, when we develop the experience to which the teachings refer, then we are taking refuge in this experiential aspect of the Dharma.

Taking refuge in the Dharma has a positive aspect and a proscription. The positive aspect is to recognize the Dharma as an extremely beneficial path and to follow that path as much as we are personally able, through our study and practice. The pro-scriptive side is that, having taken refuge in the Dharma, we should attempt to eliminate any action in our lives that causes harm or suffering to other beings; we should develop, as much as possible, a non-violent and gentle approach to other beings in everything that we do.

Finally, there is the jewel of the Sangha, the third spiritual principle in which we take refuge as a practitioner of Buddha-dharma. Again, there are two aspects to this concept of the Sangha. There is the noble or exalted Sangha, which is composed of those beings who have attained to the very high states of realization of first to tenth level Bodhisattvahood. These are very advanced if not complete states of enlightenment. There are also the ordinary human individuals who transmit the teachings. They are members of the monastic, ordained clergy whose function it is to realize and transmit these teachings and act»as spiritual guides from their own personal experience.

In taking refuge in the Sangha, there is an affirmative and a proscriptive side. We are encouraged to develop positive connections with the Sangha, and to listen to and follow the advice that we receive from our gurus and our spiritual friends. On the other hand, having taken refuge in the Sangha implies that we should not listen to or come under the influence of evil companions, those who would attempt to confuse us or lead us in a direction which was contrary to our spiritual development. This would include, for example, anyone who attempted to undermine our basic confidence in something like karma, saying we can behave any way we like. While it may not be feasible to reject or

abandon such a person, we certainly do not have to listen to that kind of advice.

On the level of the Pratimoksha vows, or the individual liberation ordinations, come the classifications of the celibate lay person, the novice monk or nun, and the fully-ordained monk or nun. The phrase Pratimoksha or individual liberation which is used to describe these vows also describes the approach. This is a personal lifestyle that we choose due to a recognition that therfe are certain tendencies in ourselves which are contrary to our own spiritual development and harmful to others. Ordination is an attempt to control the tendencies. There is a dual emphasis, but, because it is from a personal viewpoint, these are called the individual liberation vows. When we examine the levels of Pratimoksha ordination, we find that, in the case of a celibate lay person there are five major vows, four basic ones and the auxiliary vow concerning the use of intoxicants. In the case of a novice monk or nun, these vows are extended to ten basic vows which are expanded in some traditions to a total of thirty. In the case of a fully-ordained monk, there are 253 vows which are to be observed. In each case, the emphasis is on the attempt to eliminate from our lifestyle those actions which are counterproductive to our own liberation or result in harm to others.

For people such as ourselves who are just coming into contact with the teachings and beginning the practice, personal ordination may seem like a very difficult thing. But if we are intent on keeping commitments in the practice of Buddhadharma, we will find on examination that this is the easiest to keep, because all that these vows concern is our physical and verbal actions. There is less concern with motivation and more with how it expresses itself in physical and verbal action, so our attempt to control our actions is completely on the outer level of what we do physically and what we say verbally.

This brings us to the bodhisattva vow of the Mahayana, where the shift in emphasis is to our motivation. The essence of the bodhisattva vow is to attempt to be harmless in all we do and, furthermore, to be as helpful as possible. The heart of this vow is based on our faith and our respect for the Buddha and Bodhi-sattvas as spiritual examples considered superior to ourselves, and, on the other hand, our compassion and loving kindness toward all other beings. This vow reaches to the level of mind, not simply to physical and verbal actions.

In keeping the bodhisattva vow, there are two principal pitfalls to be avoided. To begin with, we must avoid developing a negative attitude toward any being, regardless of how insignificant that particular form of life may be. As soon as we have decided, "That being is my enemy and I am committed to harming that being, or not working for the benefit of that being, or not protecting that being from harm if it is within my power," we have committed a serious infraction of our bodhisattva vow. Second, to lose confidence in our ability to fulfill our bodhisattva vow also constitutes an infraction of it. To feel, "This seems to be too difficult. I simply can't work for the benefit of all beings. I better give up and try something easier," is to lose heart in a way that goes against the spirit of the vow. Because subtle motivations are what we are

concerned with, it is a much more difficult vow to keep. For that reason, to keep it is extremely beneficial. If we are able to take the bodhisattva vow and keep it in good faith, the benefits that accrue are quite incredible.

In the context of the bodhisattva vow, it is a very serious thing to cheat or deceive those we respect, for example, our spiritual teachers or the Three Jewels. To deceive or manipulate other beings in any way is also a very serious infraction. When we have taken the bodhisattva vow, there is a certain commitment to acknowledge and honor those connections which we have with people, both in a spiritual context such as our spiritual teachers, abbots, preceptors, and advisors; and with people who have an analogous function in a worldly situation, such as our parents and teachers in the world. To enter a situation where we have received kindness through instruction and guidance from these people and then deliberately let them down through refusing to listen to their advice, or by not being honest and receptive to the benefits that we are receiving from them, constitutes something quite serious from the point of view of the bodhisattva vow.

Also, someone who has taken this Mahayana vow upon themselves should attempt to avoid engendering regret in anyone for something which does not require it. Suppose we were to see someone sharing their wealth very selflessly and we were to say to them, "You'd better not do that. If you do you'll be poor in the future and then who's going to take care of you?" To cause that person to regret their generous impulse is something which constitutes a very serious infraction of the bodhisattva vow.

These four injunctions for someone who has taken the bodhisattva vow are known as the four negative dharmas, the four negative actions which go contrary to the spirit of our bodhisattva vow. In the tradition of the bodhisattva vow, we find that the commitments can be quite numerous. There are eighteen further root downfalls of the Mahayana and one tradition adds another forty-six precepts. However, the common point of these precepts is to eliminate from our physical and verbal actions all sources of harm to others and to uproot in our mental attitudes all malevolent or injurious or negative attitudes toward others. This brings us to the tantric level of commitment, the Vajra-yana samaya. We receive tantric samaya when we receive empowerment from our Vajra guru; the empowerment process introduces us formally to the Vajrayana path, so it is considered to be the moment from which our commitment on this level of samaya is effective. Tantric samaya can be a very complicated subject. In the traditional literature we find reference to the fourteen root downfalls of the Vajrayana, to the eight secondary downfalls, and, in some classifications, the twenty-one aspects of body, speech and mind commitment. Some texts speak of such a detailed classification that they enumerate 1,100,000 vows which are part of this tantric samaya.

Atisha, the very famous Indian teacher who came to Tibet to teach the Dharma, is famous for having remarked that when he took his individual liberation vows as a fully-ordained monk, he was able through very scrupulous behavior to keep all of these perfectly purely and did not incur a single infraction of these vows, which was quite a feat. However, when he

took the bodhisattva vow, he realized that there were faults cropping up here and there. Because the bodhisattva vow is something which can be repaired and restored if we are very honest with ourselves and acknowledge very quickly our negative attitudes and contrary actions when they arise, he was able, through this kind of scrupulous self-honesty, to recognize these faults when they occurred, acknowledge them, purify himself of them, and restore his bodhisattva vow. Then he said, "When I took tantric samaya, I realized that the number of times when I was actually in letter or in spirit committing an infraction of my tantric samaya was something that couldn't be counted. I was reminded of putting a polished plate out on the ground during a dust storm and watching the dust collect on the surface of that plate. The only thing that kept these infractions from becoming a serious impediment to me was that I was continually acknowledging and confessing my shortcomings and purifying myself of them." The people listening to Atisha protested, saying that tantric samaya sounded so hard to keep that no one would ever become enlightened. Atisha said, "No, that's not what I mean at all. It's simply that when we are practicing the Vajrayana, we have to be conscious of these infractions and make conscious attempts to purify ourselves." We have access in the Vajrayana to very skillful means such as the Vajrasattva meditation and recitation. A single recitation of that mantra can purify us of a mountain of broken samaya.

On a practical level, the most important considerations for someone who is undergoing Vajrayana practice are the fourteen root downfalls. They are enumerated in a specific order because the first is considered more serious than the second, and the second more serious than the third, and so forth. There is a declining order in the gravity of the infractions from the point of view of our tantric practice. Someone who is engaged in the practice of Vajrayana should be attempting to live up to these fourteen commitments as much as they can hi their situation.

The first root downfall is to contradict our guru. Until such time as we have received empowerment and teaching from someone as our vajra guru, it is perfectly appropriate to examine that person and indulge in critical analysis of that person to determine if that teacher is an authentic teacher and a proper one for us. However, once we have established that connection and accepted that person as our Vajrayana teacher, the only attitude that is appropriate is one of complete confidence in that teacher. Whether that teacher is enlightened or not, we should consider that teacher as an enlightened Buddha. If we develop negative views toward our teacher, or abuse our teacher, or commit some action which displeases our teacher, then we have committed the first root downfall of the Vajrayana.

The guru is the most excellent field for the development of one's merit or spiritual qualities, because through one's sup* plication of one's guru, through faith and devotion, one can accumulate an ocean of merit. The texts say quite specifically that it is far more beneficial to offer to a single hair or pore of the guru's body than to offer to the Buddhas of the three times and the ten directions. One's positive relationship with the guru can be incredibly powerful in terms of the merit and awareness it can generate in the practitioner. In Vajrayana practice, then, once one has established a

connection with an authentic guru, it does not matter so much whether that guru is in fact completely enlightened or not, so much as whether the student considers that guru to be completely enlightened. With this confidence, the student can receive the same benefits as though he or she were in the presence of a completely enlightened Buddha.

In Buddhist India, there was a teacher named Shantipa, who was very learned in all of the teachings, but apparently did not have much experience of the teachings. Nevertheless he was accredited as a very fine teacher. One student received teaching from him and went off to meditate on the teaching he had received from this scholar. After three years of meditating on the instructions and teachings he had received, he attained enlightenment. He attained to the level of Mahamudra experience, the complete mastery over his mind, and was able to fly in the air due to the miraculous powers he had developed as a result of his enlightenment. Out of very strong affection and gratitude toward his guru, he decided to return to him arid to where his teacher was lecturing a number of students.

By this time the teacher had gotten quite old because a number of years had passed, and the teacher looked up very amazed to see this man come flying and landing in front of him like a bird coming down from the sky. The former student began to prostrate to him many times over and then asked for the teacher's blessing. The old teacher looked at him and said, "Who are you?" and the former student said, "Well, I'm your student; don't you remember me?"

The teacher didn't, and asked to be reminded of their connection. The enlightened student recounted what he had learned from his teacher and said that these teachings had taken him to enlightenment. The teacher thought to himself, "I've spent my whole life in all this dharma and I have never once sat down to really practice these things and realize them." He turned to his former student and said, "Would you mind teaching me?" He received the same teaching back from his student that he had given in the past with the difference that this time, he actually practiced and attained enlightenment. He became one of the eighty-four Mahasiddhas or tantric saints of Buddhist India.

So, regardless of the particular state of development of the teacher, we should consider the teacher as a fully-enlightened Buddha, because it is only through that kind of positive relationship with the guru that we open ourselves to accumulating merit, deepening our wisdom, developing ourselves, and receiving the blessing that will result in our attainment of enlightenment. To reject our teacher and develop negative attitudes toward our teacher is a cause for rebirth in a state of vajra hell, which is worse than any of the hot hells that are described in the cycle of rebirth.

The seriousness of the infraction depends not only upon the extent to which the practitioner develops a negative attitude toward their vajra guru, but also the length of time that is allowed to pass before we sincerely regret this and try to make amends. If we allow a month to elapse after this falling out with our guru, then this is termed by the tantras to be a contradiction. If we allow a

year to pass, then this is an impairment of our samaya. Two years is a transgression and after three years, there has been a definite split.

Up to the point that three years has passed from the time we first developed these attitudes, it is quite possible for us to repair the damage. We can confess and acknowledge this fault that has occurred and we can purify ourselves and attempt to re-establish a positive bond with our teacher. However, if we have allowed more than three years to elapse, from the point of view of the tantra, the situation is probably hopeless. We have allowed far too long a time to elapse and the bond is irreparable. The texts speak of no direction for such a consciousness but vajra hell.

The texts also speak of specific means that we should adopt to repair this bond, depending on the severity and the length of time. If we have committed a contradiction through allowing a month to pass, then we should offer to our teacher a ganachakra, a vajra feast to purify ourselves of this transgression of our samaya. If we have allowed an impairment to remain for one year, then we should offer all of our possessions to our guru. If we have allowed two years to expire, so that a transgression has occurred, then we should offer our family, our children, our spouse and whatever we have, to the guru to purify ourselves and to restore this positive connection. If we have allowed three years to expire following this first root downfall of the Vaj-rayana, we should be prepared to offer our life to restore the bond with the guru.

The second root downfall of the Vajrayana is to contradict or refute the teachings of Buddha or the personal teachings that we receive from our guru. What this implies is that we should do what our guru tells us to do, or at least the best we can. For this reason, when I am teaching as a guru, I am careful to present things in such a way that I encourage people to practice as much virtue as they are able, and to avoid as much negative and harmful activity as they are able to, and I tend to avoid laying down strict injunctions that we must do this or we must not do that, because I do not want to put people in the position where they may be incurring this kind of fault through me having put them in an impossible situation. I encourage people to do the best they can. For example, I encourage all of you who are my students to use the Chenrezig meditation and to recite the mantra Om Mani Padme Hung as much as possible, because I feel that this is perhaps the single most beneficial technique and instruction that I can give to you. I am not trying to start a fan club, so that the more people who practice Chenrezig, the more famous I become or the more people hold me up as some kind of shining example. It is simply because I feel this is the most beneficial.

The third root downfall of the Vajrayana concerns our relationship with our vajra brothers and sisters, all those men and women with whom we are connected through having received empowerments from the same teachers or in the same mandala. The only relationship that is appropriate within the context of samaya is a harmonious and mutually helpful relationship between ourselves and our vajra brothers and sisters. Quarreling, spite, competitiveness, malevolent attitudes toward each other, bickering, and discord between ourselves and these people are completely out of the question from the point of view of samaya. We must respect the very

important bond that we have with these people through our commitment to Vajrayana. The bond exists and we must attempt to promote harmony and mutual accord, mutual help and benefit, as much as possible among the vajra sangha.

In general, of course, all sentient beings are our brothers and sisters; we are connected to each and every living thing. However, on a more formal level, all those who are involved in the practice of Buddhadharma are more intimately connected with ourselves, and particularly those who are involved in Vajrayana practice. Those people who share the same guru share the same spiritual father. Those who have received empowerment in the same mandala, though perhaps with different teachers, share the same spiritual mother, from the point of view of tantra. Those who have received the same empowerment from the same teacher have the single most intimate bond possible. They are Vajrayana brothers and sisters with the same spiritual father and mother.

The fourth root downfall is the breaking of our bodhisattva vow. To develop an injurious or negative attitude toward any being, no matter how insignificant; to harm, to avoid protecting, or to avoid benefitting any being if we can, not only violates our bodhisattva vow on a very fundamental level, but from the point of view of tantric practice violates the fourth root downfall.

In the practice of Vajrayana, these first four precepts are the most crucial from the point of view of the importance of keeping them and the seriousness of contradicting them. Whether we contradict our guru, which is the most serious downfall from the point of view of tantric practices; whether we are contradicting the teachings that we have received; or contradicting our vajra brothers and sisters or other beings, or breaking the bodhisattva vow, we are seriously violating our tantric samaya.

The fifth root downfall in the Vajrayana concerns the impairment of two forces in our bodies which are termed the white and red bindu; these are ultimately connected with the sexual processes of our bodies. In Mahamudra meditation, particularly when we are using the tsa-lung (rtsa.rlung) techniques which deal with chakras and the prajna which moves in various channels, these white and red bindu are the basis of the development for bliss and emptiness in meditation. Because there is an emphasis on the preservation of these bindu for proper practice, there is a recommendation that the tantric practitioner avoid damaging or impairing these forces through sexual activity.

The sixth root downfall concerns our own and others' spiritual systems. From the point of view of Vajrayana, it is a root downfall to denigrate or abuse any spiritual system, regardless of whether it is Buddhist or non-Buddhist. Of course, in the context of the Tibetan tradition, we may find criticism between the various schools, Sakyapa, Gelugpa, Kagyupa, and Nyingmapa, and that is foolish and harmful from the point of view of our spiritual practice. But in the case of Vajrayana practice, this prohibition extends to other religions as well, so that a tantric practitioner is not only to avoid disparaging any tradition of Bud-dhadharma but also Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other spiritual systems.

The seventh vow concerns the revealing of secret teachings to those who are not fit to receive them, which means discussing very profound and secret concepts of Vajrayana practice with those who are not prepared to accept them, who openly reject them, or who are not prepared to involve themselves with the tantric process in any way.

The eighth root downfall is to regard our physical bodies, or the skandhas or aggregates of our psycho-physical makeup, as impure and base. The reason why this is a root downfall is because Vajrayana sees everything as sacred. All appearance is a form of divinity, all sound is the sound of mantra, and all thought and awareness is the divine play of transcending awareness, the Mahamudra experience. The potential for that sacred-ness exists within our present framework, so to speak, of the five skandhas. Acknowledging psycho-physical aggregates of an individual as the potential of the Buddhas of the five families, or the five elements, or the five feminine aspects, and so forth, is to recognize that, in tantra, the potential for that transformation exists within our present situation. To disparage that potential as something useless or impure or unwholesome is a root downfall, a basic contradiction, from the point of view of tantric practice.

The ninth root downfall from the point of view of Vajrayana is to entertain doubts or hesitations about our own involvement in tantric practice. We should have complete confidence, ideally, in what we are doing in tantra and not think, "Well, perhaps this is beneficial, but then again, I'm not sure. Maybe to meditate upon this divinity is going to be helpful but maybe it's a waste of time." This ambivalent attitude toward our practice is a basic contradiction to the path.

The tenth root downfall is something which would not seem to apply very much in our case, but it is worth mentioning. The texts say that in certain situations, if there are beings who are behaving in extremely evil ways and committing extremely negative karma, which inevitably will send them to a lower state of rebirth and cause infinite harm to other beings, it is possible for an advanced tantric practitioner, in a state of supreme compassion, to terminate that being's existence and liberate them from their state of very negative existence. It must be done totally selflessly, from absolute compassion, understanding, and control of the situation; hence, it would not seem to apply in our case. However, from the point of view of tantric practice, if one has the ability to take this action and refuses to bring a halt to terrible harm when one could alter it in a very beneficial way, then one is committing the tenth root downfall.

The eleventh root downfall of the Vajrayana concerns extremes in our outlook or view. There are two extremes to avoid. We can either be a naive realist and assume that everything that we experience is absolutely real with no possibility of any other ultimate reality; or we can take the description of shunyata to be a negation of everything, and believe that nothing exists, nothing is true and karma is completely false. To fall into either of these extremes, naive realism or naive nihilism, is not following the correct view for tantric practice, and therefore constitutes the eleventh root downfall.

The twelfth root downfall is to refuse to teach a sincere and interested individual who comes to us in the context of receiving teaching with faith. If we are able to teach that person and if we renege and do not teach, we are committing this twelfth root downfall.

The thirteenth root downfall concerns our attitude and approach to tantric practice and tantric ritual. If we are participating in a ganachakra or vajra feast, where the ritual use of meat and alcohol is made, and we abstain from one or the other of these on the grounds that it is impure or that it is contrary to our convictions and principles, then we have failed to appreciate the view of tantra which attempts to transcend purity and impurity, attempts to transcend dualistic thinking, and we have failed to appreciate and take part in the spirit of that tantric transformation process. To indulge in this kind of superficial, dualistic clinging to appearances during the course of a tantric ritual, is to commit this thirteenth root downfall and to go against the spirit of our tantric practice.

The fourteenth root downfall is to disparage women, either by a mental attitude of considering women to be lower than men or by verbalizing these opinions.

These are the fourteen root downfalls of Vajrayana practice; there are many auxiliary or secondary aspects to these which will not be described here. From the positive view, in tantric practice the attempt is to absorb ourselves physically, verbally and mentally in an ongoing way, so that our perception of form is never separate from the awareness of the form of the divinity; our perception of sound and speech is not separate from our perception of the mantra; and our mental experience of thoughts, memories, concepts, and emotions is not separate from the state of samadhi. If we are able to absorb ourselves in an ongoing way on these levels of form, speech and mind, then all of these 1,100,000 vows of samaya are kept perfectly.

There is a famous story in Tibet of a teacher who is talking about negative and positive action, virtuous and nonvirtuous karma. An old woman who was in the audience got up and said, "You know, Rinpoche, when you speak about the benefits of practicing virtue, I feel that not only are you enlightened, but I am, too. Me, this old woman. But then you talk about all the negative aspects of harmful and nonvirtuous action, and I feel that not only am I doomed, but you are really in trouble, too." This is a brief discussion of the Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana levels of commitment, that is, the individual liberation vows, the bodhisattva vow, and tantric samaya. As I mentioned earlier, if we are sincerely trying physically, verbally and mentally to develop as much virtue in ourselves, and to eliminate as much negativity, then, from the point of view of the practice of Buddhadharma, we are doing our best and that is sufficient.

10
Shamatha Practice: Object Meditation

There are many techniques that we can use to develop tran-quility and stability of mind. For example, we can meditate on the form of a divinity, or we can focus the mind on the form of a seed syllable or a physical object such as a piece of wood or a stone. Theoretically speaking, there is no reason why any physical object could not be used as a basis or support for meditation. We could rest the mind upon the experience of seeing a particular form and any of these objects could be effective for developing shamatha, the tranquility and stability of mind. A very effective technique which we will explore in this chapter is to meditate upon bindu, which means to meditate upon a small sphere of light.

Meditation is a mental practice, whether we use the basic shamatha approach to instill tranquility and stability to the mind; or a vipasyana approach to develop insight into the nature of the mind; or a Mahayana technique to develop compassion and shunyata; or tantric phases of creation and fulfillment. It is with the mind that we meditate so we must begin with the nature of the mind itself. The more we understand, the more beneficial a particular technique will be.

When we speak of mind, we are not speaking about an object. Ultimately speaking, we cannot describe the mind, or consciousness, in terms of being some thing. The nature of mind itself is nothingness, emptiness; and the mind exhibits no fixed or limiting characteristics such as form, color, shape, size or location. Mind exhibits an intangibility which we compare to space as having no parameters or boundaries.

In allowing oneself to experience the spacious and intangible quality of the nature of mind, physical posture is an important factor. The body should be held erect, without being rigid or tense. The mind should rest in its natural state. There is no need to consider the mind as being outside or inside the body. There is no need to focus the attention toward one direction or another. All that is necessary is to let the mind rest in the spacious experience of mind itself, without any distraction, contrivance or artifice.

Since the mind cannot be experienced as tangible or limited, we should not say, "My mind extends only so far and beyond that, it is no longer present or valid." There is no arbitrary boundary beyond which the mind is absent and within which the mind is present. It does not behave according to those parameters. However, because we lack direct experience of the fundamental intangibility of mind, we tend to perceive the mind as though it were limited and fixed. We have a naive conception of I, my mind, my body, and think that the mind is located in the body somewhere. We behave according to the

misconception that the mind is something that we can fix or limit or phi down. The mind is also luminous, not in the visual sense but in that it can perceive anything. This luminosity is simultaneously present with intangible emptiness; they are not two separate things but two aspects of the same experience.

This experience of simultaneous emptiness and luminosity has the ability to manifest dynamically and unimpededly, as intelligent awareness. This cognitive aspect of mind not only can, but does, perceive and experience. In our particular case, the cognitive aspect of mind takes the form of five physical senses and the inner consciousness which produces thoughts and ideas as a kind of sixth sense. If we take the physical sense of hearing, for example, we have the empty and luminous nature of mind expressing itself through the avenue we term auditory consciousness. The ear is merely the particular physical organ which acts as a vehicle by which consciousness can express itself. There are different elements present when we perceive sound. Consciousness expresses itself as auditory awareness and the physical organ acts as the link between the subjective consciousness and what is perceived as the objective element, the sound in the physical environment. What is actually taking place is a manifestation of the empty, luminous and unimpeded nature of mind itself.

If we practice shamatha meditation by using some reference point in the phenomenal environment, then we incorporate the object, the organ or avenue of consciousness, and consciousness itself. These three factors come together as the perceptual situation. Using this perceptual situation of sensory object, sensory organ or avenue, and consciousness or cognition, this particular situation can give rise to a number of different levels of realization and experience. It may instill a calm stability to mind. In this case it is shamatha meditation. It may instill a certain insight and partial realization, though not what we would call complete enlightenment. This is vipasyana meditation. When one has attained complete enlightenment, and a perceptual situation is simply an expression of that enlightened being, then we are speaking of Mahamudra. So a perceptual situation can be, from the point of view of the practitioner, a shamatha or tranquility experience; an experience of insight or vipasyana; or the Mahamudra experience, the direct and ultimate experience of the nature of mind and all phenomena.

When we use the technique of shamatha with an object, a focal point, then we are using a kind of perceptual situation. If we meditate on a statue of the Buddha, for example, then there is an object hi the environment, there is the vehicle or avenue for the consciousness (in this case the eyes or organs of sight], and there is the consciousness itself, the cognitive factor of mind's awareness presenting itself through the organ of sight as the visual experience of that particular object.

If we use a purely mental approach, in which there is no physical object hi the environment, but create a mental object such as a ball of light or the form of a divinity, the situation is the same. There is the object, in this case not perceived as physically present in the external environment but nevertheless something upon which the mind focuses as an object. There is the sixth sense of inner consciousness, not a physical sense of sight or sound but the

mind functioning as a sensory organ to produce objects. Finally, there is consciousness itself, the empty, luminous and unimpeded state of awareness expressing itself through inner consciousness to perceive the mental object. Meditation on the form of the divinity or a small ball of light utilizes the same approach.

In the literature of the Prajnaparamita, the Perfection of Wisdom, there is a passage which states, "First there is I and everything else develops from the sense of I." From this basic assumption of/or self, develops my body, my mind, my this, my that; and the whole world develops from that belief.

Because there is this habitual tendency of the mind to experience in terms of I and mine, fixating on the mind as being located in the body, we can use this as a vehicle for meditation. We can conceive of an object for meditation in the form of a globe or sphere of light which is visualized as being present within the body, perhaps in the heart region. We focus the mind, which is always concentrating on the self and the body anyway, and bring it to bear on this sphere of light which we place in the heart region of the body. Both the sphere of light and that which is aware of the sphere are the expression of the empty, clear and unimpeded nature of mind. This is something which is quite important to understand. The subject of consciousness is a manifestation of mind and the object or objectified experience of the ball of light is an expression of mind as well.

We can meditate that inside the body at the heart level there is a ball of light the size of an egg. It is completely spherical, brilliant white in color, transparent, three-dimensional in form, made of light, and lacking solidity. We conceive of this sphere of light being present hi the heart region and let the mind rest on this radiant ball.

Inevitably, other thoughts and distractions will arise in the mind. However, from the point of view of the meditation, these are distractions and we simply chop them off and return to the experience of the glowing white ball of light in the heart.

These distracting thoughts in the mind indicate that meditation is actually taking place. The first signpost in the development of shamatha is traditionally recognized to be this experience of thoughts cascading like a rushing mountain stream. We are becoming aware of all of the activity of the mind. Gradually, as we develop the shamatha approach and instill stability and tranquility of mind, these thoughts, emotions and distractions begin to diminish.

The experience of the second stage of shamatha will be that of a slowly flowing stream. There will still be a sense of activity of the mind but it will be much more controlled and cohesive. Unfortunately, many people have difficulty through the first stage. When they become aware of all of the activity in the mind, they take it as a sign that the practice is somehow wrong, that either there is no blessing in the practice of dharma or that they themselves are incompetent as meditators. The problem is not that the practice is without benefit or blessing, or that we are hopeless meditators. It is that there are very solid levels of confusion and obscuration in the mind. Fundamental ignorance, dualistic clinging, emotional confusion and karma have been

reinforced in an infinite process. In particular, dualistic clinging and emotional confusion play great parts in the mental agitation that we experience while we meditate.

This is an indication that we are going to need to exert ourselves. It will take effort, diligence and commitment to the practice. It will also take a sincere effort to purify ourselves of these obscurations and negativity and to develop our positive qualities of merit and deepening awareness, for the practice to be successful. Traditionally, the teachings assert that it is not so much meditation as acclimatization. By familiarizing ourselves with the experience of meditation, our experience is actually transformed. It becomes a spacious realm of awareness. Meditation is something that we learn. We become accustomed to experiencing in a new way through meditation. This culminates in the spontaneous experience of spacious awareness.

Therefore, meditation is very much based on habitual practice, acclimatizing ourselves to a particular way of experiencing which is compared to the experience of a vast body of water without a ripple on the surface. There comes a feeling of bliss, not ultimate bliss, which cannot be limited or exhausted, but certainly a kind of physical and mental well-being beyond anything we have experienced before. It is beyond what we can express in our mundane frame of reference. This practice is also the basis for various psychic powers, such as clairvoyance, which may arise as the practice becomes more well-established.

If we do not receive any guidance from qualified teachers at this point, either because we lack contact with teachers or because we lack the ability to implement the teachings, we may find ourselves in a cul-de-sac. We may wish to spend our life in the cultivation of this blissful, stable, peaceful state of mind. However, that is an error from the point of view of spiritual practice, because while it leads to superior states of rebirth within the cycle of samsara, it does not represent a supreme path to enlightenment. It cannot liberate the mind and allow the mind to transcend limitations which bring about rebirth in this cycle of conditioned existence. No doubt it was this situation that Milarepa described when he said, "Without clinging to the deep pool of shamatha, allow the flower of vipasyana to bloom." The poetic example that he was presenting was that of a deep, still pool of water in which we can get so lost that any future growth is impossible. We would be like a water lily remaining dormant at the bottom of the pool without actually extending its stem to the surface to bloom. It is not enough to have developed tran-quility of mind; we have to allow true insight to blossom.

The practice of meditation hi spiritual development is one of gaining greater freedom of mind and control over our own experience. This begins with shamatha, the ability of mind to rest without distraction. Once that has been established as a basis, any approach that we use, such as developing further insight, instilling a particular aspect of our experience such as compassion or emptiness, or using the tantric techniques of creation and fulfillment, is going to be more fruitful. What is needed, then, is something which will produce not only the freedom of mind to stabilize itself, but also to extend that freedom of mind throughout every aspect of our experience. We will need a technique

that will accomplish this rapidly and effectively, because, while we may be motivated to practice meditation, we have very little tune to do so.

One effective technique extends the earlier example of the sphere of light meditation. We mentally orient ourselves so that the direction we face is east, regardless of what our actual physical orientation is. From the point of view of the practice, the direction in front of us is east. We meditate that there is a sphere, similar to the one we have visualized in our hearts, a very long distance in front of us. It is hundreds, thousands, millions of miles to the east of us. We rest the mind on the experience of that sphere of light far to the east. If the mind were something fixed and limited, then to force the mind to go all that distance to the east would be very problematic, but we are not limited by any such consideration. Our mind has perfect freedom to extend itself that far or further, to extend itself anywhere.

At this point, we shift our attention to the west, that is to say, behind us, and visualize that there is a sphere of light thousands and tens of thousands of miles away. We let the mind rest on the experience of that sphere far to the west.

Then we shift the focus of our awareness to the southern direction, which is to our right, and meditate that a sphere of white light is thousands and tens of thousands of miles away, and we let the mind rest on the experience. Finally, we shift the focus of our awareness to the north, which is to our left, conceiving of this white globe of light at the same vast distance, and we let the mind rest undistracted on that experience.

The next step is to conceive of all four spheres in all four directions simultaneously, along with the original sphere in the center of our heart, and let the mind rest on this simultaneous experience. The initial benefit of the mind resting upon a particular chosen experience undercuts our naive assumption that the mind is contained within the physical body, fixed and immovable.

What we find, in fact, is that the nature of mind has nothing to do with the body at all. This empty, luminous and unimpeded state of awareness, this nature of mind itself, is free to express itself in any way. This is not only true for four directions and a central point simultaneously, but we could also meditate in a hundred or million directions at once. Our fixation on self or ego severely limits the ability of the mind to express itself. It is like a very tight bond around the mind. This kind of approach, without posing any threat or harm to the mind, gradually loosens the bond and the mind becomes free to express itself.

The second benefit is very practical. It is very difficult to choose a single thing and meditate on it uniquely. Meditating on the globe in the heart without distraction is very often more than the beginner is able to do. By moving the focus of awareness around, we give a certain sense of openness to the meditation. When we become a little bit strained in one approach, we simply shift our attention to another direction. This gives the mind more play and some relief from holding the mind in a single place. At the same time, we do not lose the benefits of shamatha which this approach instills. Because this practice of meditation brings greater freedom and control of mind, inevitably

we come to a significant stage of advanced realization, perhaps to first level Bodhisattvahood.

At that point, the mind is perfectly capable of maintaining one hundred states of meditative absorption in a single instant without there being any contradiction or conflict in the mind at all. It is also capable of manifesting as one hundred emanations in a single instant, of obtaining enlightenment or liberation through one hundred different pure realms of experience, of working directly for the benefit of one hundred beings in a single instant and so forth. All of these qualities and that power of mind come about through this technique of meditation.

Questions

You recommend that we use the organ of hearing to realize that mundane sounds are the union of sound and emptiness. Is there any connection between this experience and that of mantra as the union of sound and emptiness?

There is a connection in the sense that all sound is empty, regardless of whether it is the sound of mantra being recited or the sound of one of the elements in the environment. Regardless of the source of the sound, it is empty. However, we don't normally experience things in that way. We are very convinced that sound is in fact sound, very real, and when we hear a particular sound we think of it as a thing in and of itself. We ascribe agreeable qualities to some sounds, disagreeable ones to others. It has the power to play a great role in our lives to either benefit us or harm us because we pay so much attention to it and endow it with solidity.

The specific approach of shamatha meditation is to pay attention to sound as sound, beyond ascribing any characteristic to it at all, including emptiness. The point is to bring the mind to rest. This is as convenient as any other approach. We take a sensory experience like sound and use it as a quality in our experience which can be the basis for developing shamatha.

The deity meditation may also be utilized to instill this shamatha tranquility and stability of mind. We visualize the form of the divinity and rest the mind on that experience. If we find that the mind wanders from the divinity or we are not able to clearly visualize, it can be an equally effective method to recite the sound of the mantra and to rest in the sound of the mantra as sound. The sound of our own recitation of the mantra provides the basis or support for developing shamatha experience. Whether we are using the sound of the elements, an external sound, or whether we are using our own generation of the sound of the mantra as sound for the basis of shamatha, it is equally effective.

The point is, of course, that as sentient beings, as unenlightened beings in the cycle of rebirth, our biggest flaw is that the way we go about experiencing things is with this absolute conviction that what we experience is ultimately real. We are convinced that this body is absolutely real, so suffering, illness and pain arise from this conviction. The same thing can be said for speech,

which is one aspect of sound; we are convinced that speech is something absolutely real. When we say words, we take the experience of hearing those words, that sound, as something real in and of itself. Benefit and harm arise from this conviction. We can be injured by words, damaged, hurt and upset, because we treat them as something absolutely real. The same thing can be said on the level of mind. All of the thoughts and emotions that come up in the mind are regarded as something real in and of themselves.

This naive assumption is relevant not only during our waking state of existence, but also takes place during the dream state when the mind projects all kinds of things which are experienced as though they were ultimately real, and during the Bardo or after-death experience, when there is a mere mental embodiment without there being any physical basis for the consciousness.

In the practice of Vajrayana, if we are to effect the transformation from unenlightened to enlightened being as rapidly as possible, ideally in a single lifetime, we will work on all these levels. We will transform this ordinary, naive experience of form as something solid and ultimately real in and of itself, into the experience of the emptiness of form. We will transform the ordinary naive experience of sound as sound into the experience of sound as sound and emptiness simultaneously. We will transform the experience of thoughts and emotions and mental activity into the experience of the union of emptiness and intelligent awareness. If we can effect transformation on those levels, we are powerless to prevent the attaining of enlightenment.

The purpose of Vajrayana deity meditation is to change or shift the focus of our attachment. We are presently convinced of the reality of our physical body and we are very attached to that concept. In deity meditation, we trade our own identity for an identification with the form of the divinity. We experience, for example, the thought, "I am no longer this physical body; I am Chenrezig." We become one with the divinity and identify with this form of the divinity which is approached as the union of form and emptiness. We trade our fixation on ordinary sound and speech for that of appreciating all sound as intrinsically the sound of the mantra, for example, Om Mani Padme Hung, which is the experience of sound and emptiness simultaneously. We exchange our approach to mental activity by appreciating the thoughts, emotions and concepts which arise in the mind as the union of intelligent awareness and emptiness, the Mahamudra state of experience.

The Vajrayana practice tries to effect transformation on all these levels, physical, verbal and mental. Even if we are not able to effect this transformation hi a single lifetime, the tendencies that we establish in this lifetime do not die with this physical body. Through an ongoing practice of meditation and the attempt to approach the experience of form as the experience of form and emptiness, the experience of sound as the experience of sound and emptiness, and the experience of mental activity as awareness and emptiness, we establish habitual tendencies that may manifest in the after-death state, when the physical body is no longer a limiting factor. It is possible for these tendencies to arise at any point during the after-death state and express themselves as transformation. The

immediacy of the Bardo experience means that if those tendencies do arise and become part of our conscious experience, then this transformation can be effected instantaneously, because the physical body, which was a delaying factor, is no longer present. Then the experience of form as empty form, sound as empty sound, and thought and mental activity as empty awareness can take place instantaneously. This is another reason why the Vajrayana is a very rapid path. It provides an opportunity in the Bardo state if it is impossible for the practitioner to attain to the ideal of enlightenment in a single lifetime. The importance of the deity meditation such as the Chenrezig practice can hardly be overstated.

In addition to our own efforts, there is, in tantric practice, the blessing of the divinity and the blessing of the rnantra; our own efforts are met with blessing, which creates a very powerful situation. We should not underestimate the powerful blessing of something like a mantra nor the power of our tendencies that develop through practice.

One of the principal students of the Buddha was an Arhat named Shariputra. This individual's mother was not interested in dharma practice at all, and lived a very worldly, very mundane life. Shariputra wished to help his mother, so what he thought up was the idea of hanging a doorbell above her door. It would ring every time someone opened or closed her door. He said to his mother, "From now on, we've got a new rule in the house. Every time you hear the bell ring, you have to say Om Mani Padme Hung." This went on for the rest of her life.

When she died her consciousness took rebirth in a hell realm due to some very negative karma that was part of her make-up, and while she was in this hell realm, there was a large cauldron in which the denizens of this particular realm were boiling the forms of many hell beings. As one of them was stirring the pot with a large iron spoon, it hit the spoon against the cauldron. She heard this sound and this hell being that had been Shariputra's mother immediately said "Om Mani Padme Hung." She was immediately liberated from her hellish rebirth.

This story is something which bears investigation, because when we have accepted someone as our guru, the keynote of that relationship is our faith and devotion to the guru and our conviction that the guru is, for us, Buddha. Now, Buddha is everywhere. The enlightened state of mind is not something which is localized. Enlightenment is the experience of the fundamental nature of mind itself, which is omnipresent, all-pervading, and not limited or hindered or localized in any way. Whether we receive blessing or not depends upon whether we have faith and devotion. That is the single quality which opens us to receiving blessing.

We can compare the source of blessing, which is our guru, the Buddha for us, to the moon rising in the sky at night. Wherever there is water on the earth, there will be a reflection of that moon regardless of how many surfaces of water there are; wherever there is someone with faith, that person will receive blessing. It does not matter at all whether our guru is alive or physically present. This is something that the sage Milarepa addressed when he said, "I will not take rebirth here; my consciousness will go to the realm of

manifest joy in the eastern direction. In the future, whenever anyone prays to me with faith and devotion, I will be there and I will give them blessing."

Each teacher, in accordance with their qualities and abilities, does their very best to fulfill the role of spiritual advisor. In placing lamas in the centers that I have established in the West, I have hoped very much that through providing someone with experience, I can provide a source of advice, guidance and information that will help each student in their practice. These lamas can provide the teachings to people who are sincerely seeking this path to liberation, as can every qualified lama throughout the world.

If we approach any lama as our root guru and we have the faith and devotion appropriate in that context, we will receive blessing. The lama can also be regarded as an emanation of His Holiness the Karmapa or myself or any other teacher. Our own attitude will determine the particular blessing or the degree to which we will receive blessing from that relationship. The texts are quite specific. If the student considers the teacher to be the embodiment of all the Buddhas of the three times, the blessings of the Buddhas of the three times can be transmitted to that student through the agency of that teacher. It is dependent upon the student's own attitude the degree to which that student will receive blessing and benefit from the relationship with any teacher. Perhaps we could find many flaws in the guru's understanding or realization if we were an objective observer being critical in the situation, but if the student has faith, then that opening of the student's mind permits the student to receive blessing from the relationship.

To illustrate this there is a story about the Buddhist Nalanda University in India. During the course of this university's existence it was noted for the excellence of its standards and the diligence with which the scholars and pandits within that university studied and understood the Buddhist teachings. At a certain point there was an old monk in the monastery who was quite lazy and didn't wish to study at all.

The king of that area was a sponsor of the university and every month on the full moon day, he would request teaching from one of the members of the university. A throne would be erected and the person who had been selected by the group would mount the throne and the king and his people would take teaching. At one time, the members of the university decided to play a little trick on the lazy monk, so they appointed him to be the lecturer for the king's visit the next month. When the time came, the old monk was informed that it was his turn to mount the throne and despite his protests, he was put up there on the throne, in front of the king who was very respectfully waiting for the teaching that would be given.

Of course, this poor old fellow did not know a thing and he sat there and tried to think of something to say. The only thing he could think to say was, "You know, it really hurts me so much, it is so much suffering to be so dumb at this tune, to not know a thing." Then he got down off the throne and that seemed to be the teaching. The king was sitting there very respectfully and all that he had heard was this one sentence. But because he had come into the situation with faith and confidence that he would receive something, he

thought about it and said, "Well, there must have been some deep import to what this old teacher was saying."

The king took it home and reflected on it. He came to the understanding that not knowing anything was fundamental ignorance and that it was the cause of all suffering. The more he thought about it, the more he understood that the root of all suffering in human existence was fundamental ignorance of the nature of mind and the more he meditated upon that, the more the fundamental ignorance in his mind began to transform itself into direct experience and awareness. The king actually attained liberation from the teaching that he received from this old monk. If there is no faith and devotion in the student's mind, then it does not matter whether there is a guru present or not; we are not open to the blessing and we would get as much benefit from being in a guru's presence as by calling a wild animal our guru.

Which aspect of our being is utilized in the process of identifying with divinites? If we find the formless meditation of emptiness quite satisfying in and of itself, how do we relate to the form of the divinity?

To begin with, if we are actually meditating upon emptiness, that alone is fine. We need not feel that somehow it is not a worthy practice. It is in fact the essence of all meditation because shunyata, emptiness, is the heart of all experience. If we are able to understand shunyata and meditate authentically in that state of emptiness, then no more would be required.

However, we may not be able to generate a true experience of emptiness. We may feel, "This is emptiness," but we are really experiencing a kind of dullness or stupidity in the mind. The mind is blank and it seems as if there is nothing happening in the mind. In fact, there is nothing happening in the mind. We take that to be emptiness when, in fact, it is a subtle form of stupidity which we are reinforcing through meditation. We have to guard against this.

As to the practical question of visualizing the form of the divinity, I do not see that this need pose much of a problem. If there is someone that we hate, it is very easy to have a perfectly clear impression of that person in our mind. If there is someone toward whom we are intensely attracted sexually, it is easy tohave a clear impression of that person in our mind. Therefore, I do not see any problem in clearly visualizing the form of a divinity. It certainly is well within the power of mind to create a clear image of the divinity. We have no trouble thinking, "I am," so it should not be any problem thinking, "I am Chenrezig." It is simply a shift of focus in terms of what we are thinking that we are.

We are using the deeply rooted clinging that we have to / am to properly approach yidam meditation, during which we transplant the fixation from our usual conception of self to the form of the divinity. This is a shift in focus or shift in emphasis, like the old saying that to get water out of your ear, you pour more water into it and let it all flow out. In order to overcome ego clinging, we use ego clinging.

Would you please explain the ten levels of Bodhisattva-hood, the ten bhumis?

The first level or bhumi of bodhisatrva realization is the stage in which the individual has the direct experience, on an ongoing basis, of the nature of mind as empty, clear, and unimpeded. After this recognition ceases to be a temporary experience and becomes a stable element, be it ever so slight, that is the first bhumi. It is the first significant attainment of real freedom of mind and control over our experience. As such, it entails certain qualities which are indicative of the fact that some freedom of the mind has been achieved. Whereas now we are able to experience states of mental experience one at a tune, the mind of the first level bodhisatrva is able to experience one hundred simultaneous states of meditative absorption in a single instant, and experience no contradiction. The texts speak of twelve such qualities, which are termed the twelve hundreds. Some examples of these hundreds are the ability of the mind to manifest one hundred emanations in different realms of experience in a single instant to benefit other beings; the ability of the mind to meet with one hundred buddhas in a single instant; the ability to experience one hundred pure realms in a single instant; the ability to recall one hundred previous existences and the ability to foresee the circumstances surrounding the next one hundred births. There are twelve such qualities which are traditionally noted as characteristic of this first level of freedom of mind and control over experience.

Developing from the first through the tenth bhumi and beyond this to complete enlightenment, our efforts in purification and development, which are technically termed the accumulation of merit, and our efforts in meditation, which are technically termed the accumulation of wisdom, become more mature. The stability developed in the first bhumi becomes more a part of our experience and the negative aspects of our being become more subtle and diminish. This is coupled with the elimination of the limiting and hindering factors that had previously prevented that experience from unfolding.

A comparison might be made to the waxing moon. The third day of the lunar month, there is a tiny crescent moon which can be compared to the first bhumi. The progression toward enlightenment is like the waxing of the moon until it is full. As a sign of this process, qualities that were experienced as elements of the first bhumi are augmented. The scope of the freedom of mind expands. The texts say that the twelve hundreds increase tenfold from the first to the second bhumi, tenfold again from second to third, and so forth, so that by the time we have experienced the tenth level of bodhisattva realization, we speak not of one hundred states of simultaneous samadhi in a single instant, but of ten million states in a single instant. We speak not of one hundred emanations but of ten million emanations, not of one hundred previous or future existences, but of ten million previous or future existences. The scope is expanded because the freedom of mind to express itself has increased with the elimination of the negative and hindering factors which had previously prevented that expression.

All the levels of confusion and obscuration that we now experience, fundamental ignorance, dualistic clinging, emotional confusion, and karmic tendencies, have both gross and subtle aspects. The first bhumi entails the complete elimination of the grosser aspects of the karmic veils of the mind, which is the most gross of the four levels of confusion. The seventh level bodhisattva realization entails the elimination of the grosser aspects of emotional confusion. With the attainment of eighth level, the grosser aspects of dualistic clinging are eliminated; and with the ninth and tenth levels, the subtler aspects are eliminated.

By the time we have attained to the tenth level of bodhisattva realization, the only factor still hindering or limiting the mind is an extremely subtle aspect of fundamental ignorance. This must be eliminated to attain complete enlightenment. The Tibetan term Sangye defines Buddhahood, complete enlightenment, as the absolute elimination of every level of obscuration and hindering factors, and, therefore, the total manifestation of the inherent potential of mind.

What is the connection between shamatha and yidam meditation? The shamatha approach seems simple compared to yidam meditation. Should we extensively practice shamatha before embarking on yidam meditation?

Shamatha means simply the instilling of an experience of tranquility and stability in the mind. Shamatha techniques can take many different forms. We can develop shamatha through meditating on a statue of the Buddha. We can also develop shamatha by meditating upon the form of the divinity, the yidam, and in fact, this meditation is recommended as perhaps the most effective approach for developing shamatha. This is because it takes into account not only the personal efforts of the meditator but the blessing inherent in the form of the divinity and in the mantra that we are reciting. Our own efforts are augmented by the blessing inherent in the practice and this produces effects more profoundly and rapidly.

It is true that on a practical level people find it more approachable to use a less complicated technique such as meditating on a ball of light rather than on the more complex form of a divinity. From the point of view of practical convenience, then, a simplified approach is preferable; from the point of effectiveness, yidam meditation is preferable for developing shamatha.

Normally, we think of the sense organs as passive receptors of sensory stimuli rather than being active agents through which the mind is expressed. Could Rinpoche comment on the distinction?

In a sense we are looking at the same situation from two different angles. Either stimuli are being brought in or the mind is expressing itself outwardly. However, from an experiential point of view, it is more accurate to say that the mind is leaking out rather than something is seeping in. When we refer to our present state of existence, tradition speaks of the skandha of leakage. The skandha is a heap or pile of our experience which is literally termed leakage because the mind is leaking out of the sense organs. Rather than being a passive receptor for stimuli making their presence felt, the mind goes

out to meet the object and in doing so, it leaks out of the sense organ to appreciate the object. The object is only one of the elements necessary for a perceptual situation to occur. Along with the object or stimulus, there must be the organ of sensing and the mind itself.

11

Shamatha Practice: Objectless Meditation

We have been discussing the luminosity and dynamic unimpeded quality of mind. Its nature is the luminous potential to know and its manifestation is unimpeded or unobstructed awareness. These are fundamental qualities of the nature of mind, but they are not something in themselves. They remain essentially empty and so the essential emptiness of mind is reflected in the fact that its luminosity and its dynamism are not solid, limited, fixed things. This is something which is crucial to understand and something that a spiritual teacher of meditation must convey to the student although only a small number of people are sensitive enough to immediately perceive what is being said and have some experience of it.

It is necessary for the student to reflect upon and understand these ideas, whether they use an analytical approach of dissecting their experience, or a more intuitive uncontrived approach. In meditation, we are letting the mind rest in its own nature without any artifice, allowing that experience to grow, and then at other times we are pursuing a train of thought, analyzing and dissecting our experience to come to some understanding of the nature of mind. This is how the student perceives that what the teacher has been saying is true. It is necessary for us to work through our own experience. Once we have had the experience of the empty, clear and unimpeded nature of mind itself, then there follows the experience that all the contents of mind are merely expressions of mind-nature rather than something in and of themselves.

If all thought and emotion and mental activity are merely expressions of mind and partake of mind-nature without being anything independent of mind, then when an emotion such as attraction arises in the mind, it is perceived for what it is, merely a manifestation of that empty, clear, and unimpeded mind-nature. There is no need to ascribe to that emotion of desire any reality in and of itself. There is no need to posit this emotion as something other than an empty manifestation of an empty mind. We are free from the necessity of being dominated by our emotions, whereas currently, we experience these emotions that arise in the mind as something very solid and real. Because we ascribe this solidity and reality to the emotion, we have no choice but to follow the dictates of that emotion; we have placed ourselves in a position where our feelings rule our activities. Once we have appreciated that the mind is empty, and that therefore all thought and emotion arising in the mind are empty, then we appreciate that any thought or passion is equally empty. It partakes of the essential emptiness of the mind from which it arises and is not any thing in and of itself, and certainly nothing solid or inflexible.

When, for example, a thought of passion or desire arises in the mind, if we have understood the emptiness of that emotion, then, as the emotion arises, we experience its intangibility, its empty essence, and spontaneously there arises the experience of bliss and emptiness. There is no need for us to abandon that particular emotion; there is no need for us to repress or suppress that emotion; there is no need for us to indulge in that emotion. We simply experience directly the essence of that thought or emotion, allowing it to liberate itself and express itself as an experience rather than as a conflicting emotion. This is a simultaneous experience of bliss and emptiness. With this very efficacious approach, the thought is liberated as it arises in the mind.

When a person experiences very strong anger or aggression, an intense hatred for someone to the point where he or she may actually want to hurt or to kill someone, if that person can use this approach, being aware of the emptiness of mind and experiencing thought and emotion that arise from the mind as mere manifestations of that mind-nature; then, what will take place, rather than the ordinary experience of anger or hatred, is an experience of clarity and emptiness. We are not forced to deal with the emotion by suppressing it or manipulating it or indulging in it, but we can allow the clarity and sharpness which is inherent in that anger to express itself. This approach is very straightforward, very simple. We allow what was normally experienced as a conflicting emotion to arise as an experience.

Let us take the example of stupidity, the dullness or lethargy of mind which we all experience frequently throughout the day and also at night when there is no conscious activity in the mind at all. To experience that emotion of stupidity or mental apathy or dullness for what it is, to appreciate its emptiness, is to discover a fundamental transformation of unknowing to awareness. This intelligent or dynamic awareness, termed rigpa (rig.pa) in Tibetan, is experienced as essentially empty. Where once there was dullness, torpor and stupidity of mind, there is now a simultaneous experience of intelligent awareness and emptiness. We do not need to suppress this dullness of mind, nor do we have to indulge in it. We can use this approach to discover a very beneficial experience within what was normally experienced as a conflicting emotion.

Suffering and pain are unavoidable. They are part of being alive. Part of the human condition is that each and every human being must experience the pains of birth, aging, illness and disease, and death. This is something we cannot avoid. Our particular state of illusion as human beings follows that pattern of suffering and there is nothing we can do about it. In a country like America, however, we find such a high standard of living that most of the material needs of a human being have been answered. Excepting the limitations of the four great sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death, nearly everything else has been provided on a material level. However, there is still much mental suffering. In fact, the principal source of suffering in the West is mental in nature. Westerners suffer particularly from the emotional imbalance, unhappiness and confusion that all beings experience, because there is no consideration given to dealing skillfully with emotions. In not

understanding the essential emptiness of mind and the essential emptiness of the emotions, we find ourselves very much subject to emotional conflict.

The three patterns of attachment, aversion, and stupidity are primary emotions which give rise to many other complicated emotional situations as they interact with one another. Due to a lack of awareness of what is actually taking place when the mind experiences an emotion, people suffer from their emotions. This approach of understanding the nature of mind to see into the nature of emotionality is the single most effective method for dealing with emotional pain and suffering; it frees us from the laborious process of having to manipulate or transform or play with the emotions in any way. We experience the energy for what it is rather than what we had assumed it to be. There is no more simple, straightforward, or effective approach for dealing with emotional pain and suffering.

These days, one common approach to dealing with the emotions both on an ordinary level and on a therapeutic level seems to be the idea that the more we express one emotion, the less there will be of it. If we are angry people, the more we express our anger, the more skillfully we are dealing with it. Eventually the reservoir is going to run dry. If people have problems of sexual desire or attachment, then to act out those desires seems a skillful way of dealing with them. Perhaps for someone who has no inkling of the teachings of dharma, that is the only means they have; but from the point of view of the teachings of dharma, this is really an idiot's way of going about things, because the rnqre we express emotions, the more emotions there are to be expressed. The more we express an emotion, the more we reinforce the tendency for that emotion to arise. By surrendering to an emotion when it arises, we are augmenting and embellishing and increasing it rather than exhausting it. The very fact that the emotions are empty means that they are inexhaustible. If the mind were something solid and real and tangible that gave rise to emotions which were solid and real and tangible, we could chip away at them until they were finished; but the mind is essentially empty and the emotions which arise from the mind are essentially empty and, therefore, they have no limit. They could be extended and developed as much as we chose to expand and develop them, because there is no way to exhaust that emotionality. The importance of seeing into the nature of mind is to see into the nature of the emotion rather than looking at its superficial content.

The Buddha once said that dealing with the emotions that we experience in this life is rather like dealing with thorns. If the whole earth were covered with thorns and we wanted to walk somewhere, we would have two choices. We could pick all the thorns out of our way, which is a very laborious process, or we could put on a pair of thick shoes. Likewise, in dealing with the emotions, we can employ a kind of hit and miss approach, dealing with each situation on a superficial level, or we can attempt to instill in ourselves some understanding of the nature of mind itself and the nature of emotionality. That would provide a kind of protection, allowing us to move through situations without any harm.

Perhaps you have had the experience of sitting at home where everything is comfortable and you are quite happy. Then, all of a sudden, you find yourself

hi a state of emotional imbalance, with some strong emotion arising in the mind and completely transforming your experience. You can no longer stand to be where you are. You are completely agitated and all you can think about is playing out that emotion.

If we are looking for a medicine to cure the disease of emotional imbalance, we are not going to find a .better remedy than emptiness. Experiencing the emptiness of emotion is what liberates us from that need to recapture the balance of our lives, because we have not been knocked off balance by emotional upheavals in the first place. Contentment and well-being arise first and foremost from understanding the nature of mind and the nature of emotionality.

During the infinite process of rebirths that the mind has been experiencing to no ultimate purpose, there has been continual activity hi the mind. Thoughts, emotions and experiences have arisen continuously, but none of these have any substance. If those thoughts and emotions had been solid, we would have to look somewhere to find where they had been stored. But it is all intangible and it has passed away. The emotions that we have experienced are not stored within the body, nor are they stored anywhere outside the body. They are not, ultimately speaking, anything real to which we need ascribe tangibility or solidity. They are essentially empty and intangible, expressions of the intangible and empty nature of mind. We can derive much benefit from understanding that and more from experiencing it.

Once we have experienced and appreciated the nature of mind, then the battle is half won, the task is half over, and the intention of the Buddha in presenting the dharma is half realized. We are significantly closer to enlightenment through that single experience, that single act of appreciating the nature of our mind. To approach this understanding, we need instruction.

In looking for the nature of mind, we have to be aware of our methods. No doubt there are many very brilliant scientists in the world nowadays who are looking for the mind, but, from the point of view of spiritual realization, what is looking for the mind is mind itself, and so it is a vicious circle. The subject is looking for the object which is the subject which is the object, and as long as mind keeps looking for itself in that intellectual or conceptual framework, it is not going to find itself. It is an endless search. This does not mean that we cannot use the intellect to approach the experience of the nature of mind itself. It is just that, in and of itself, it will not be ultimately effective.

There are two quite valid approaches in meditation, both of which are necessary, both of which are quite important. The first is an intellectual or analytical approach and the other is an intuitive, spontaneous approach. In the first case, we periodically receive teachings from a guru and then take them home and work with them. We contemplate what we have been given; we compare it to our own experience to validate it or invalidate it; we dissect or analyze our experience to attempt to discover the truth of what we have been taught on a conceptual level. This is going to be very beneficial, but it is not going to be ultimately fruitful in giving us the authentic experience of the nature of mind itself. That requires the second, more intuitive approach, which is seeing the nature of mind without looking for it. In contrast to an

objectifying process of mind looking for itself, there is a simple state of dwelling in bare awareness, where the natural essence of mind is allowed to express itself.

Therefore, rather than looking for the mind, we experience the nature of mind in a direct way. There is no one looking and nothing is looked at; there is no subject or object, but simply the state of spontaneous awareness in which the nature of mind itself manifests. At this point, we are not looking at the mind as we were during the analytical meditation but rather we see without looking and experience without analyzing. Once there has been the fundamental experience of the nature of mind, then the other aspects of enlightened being to which we have made reference, the experience of speech and sound as the union of sound and emptiness, and the physical body as the union of form and emptiness and so forth, are not problematic at all. This is quite straightforward once we have grasped the significance of the fundamental experience of the nature of mind itself.

To begin a session of shamatha meditation, we take refuge and arouse bodhicitta, the ultimate and compassionate motivation. Next we align the physical posture of the body. One of the reasons why an erect, dignified posture for meditation is considered quite important is because this lends to the body a sense of balance. When the body is held straight, the subtle channels of energy in the body are not blocked or contorted in any way; everything can run smoothly. When energy flows freely in our body, there is a sense of stability and calm in the body and thus in the mind. At this point, at least, there is an intimate interconnection between mind and body, so to instill calm and tranquili-ty of mind, physical posture is quite important.

If we are pursuing a formless or objectless approach in shamatha, then the experience of formless awareness, of emptiness, becomes the approach for developing tranquility and stability of mind. Ideally, of course, from the point of view of Mahamudra realization, our experience of emptiness is completely nonconceptual. It is beyond any kind of mental construct as to what emptiness is, but is merely the direct experience of the intangibility of mind. This is not something we are likely to be capable of experiencing at the beginning, and so our approach will of necessity be involved with these kinds of mental constructs. This is unavoidable and, in fact, is quite appropriate from the point of view of meditation. Even though the nature of mind itself is inherently intangible and empty at this stage, we focus the mind on the experience of emptiness. There is a sense of objectifying or directing the mind toward that experience of emptiness to the exclusion of other thoughts or concepts which would be distractions at this point.

In this approach, then, the focus of the mind is the experience of the essential nature of mind as intangible, as spacious, as free from any limitation; it has no circumference, no parameters, no color or form, no shape or size or location at all. The point is to remain in that state without distraction. When thoughts and distractions arise hi the mind, we should remain true to the experience of the essential emptiness of mind without following after or indulging hi the thoughts or concepts that present themselves.

We should begin this kind of approach by employing it only for very short periods of time, that is, no more than five or ten minutes, according to the traditional texts. Unless we are acclimatized to this alert and clear state of formless awareness, pursuing it for very long will lead to the clarity and alertness of the mind becoming dimmed and a certain dullness or torpor of mind setting in. This may go unnoticed by the meditator and then our efforts at developing shamatha become polluted.

Whether we use a shamatha approach to develop tranquility and stability of mind, or a vipasyana approach to develop insight into the nature of mind, our wisdom is utilized on three levels. The first kind of wisdom is an intellectual one which is developed through hearing teachings, studying them, and understanding them on a conceptual level. The second kind of wisdom is developed through contemplation, by taking the teachings that we have been given, and reflecting on them again and again, validating them against our own experience so that we come to a deeper understanding. Finally, there is meditative wisdom, in which intellectual or conceptual wisdom becomes experiential and completely intuitive by allowing the mind to rest in an uncontrived state in which wisdom arises as direct experience. In order to successfully follow any chosen path in meditation, it is necessary for us to develop our wisdom on these three levels.

Questions

What is the relationship between the physical body and the mind?

Our being is both mental and physical in nature. If there were merely a physical body without a mind, then all we would have would be a corpse. We could not speak of emptiness, clarity, and unimpededness, because we would be speaking about a corpse. A corpse cannot think; a corpse cannot see things; it cannot feel or taste or touch or smell things. A corpse is inanimate matter, because it is not imbued with the consciousness which experiences everything. Only when the physical body is animated by a consciousness can the physical body be the vehicle by which the mind's empty, clear, and unimpeded nature express itself. It experiences form by seeing sights, hearing sounds, smelling smells, tasting tastes, touching textures, thinking thoughts. It is only when there is the animate quality of the empty, clear, and unimpeded state of awareness that is mind, that the body comes into the picture at all.

The idea that we are doing something, are meditating, is not such a bad thing. Actually, it is quite important. We have no choice but to go about our spiritual practice in the way that we are accustomed to going about things, which is saying to ourselves, "I am going to do this." It might as well be, "I am going to do spiritual practice." Eventually, if we do exert ourselves and stay with the practice sincerely, the function of the practice will allow dualistic clinging to exhaust itself, but it is rather like the growth of a flower. We cannot expect to plant the seed and immediately have a blooming flower. First a sprout arises, then it sends out leaves and shoots and eventually we have a

flower. To expect it all to happen instantaneously is unrealistic. It will take time; it will take some effort; but we should not doubt that it will take place. The important thing is not to doubt. We keep to the practice with the understanding that it will be effective and that the flower will blossom; gradually, dualistic clinging will exhaust itself. We will come to a more spontaneous place where the meditation occurs.

Generally, attachment to clinging and egocentricity are considered to be a real fetter, chaining us to the cycle of rebirth; if they were not there in the first place, we would begin liberating ourselves from that cycle of rebirth. First and foremost, we are practicing in order to liberate ourselves. We are thinking, "I want to liberate myself from the cycle of rebirth. I want to practice dharma. I want to get enlightened." It is a selfish point of view. We are concerned with doing something ourselves, which is not bad, because it means that we do actually start. As we begin to approach enlightenment, this fettering effect of ego clinging and preoccupation with the self becomes less and less of a problem. It dissipates itself as a natural result of the experience and realization which is unfolding.

Suppose you want to go to India. You would not think, "I want to go to India/' with the thought that you will never get there. You think, "I want to go to India," because you assume or you hope that at some time in the future, you will actually arrive. You get your tickets, collect your baggage, get visas and passports, and then you board the airplane. The only reason you get on that plane is because you once said to yourself, "I want to go to India." As the plane is flying to India, you are not so concerned with getting to India, because you are almost there. By the time you land at the airport in India, you are not concerned at all with getting to India, because you have arrived. Likewise by the time we have attained enlightenment, there is no longer any need to think, "I want to become enlightened," because we are almost there. We are going to get there. At a certain point, we know we are going to get there and the question of whether or not I am involved becomes less and less of a factor.

During the Chenrezig meditation, there is a formless period of meditation. If someone finds it difficult to maintain this state of empty awareness for a long period of time, can they alternate the form and formless, the object and objectless meditation?

Since the main purpose of meditation is to benefit the mind, we are interested in an approach which facilitates the meditator being able to feel comfortable with the technique. Therefore, we could adopt the approach you suggest, balancing the object and objectless meditation techniques, in the following way. After the recitation of the mantra, when we are visualizing the form of the divinity in Chenrezig meditation, there is a process of dissolution whereby the visualization is condensed into a tiny point of light which we then meditate as dissolving into nothingness and we let the mind rest in an empty state of formless awareness. This dissolution process is very effective for introducing the mind to the experience of emptiness. We should, ideally, remain resting in that state of empty awareness as long as is comfortable. However, if we

find that the mind is unable to maintain that approach without dullness or distraction, we could call to mind the ball of light that was the last form in the meditation, and rest the mind on that for as long as is comfortable. The dissolution and reincorporation could be alternated as needed.

What you say is quite true. When we are beginning in meditation, it is very difficult for the mind to rest in any given state. Another approach that we might find very effective, if we are using the Chenrezig meditation, is to prolong the dissolution process of the visualization. The way the dissolution is normally described is that we are conceiving of ourselves in the form of the divinity, the bodhisattva; we are conceiving of all beings as the bodhisattva and the entire external environment as the realm of pure experience. First, we visualize that the external realm and the beings in that realm dissolve into light and this light is absorbed into our own form as the divinity. Then our form as the divinity dissolves and is absorbed into the mantra and seed syllable that we are visualizing in our heart. Next, the letters of the mantra dissolve into the central seed syllable and then the seed syllable dissolves from the bottom upward and we are left with a tiny point of light as the last stages of the visualization.

What we could do is prolong the process so that we spend perhaps five minutes on each stage of the visualization. First, we meditate the entire external realm dissolving into light and being absorbed into our own form as Chenrezig, the bodhisattva of compassion, and rest at that point of the visualization for five minutes. Then, we visualize our form as the divinity slowly dissolving into the syllables in the heart and let the mind rest on that for five minutes. Each stage of the dissolution can be followed by resting in it for five minutes, so that by the time we are left with the tiny point of light, the mind is very acclimatized to the dissolving of the form. The actual entrance of the mind into the state of emptiness is less of a shock than when we dissolve the form very quickly.

This particular technique of dissolving the visualization, which forms a bridge between the form and the formless aspects of the meditation, is a particular keynote of the tantric approach. The bridge between form and formless can be experienced in many ways depending upon the acumen of the practitioner. Ultimately, we will not experience a gap between form and formless. At that time, if we meditate on a form, we will experience the formless, because we will not experience form as solid form but as empty form, the union of form and emptiness. The form and formless will be simultaneously present and a stage of dissolution, acting as a bridge from one to the other, is not necessary.

However, even for someone with less developed capabilities, the bridge can be effected very quickly. Such a person can employ a particular technique in which we are meditating on a given form. For example, we see ourselves as the divinity and all beings as the divinity and the entire outer realm as the realm of pure experience. Then instantly we dissolve the form of the visualization and are in a state of formlessness. In this technique, there is a gap. There is a difference between one state and the other, but the change from one to the other can be effected very quickly, very smoothly. Obviously,

for someone who is beginning to practice, that kind of dexterity of mind is not going to be forthcoming right away, so the gradual dissolution is one very profound technique in tantra for acclimatizing the mind to passing from one state of experience to another, from a form to a formless state.

Could you please discuss some means of dealing with distraction and dullness during shamatha? I am particularly concerned with agitation due to bodily tension.

When we are pursuing shamatha practice to instill tranquility and stability to the mind, the two obstacles to the meditation are dullness of mind and agitation of the mind, in which it becomes untamable and uncontrollable.

In the case of dullness or torpor setting in, we can do very practical things on a physical level, such as sitting straighter, or opening our eyes which wakes up the mind, or raising our eyes which lifts the consciousness. If we are using a form visualization, we can work with the visualization in a way that will remedy the situation. For example, if we are meditating on a sphere of light, and the mind is becoming dull, we can meditate that the ball of light shoots up into the air through the crown of our head like a shooting star, follow it up with the mind, position it far in the air above our heads and keep ourselves focused on it. If the mind is too agitated, that may be an indication that we are too tense and should relax the posture or lower the eyes so that we are resting our gaze on the ground in front of us. We are attempting to bring the mind back down and ground it. If we are meditating on the ball of light hi the heart, we can meditate that it becomes very heavy and begins to sink down to the ground and follow it with the mind in that direction. That will help to counterbalance the agitation of mind.

If we find that our distraction in meditation is largely due to physical discomfort because we have not trained enough in correct meditation posture to be able to sit comfortably, then we should take that into account. We do not need to strain to achieve some kind of correct posture if in fact it is causing the mind to be too tense.

A very famous Tibetan woman whose name was Machig Lab-kyi Dronma (Ma.gcig Lab.kyi Sgron.ma) and who was the main figure in one of the principal lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, the Chb'd (gCod) lineage, once said, "The quality of a mountain stream is determined by the force or the speed with which it rushes down the side of the mountain, crashing into rocks and bounding off rocks as it goes down, but the quality of a yogi's practice is determined by that yogi's poise." The more a mountain stream crashes against things as it pours down the mountainside, the more dramatic and inspiring it is; from the point of view of a yogi's practice, the poise in meditation of being able to balance oneself between too much tension and too much relaxation determines the quality of the meditator's practice. The great Mahasiddha Tilopa of India once said, "If tension can be relaxed, there is no doubt that liberation will occur."

After I still my mind's thoughts through shamatha, visual impressions of shapes and colors arise that are quite distracting. Sometimes they disappear and at other times they are quite persistent. Why is this happening?

This kind of experience would seem to be due to a subtle dullness of mind which creeps in during the initial phase of relative calm and tranquility of mind. While the mind is calm or tranquil, what is missing is a kind of alertness, a luminous or clear quality to the experience. Because there is the initial fault of subtle dullness, then these kinds of hallucinations tend to arise later as a consequence. The best thing to do is to stop the meditation for a short time, and then come back to the meditation, so that we are making a fresh start, rather than trying to push through it.

When we make an effort to generate the experience of meditation, don't we run into the danger of manufacturing it or of convincing ourselves that it is happening?

In order for meditation to become spontaneous, we first have to work at it. It is due to our efforts in meditation and the blessing of the practice itself that we gradually attain to that spontaneity where the experience of the nature of mind simply arises without work. However, to say that we should make efforts in meditation does not mean that we should think of it as creating an experience. We are simply appreciating what is already there. To experience anything at all, even in the limited way that we now experience things, requires that the mind have the qualities of emptiness, luminosity, and unimpededness. We do not have to create that experience of the nature of mind because it is here already. We are simply appreciating what is already taking place. The more effort we make in the particular technique that we are using in meditation, the more we come not only to appreciate the nature of mind on a conceptual level but also to experience it directly as something arises in the mind.

12
Four Causes Leading to Rebirth in Dewachen

There are four causes that bring the mind to rebirth in Dewachen, the realm of pure bliss, which is also known as Sukha-vati in Sanskrit. The realm of Dewachen can be thought of as a high level Nirmanakaya pure realm or as a bridge to a low level of Samboghakaya. This is a realm of experience equivalent to the first level of bodhisattva realization. This represents the state of being that transcends the limitations of the cycle of rebirth in that there is no need for the consciousness to take rebirth due to karmic circumstances. It is possible that, from the enlightened perspective, a being who has attained this level of realization may choose to consciously emanate in samsara for the purpose of helping other beings. However, this is a matter of choice, not karmic necessity.

Before our present world system came into being, there was a period of twenty intermediate kalpas of voidness following the destruction or disintegration of the last world system in this area of the universe. After this, there was a process of creation beginning with the consolidation of the various elements. The man-dala of the wind element was followed by the mandala of the water element and so forth, gradually forming our physical universe. This process of creation, before any life took rebirth in this particular world system, was an additional twenty kalpas in duration. From the time that beings began to populate the various realms of this world system, until the appearance and passing of the thousandth Buddha, there will be a period of twenty kalpas. At this time, the karma which maintains this world system will exhaust itself. Then the process of dissolution and distintegration of the various elements and physical makeup of this universe will occur again. This will take twenty kalpas. These phases of voidness, creation, duration and destruction form a period of eighty kalpas, which is termed one mahakalpa, or great kalpa.

The Amitabha sutras describe Dewachen, the realm of pure being, as having come into being some ten days ago. It should be understood, however, that for the being experiencing Dewachen, one day is equivalent to one mahakalpa. It was that long ago that the aspirations of the Buddha Amitabha first gave rise to this realm of pure being.

When the mind comes into the experience of Dewachen, it is realizing the first bodhisattva bhumi. It is an experience that is quite extraordinary and aesthetic in its implications, because the mind takes rebirth in a miraculous way. It incarnates in the center of a lotus flower, which opens to expose a realm of paradisiacal beauty and contentment to the being experiencing that pure state.

Amithaba with Tchenrezig (on his right) and Vajrapani (on his left).

Once having achieved the enlightened perspective of the first bodhisattva level, a being may employ the increased freedom of mind to manifest one hundred times in any instant in any realm for the purpose of benefitting other

beings. It is also possible for a being to experience other pure realms and to encounter other Buddhas.

As far as other pure realms are concerned, some of these are very high Sambhogakaya pure form realms. In order for the mind to experience these realms, it is necessary to attain to the eighth level of bodhisattva realization. Even in the case of lower level Sambhogakaya pure realms, it is necessary for the being to experience at least first level bodhisattva realization. Lower level Nirmanakaya pure realms require a very scrupulous moral purity on the part of the practitioner and an incredible accumulation of merit.

Due to the aspirations of the Buddha Amitabha, the single crucial element in determining the ability of the mind to take rebirth in this state is the aspiration of the individual. All that is required is absolute conviction that this realm of experience is possible, and the fervent aspiration to attain to that state. The Amitabha sutras describe the particular characteristics of this pure realm as being attributable to the faith and confidence of the practitioner.

While it is aspiration and conviction that is the crucial factor in determining whether or not the mind can experience this realm of pure bliss, we need to consider the four factors or causes which are essential for the practice to be successful. The first of these is the supportive role played by our clear visualization of this pure environment. This is something which is not dramatically different from other Vajrayana practices. For example, when we are performing the Tara ritual, we are meditating the mandala of the Green Tara surrounded by the twenty-one other forms of Tara in the sky before us. The frame of reference that we develop through our visualization, and the faith that this is actually present before us, is the same basic principle. In the case of the Dewachen practice, the particular content of the visualization is different. We visualize ourselves in the presence of Amitabha and the retinue of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.* We conceive of our present environment as the pure realm of bliss. The external world of rocks, trees,, water and mountains become much more precious, much more beautiful than the natural world as we experience it now. It is a completely perfect realm of experience, where the elements can never be the cause of any suffering or harm for the inhabitants.

We envision that at the center of this enormous environment is a jewel throne upon which is the form of the Buddha Amitabha, deep red in color and clad in the robes of a monk. He is seated in full meditation posture, holding an alms bowl in his lap, and surrounded by a vast assemblage of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Arhats. These figures form the retinue around the central figure of the mandala, Amitabha Buddha. The more clearly we can visualize this mandala, the better support it will be for our meditation and for the generation of our aspirations and prayers. The crucial factor is our conviction, regardless of whether we are capable of clearly visualizing this mandala. As is quite accurately and appropriately said in one of the texts of Indian Buddhist tradition, all phenomenal experience is based upon our intention and aspiration; it is on that level that we can be supremely effective. If we develop the intention, aspiration and conviction that something is true, we have a greater chance to effect that transformation.

The second or causal factor of rebirth in Dewachen is our own purification and development. We accomplish this through eliminating the negative and obscuring elements of our being, developing and encouraging the positive aspects, developing our merit and deepening our awareness. This is similar to what we experience in our present life. If we have sufficient stock of merit due to virtuous karma, then we will be successful in whatever we do; if we do not have it, then regardless of the efforts we make, there is no basis upon which prosperity or success can grow. We cannot expect to achieve results without developing these causal factors of merit and awareness.

However, in spiritual practice, the qualities which determine our success in establishing this basis of merit are somewhat different. The most important qualities are faith and confidence in our spiritual teacher, the Three Jewels and the spiritual principles from which we seek inspiration; our compassion and loving kindness for beings; and our wisdom in understanding that phenomenal existence is an expression of mind and that the mind itself is something essentially empty. If this faith, compassion and wisdom are present in abundance, then our spiritual development will be very effective.

The effort to purify ourselves of negativity and obscurations and to develop merit and awareness is encapsulated in the Seven Branches Prayer of the Mahayana. This prayer appears frequently in liturgical texts because it is one of the finest techniques for purification and development. The Seven Branches are, first, rendering homage to the sources of refuge, the Three Jewels and the Three Roots; second, making offerings; and third, confessing our negativity and obscurations. The confession is done not only in the context of this life, but of all the negativity that has been committed by ourselves and all beings in an infinite series of rebirths. We acknowledge and confess our own faults and shortcomings as well as those of others.

The fourth branch of this prayer is rejoicing in the merit and virtue of others, including that of ordinary and enlightened beings. The fifth branch is requesting our gurus, the Three Jewels, and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, to continue to turn the wheel of the dharma by presenting teachings and making them accessible to beings in samsara. The sixth branch is appealing to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and spiritual teachers to continue to manifest in future kalpas until the cycle of rebirth may be emptied and all beings may attain enlightenment. We supplicate them so that the source of spiritual blessing and inspiration will not be lost. The final branch is dedicating the virtue and merit of the preceeding six branches and all spiritual practice to the benefit of all beings. This prayer incorporates all of the elements for purifying negativity and developing merit and awareness.

The third factor is the benefit that our practice receives from the fact that our motivation is an altruistic one. This is the time when our bodhicitta, the altruistic and compassionate concern for others, becomes very significant in spiritual practice. When we develop loving kindness and compassion, true bodhicitta, every action becomes far more significant. If we make an offering of a single candle on a shrine with a totally altruistic motivation, it is a far more meritorious act than another person without that motivation offering hundreds of thousands of candles. There is a concentrated or embellished

quality to everything that we do when it springs from this altruistic motivation. Our aspirations are easier to realize if they are grounded in and arise from this selfless, compassionate concern for others.

When these three factors are present, it is the fourth factor, aspiration, which gives direction to the practice. For the mind to successfully attain the state of pure experience, there needs to be a strong aspiration. This is the deciding factor in the practice, once the basis has been formed by the other three elements. The aspiration, in this instance, is for ourselves and all beings to attain to the state of Dewachen. Even if we attain this state while other beings have not, we will continue to work for the benefit of others from that enlightened perspective. This is a commitment that we never forget. Our altruistic motivation is the stable foundation upon which we build our perception of the external environment as the realm of Dewachen.

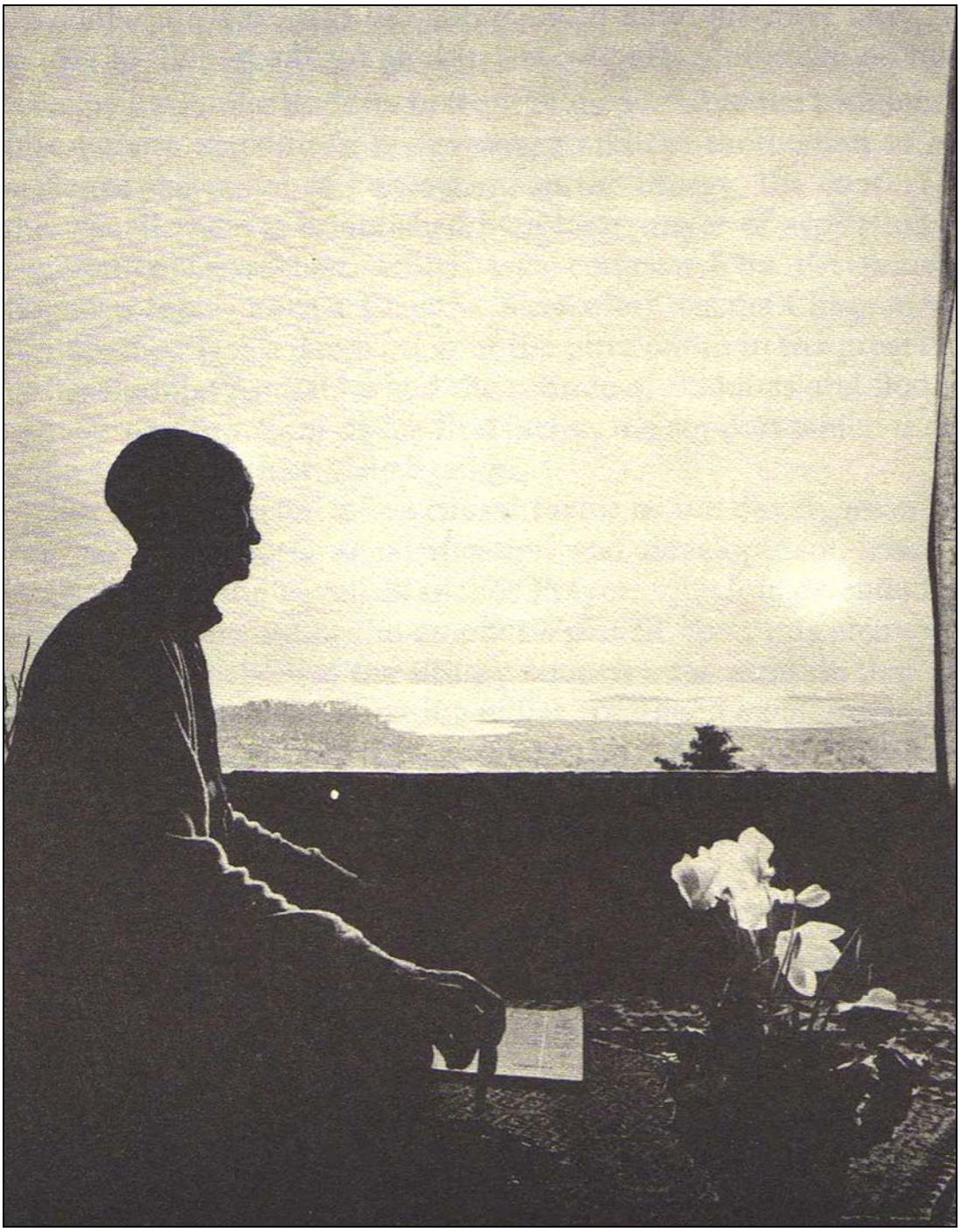
Having laid the foundation of our bodhicitta, we envision the form of Amitabha Buddha in front of us; we have the conviction that we are actually in his presence and the motivation to experience the realm of Dewachen. In the liturgy, the context of the visualization is established by a long prayer of aspiration to experience Dewachen, which was composed by the famous Kagyupa lama, Karma Chagme Rinpoche (Kar.ma.Chags.med.-Rin.po.che). It is a description of the pure realm in the presence of the Buddha Amitabha and the retinue of Buddhas and Bodhi-satrvas, and functions as the first factor, the support which is derived from our clear visualization.

The second factor is the causal factor of the development of our personal efforts at purification and development. This is done through the Seven Branches Prayer, which is extended in this liturgy because of the emphasis placed upon this element. The next section of the liturgy concerns the attitude that we develop in physically choosing either continued existence in the cycle of rebirth or the ability to transcend that cycle and liberate our mind to experience a pure realm of bliss. There is an examination of the faults and limitations of samsaric existence, the instability and frustrating nature of existence in the cycle of rebirth, and the fact that nothing exists on that level that can be relied upon. This is a reinforcement of our aspiration to attain to that experience of pure and stable bliss as opposed to continuing to wander in the confusion and suffering that fuels the cycle of rebirth.

The concluding section of the liturgy is a description of the experience of the state of pure bliss. The incredible longevity, the qualities of mind, the bliss of the mind, the ability of the mind to emanate in order to benefit other beings—all of these are examined in turn, to impress upon the mind the qualities of this state of existence and to further reinforce our aspiration to attain to it.

If our aspirations and prayers incorporate these four factors to insure the success of the practice, then we need not doubt whether the practice will be effective. We will undoubtedly attain to this state of experience which is free from suffering and imbued with supreme bliss, and is the context from which we can be incredibly effective at working for the benefit of others.

* Editor's note: This visualization and the ensuing prayers are fully stated in the liturgy for the deity Amitabha.



His Eminence Kalu Rinpoche
Photograph taken at Evam Choden Center, Kensington, California.
© by Moke Mokotoff.

13
Mahamudra

The Mahamudra experience and approach is perhaps the quintessence of all Buddhadharma. In order for this quintessential approach to be effective, we must have some understanding of the nature of the mind that we are attempting to discover through the Mahamudra techniques.

Mahamudra has three aspects: foundation, path, and fruition. Foundation Mahamudra is the understanding which is based on our appreciation of the nature of mind. This must be augmented by the process of path Mahamudra which is direct experience and acclimatization to that nature of mind through meditation. Finally, there is the fruition or result aspect of Mahamudra, which is the actualization of the potential inherent in the nature of mind. This actual aspect of transcending awareness includes the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya as the facets of completely enlightened experience. It is not beneficial to speak of Mahamudra lightly; we must not ignore any of these three aspects of the Mahamudra approach.

Foundation Mahamudra implies a deep appreciation and understanding of the nature of mind. When we say that this is the correct view, we do not use that phrase in a casual sense. Very often, we say, "Well, in my view, such and such is the case," but this does not necessarily mean that we have understood it at all. We may say, "I believe in previous existences," or, "I don't believe in future existences," but very often our talk is not based on experience and appreciation, but merely on an idea to which we give lip service. What is meant in foundation Mahamudra is a thorough appreciation of the nature of mind itself, the mind with which we are working, and the mind which we are attempting to discover.

To get a deeper understanding of the nature of mind itself, we can quote the authority of enlightened masters of the lineage as a guide. The third Karma, Rangjung Dorje (Rang.byung.Rdo.rje), wrote a prayer of aspiration for the realization of Mahamudra in which he said,' 'It is not existent because even the Buddha could not see it, but it is not nonexistent because it is the basis or origin of all samsara and nirvana.1' It does not constitute a contradiction to say that mind neither exists nor does not exist; it is simultaneously existent and nonexistent.

Let us consider the first part of the statement that the mind does not exist. We take into account that the mind is intangible. One cannot describe it or find it. There is no fixed characteristic that we normally ascribe to things, that we can ascribe to mind. Consciousness does not manifest with any particular color, shape, size, form or location. None of these qualities have anything to do with the nature of mind, so we can say that the mind is essentially empty of these limiting characteristics.

Even the fully enlightened Buddha Shakyamuni could not find any thing that is mind, because the mind does not have identifying characteristics. This is

what Rangjung Dorje meant when he said, "It does not exist because even the Buddha could not see it."

So, then, is mind nonexistent? No, not in the sense that there is nothing happening. That which experiences confusion, suffering, frustration and all the complexity of samsaric existence is mind itself. This is the origin of all unenlightened experience; it is within the mind that all unenlightened experience happens. On the other hand, if the individual attains to enlightenment, it is mind which is the origin of the enlightened experience, giving expression to the transcending awareness of the various kayas.

This is what Rangjung Dorje meant when he said, "One cannot say that it does not exist, because it is the basis for all samsara and nirvana." Whether we are talking about an enlightened state of being or an unenlightened one, we are speaking about the state of experience that arises from mind and is experienced by the mind. What remains if mind neither exists nor does not exist? According to Rangjung Dorje, this is not a contradiction, but a state of simultaneity. Mind exhibits, at one and the same time, qualities of nonexistence and qualities of existence. To state naively that mind exists is to fall into one error; to deny the existence of anything at all is to fall into another error. This gave rise to the concept of what is called the Middle Way or Madhya-mika. Finding a balance between these two beliefs, where there is simultaneous truth to both, is the correct view, according to the Buddha's description of the nature of mind.

When we hear a guru make the statement, "Mind does not exist; mind does not not exist; but it is at the same time existent and nonexistent, and this is the middle view," we may say, "Fine, I can accept that," but that is not enough. It is an idea that may appeal to us, a concept with which we are comfortable, but that kind of understanding lacks any real spirit or depth. It is like a patch you put on your clothes to hide a hole. One day the patch will fall off. Intellectual knowledge is rather patchy in that way. It will suffice for the present but it is not ultimately beneficial. This is not to say that intellectual knowledge is unimportant. It is crucial because it is that which gives us the ability to begin to develop personal experience of what is being discussed. However, mere understanding on a superficial or intellectual level should not be mistaken for the direct experience. We can only arrive at that through meditation and the continued analysis of our own experience. The value of intellectual knowledge is that it is a springboard to deeper, more intuitive experience.

First, then, we say that mind is essentially empty, that it is not describable as some thing. Other than using the label, mind, there is no thing that could be further described in terms of form, shape, size, color or any distinguishing characteristic.

Beyond this essential emptiness, we can make the statement that mind is like space. Just as space is all-pervasive, so is consciousness. The mind has no problem conceiving of any particular place or experience. While we have attempted to describe the indescribable by saying that mind is essentially empty, that is not the complete picture. We are speaking of something that is like space, but is not space; because if it were space, it would not be mind; it

would be space. We are speaking of something that is obviously qualitatively different from simple space. We need to remember that when we are using these terms, we are attempting to describe something that is indescribable. However, that does not mean that it cannot be directly experienced. The person who is mute is still able to experience the sweetness of sugar without being able to describe it to anyone else. Just as the mute person has trouble describing the taste of sugar, we have trouble describing the nature of mind, but we try our best. We search for examples and metaphors that will give us some idea of what is being experienced.

Another aspect of the nature of mind is its luminosity. Normally we think of this term in a visual sense. We think of a luminous body like the sun or the moon which shines and gives off light. However, this is merely a metaphor to give us some idea of what is being hinted at. To say that the mind is luminous in nature is analogous to saying that space is illuminated. For example, we can have empty space and there might be no illumination; then the space would be obscured. There is space, but no ability to see clearly; there is no direct experience possible in complete darkness. Just as there is clear vision in illuminated space, so in the same way, while mind is essentially empty, it exhibits the potential to know, which is its luminosity. This is not a visual experience per se, but the ability of mind to know, perceive and experience.

In our continuing attempt to describe the nature of mind, to describe the indescribable, we next speak of the unimpeded or unobstructed dynamic nature of mind. It will be useful to divide this element of unimpededness into a subtle and a gross aspect. The most subtle or fundamental level of the unimpeded aspect is an awareness of the emptiness and luminosity of the mind. The mind is essentially empty and has this illuminating potential to know and experience.

The coarse or gross aspect of the unimpeded dynamic manifestation of mind is conscious experience, which does not depart from emptiness and luminosity, but is the experience of, for example, seeing and recognizing form as form, hearing and recognizing sound as sound, and so forth. This is the ability of mind to experience the phenomenal world, to make distinctions, to make value judgments based upon that discrimination.

We may utilize a metaphor here. The emptiness of mind is the ocean; the luminosity of mind is the sunlit ocean; and the unimpeded dynamic quality of mind is the waves of the sunlit ocean. When we take the waves of the sunlit ocean as an event or situation, it is not as though we are trying to separate ocean from waves from sunlight; they are three aspects of a single experience. The unity of these three aspects forms the seed or potential for enlightenment. They are the pure nature of mind; the impurity of obscurations, ignorance and confusion overlays what is inherently the nature of mind itself.

There has always been the pure nature of mind and there has always been fundamental ignorance in the mind. The essential empty nature of mind has never been recognized for what it is; the luminous nature of mind has never been experienced for what it is; and the unimpeded or dynamic manifestation

of mind, this consciousness, this awareness, has never been directly experienced for what it is. Because this level of ignorance is so subtle and so fundamental, and because it is co-existent with mind itself, it has been valid as long as mind itself has been valid. We speak of it as co-emergent awareness.

Just as there are subtle and gross aspects to the dynamic awareness of mind that we noted earlier, there are subtler and coarser aspects to the ignorance of mind. We have already spoken of the fundamental level of co-emergent ignorance, the lack of direct experience of the empty, clear and unimpeded nature of mind itself, and this is the subtle aspect of co-emergent ignorance.

There is a second level of ignorance that we might distinguish which is termed labelling ignorance; it is a more conventional or relative ignorance. Not only do we lack direct experience of the essential emptiness of mind, for example, but we substitute the self or ego for that experience. The individual mind as something ultimately real is a distortion that has taken place, due to a lack of direct experience, and this is an example of labelling or relative ignorance. Likewise, due to a lack of direct experience of the clarity and luminosity of mind, there is a projection of something other than the mind, an object other than the subject.

This is again a relative level of ignorance. Rather than being a simple lack of direct experience, there has been a distortion into some thing.

So the second level of obscuration in the mind is the aspect of ignorance which begins to label things as I and other. Lacking direct experience, the distortion takes place on a coarser level of dualistic fixation between subject and object.

Once we have this dualistic framework, of course, emotionality develops and action takes place. Karmic tendencies are reinforced by actions based on the emotional confusion which springs from dualistic clinging. All of it is based upon the fundamental ignorance which is the lack of direct experience of the nature of the mind itself.

The nature of mind is like empty space, like the sky, which at present is filled with clouds and fog and mist and periodically has all kinds of activity such as hailstorms, snowstorms, rainstorms and thunder and lightning. This activity does not change the fact that the empty space is still present, the sky is still there. However, it is temporarily obscured by all these activities. The reason the Buddha presented his teachings, which encourage basic moral choices between virtuous and nonvirtuous actions and encourage the practice of meditation, is to eliminate the obscuring and confusing aspects of our experience. This permits the inherently pure nature of mind to become more obvious and be discovered, just as the sun becomes more obvious as the clouds begin to dissipate.

As the most effective means to bring about that transformation rapidly and directly, the Mahamudra approach has no equal. It gives us the most powerful methods to turn the balance, to eliminate obscurations and allow that manifestation to take place. Our present situation as unenlightened

beings is due to the victory of ignorance over intrinsic awareness; Mahamudra speeds the victory of awareness over ignorance.

When we are concerned with foundation Mahamudra, then, we first and foremost need to be exposed to ideas. This should take place in the presence of a teacher who holds the transmission and can accurately introduce us to the concepts which are the theoretical underpinnings of the Mahamudra approach. After we receive the teachings and understand what is being said, we take them home with us and begin to apply them to our own experience. We say to ourselves, "Well, mind is empty, clear and unimpeded. What do I experience when I experience mind? Does it exist; does it not exist?" We check with our own experience. That is very beneficial for developing a kind of mental construct from which we can work, though it is not the ultimate experience. Conceptual understanding is only a springboard, because the theme of Mahamudra is spontaneity and un-contrivedness, and it is still a very contrived situation to think of the mind as being empty. To directly experience the nature of mind itself requires meditation.

So on this foundation level of Mahamudra, the analytical approach is followed by, and interwoven with, the more intuitive approach of relaxing the mind in its own natural state. The particular skill required is that it must be a state of total relaxation which is not distracted or dull. It is not an objective experience of looking for the mind or looking at the mind. On the other hand, it is not a blind process; we are not unaware. There is seeing without looking; there is dwelling in the experience without looking at the experience. This is the keynote of the intuitive approach.

While the mind is poised in the state of bare awareness, there is no directioning the mind. One is not looking within for anything; one is not looking without for anything. One is simply letting the mind rest in its own natural state. The empty, clear and unimpeded nature of mind can be experienced if we can rest in an uncontrived state of bare awareness without distraction and without the spark of awareness being lost. The pure nature of mind calls to mind an image such as the sun or the moon, a luminous body. The unimpeded nature of mind permits the act of thinking of this form in the first place, and we can rest in the bare perception of that form without any further elaboration; we dwell in the bare awareness of that form.

Thus one's approach in developing the foundation aspect of Mahamudra is, at times, an analytical or conceptual approach of examining the mind from the point of view of trying to locate it, describe it or define it, and at other times an intuitive approach of dwelling hi the experience of total relaxation of mind, an uncontrived state of bare awareness which allows the experience of the nature of mind to arise.

The third Karmapa wrote a prayer in which he said that confidence comes of clearly establishing the parameters of practice by defining the nature of mind precisely. Then the confidence of actually experiencing and appreciating it on an intuitive level completes the foundation. The prayer describes meditation as remaining true to that experience by refining through continual attention to and absorption in that experience. Path Maharnudra is the refining of and attending to the basic experience of the nature of mind. When we remain true

to this experience of the nature of mind and refine it, then at a certain point, an automatic quality arises; the experience happens without one generating it or discovering it. The mind is subject to very little distraction at all. When this occurs, one has entered into the level of path of Mahamudra which is termed one-pointedness or focus on a single thing. In this case, the focus is on a single aspect of experience, the experience of mind nature. Traditionally there are three degrees of this one-pointed experience: a lesser degree of intensity, an intermediate one, and a very intense degree.

As meditation continues, the next clearly definable stage is a certain spontaneity, where the experience is no longer the result of any particular effort; to think of meditation is to have the experience. One begins to discover the incredible simplicity of the nature of mind, absolutely free from any complication and this, in fact, is the name given to the second phase of experience, simplicity, the freedom from complication. Traditionally this phase also has three degrees of intensity; a lesser degree, an intermediate degree, and a very intense degree.

In the beginning, one is meditating for short and frequent periods of time rather than attempting long periods of forcing the mind. But as experience accumulates and simplicity arises, one's meditation naturally begins to be of longer and longer duration. Soon the phase termed one flavor arises, which is the experience of the essential quality of all aspects of phenomenal experience. Soon, seeing form, hearing sounds, smelling smells, tasting tastes, feeling textures, thinking thoughts, formless states of awareness and form states of awareness all have the same flavor. One perceives the underlying essential nature of these experiences, rather than being concerned with the superficial content.

This is the third phase of the experience of path Mahamudra, the unique flavor of all aspects of one's experience, and again, it has different degrees of intensity forming a spectrum of experience, rather than clearly defined steps.

The spontaneity of the experience will take over completely so that there seems no need to meditate at all. The experience arises without there being any particular thought of meditating. This is a glimpse which intensifies further to become the actual experience of the nature of mind without there being any thought of meditation. The most intense degree of this stage is that meditation and being become one. At that point there is no longer any distinction between meditating and not meditating because one is always meditating. The full experience of this is the most intense degree of the fourth phase of path Mahamudra which is termed beyond meditation. The sustained experience of this phase is the result of all one's efforts, Mahamudra. It is the quintessential experience, the pinnacle experience in terms of the attainment of enlightenment and realization.

It is important to identify the context of the Mahamudra experience. Tradition assures us that any approach, other than one's own efforts at purifying and developing oneself and the blessing that one receives from an authentic and qualified guru, is stupid. Of course, at a certain point, the practice becomes spontaneous and the efforts to purify oneself and to develop devotion to

receive blessings from one's guru become second nature. However, this does not become spontaneous until the intense level of the simplicity experience, the second phase of Mahamudra practice, when the practice of meditation becomes one's purification, one's development and the receipt of blessing from one's guru. The fundamental identity of the guru's mind and one's own mind begins to be directly perceptible; one's deepening awareness assures further development of merit and the further purification of obscurations and negativity; there is no necessity to formally supplicate one's guru, meditate upon one's guru or generate devotion in order to receive blessing, because the meditation practice carries one along.

Up to that point, however, the efforts that we make to purify ourselves, to develop our devotion and open ourselves to the guru's blessing, are absolutely crucial. Only present exertions will convey us to the time when they are no longer necessary; the practice of meditation becomes the process of purification, the process of development and the process of receiving blessing.

14
Concluding Remarks

There are some final remarks I would like to make as these teachings come to a close. I give this advice to my students from the perspective of being someone who is reasonably old now and originally came from far off in the hills of eastern Tibet. Having travelled the world, East and West, I have been impressed by the energy and effort that one sees people in all countries putting into the progress and development of their country. They work to consolidate some kind of material progress, security and prosperity for themselves and their country.

Nowhere does one find this more in evidence than hi a country like the United States. It is a very large and prosperous country, with a very high standard of living and a very high degree of personal freedom when compared to other situations. There is far more freedom in America than elsewhere to go where one wants, to do what one wants, to practice the religion that one wants, and to work as one wishes. In America, one is free to pursue the bettering of oneself, the consolidation of one's business, one's security and prosperity and so forth.

On the other hand, there is the problem of taxes, but I do not see any real evil being committed on this level, because it seems to be only fair that if people earn money, the government should take some of it for social services and things which benefit the people as a whole. This is like something arising from the ocean and dissolving back into the ocean; it arises from the people and then dissolves back into the people and tends to even out on a large scale. It is difficult to find another country where as much attention is paid to the old people, children, orphans, sick people and needy people, at least on a relative level. There is a kind of benevolence in this society which needs to be brought to everyone's attention. There is a kind of parental role in government and a public feeling in this country which is concerned with people in less fortunate circumstances.

Also, where else could one find so much available, so much that could answer anyone's wishes. If one wants the smallest article of clothing, one can get it in white, red, black, yellow and blue. One can get any kind of clothing one wants; one can even go without clothing if one wants. In general as I have experienced the way things are run in this country, there is a great deal to be said for it and far less to be said against it. The basic structure of this society and the way it is governed offer much to the people in it, and this is something people need to be aware of, because it is very easy to find fault and complain.

In this particular time, of course, the problems which are facing the world, particularly that of nuclear warfare, and the danger of very widespread destruction, are ever-present. There is an understandable wave of sentiment throughout the world now to disarm the world completely; this is, of course, a

goal to which we always need to aspire, because the basic function of weaponry is to hurt, harm, or injure. As long as this weaponry exists, then the danger exists that it will be used. So an ideal which is very worthy is the hope that efforts can be made to eliminate this threat from the world, so that hurnans will not have to suffer the consequences. As I see it, this can be viewed in at least two ways. The first is the ideal, that we would all hope for, that it would be possible at some point in the future to bring peace to the world. Weaponry would be a thing of the past and the world would not need that particular way of relating in order to survive.

However, from the realistic point of view, one must not be too over-zealous in making oneself vulnerable. If one country such as America abandons its weapons when other countries do not, there remains the risk of being invaded and losing the benefits that do exist in this culture, which would be a great loss. This topic is one which must be viewed from a global and a realistic perspective. It is a very difficult thing for me to make any definitive choice.

The reason why there exist so many religions in the world, so many spiritual traditions, is because the enlightened compassion of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas manifests in different ways in different circumstances to meet different needs. In some cases greater needs will be met; in some cases lesser or intermediate needs will be met. Nevertheless, there is benefit to be found in all these situations. The ability of these spiritual traditions to continue to develop and flourish in the world is a very important factor in the future happiness of humanity. Thus, it always gives me pleasure to come to a country such as America where there is this personal freedom for one to practice the religion of one's choice and for religions to establish themselves, even though they may be very new to this country. The benefits of living in this country are numerous, and my general advice to you is to be aware of these benefits and take advantage of them.

More specifically, my journeys began hi 1971, and I have visited North America four times. A number of centers and groups started up as a result of my coming and teaching in North America. I was particularly concerned with the problem of lamas or teachers to stay hi these centers, because I felt this was one very crucial factor in insuring the stability and development of a center: that it have a resident teacher. I went to His Holiness the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa and asked him personally to look into this, to do what he could to send lamas who are qualified to be resident teachers in these centers. After I made this request, he replied to me that it was basically my function to supply the lamas. He would supply the passes and visas that they needed to assure them passage to the West but since I had founded the centers, it was appropriate for me to supply the teachers.

At that point, the pool of potential lamas that we were drawing upon were Tibetans, Bhutanese and Sikkimese. These were the people who had received the training in the Kagyu teachings that would qualify them to act as teachers in Kagyu centers. However, we ran into a problem, because most of them were quite aware of the fact that in leaving India, Sikkim, Bhutan or Nepal and going to the West, they were traveling an immense distance; they

were severing their roots and ties with the culture they had grown up in, and they were going to a completely foreign culture. People did not speak the same language, wear the same clothes, or eat the same food. The entire situation was different and they would be going there alone, which did not strike them as a particularly entertaining prospect.

His Holiness would instruct these lamas, "You know I want you to go to the West. We are trying to set up centers in the West." But what we originally found was that people balked at this, though it was done in a rather roundabout way, because they couldn't simply go to someone like His Holiness and say, "No." One does not do that with someone like His Holiness. He tends not to listen when one says, "No," so when he would say, "You go to the West," they would say, "Well, you know, my poor old father is just about on his deathbed," or, "My mother really needs me to take care of her," or "You know I have this sickness and the doctor says I can't travel."

My particular advantage is that I am not someone great like His Holiness, so that if I tell someone to do something, they can argue with me. They can always say, "Well, okay, but isn't it going to be difficult?" They know that when I send them somewhere, if things turn out to be difficult, they can write and tell me about it. They can let me know,' 'Look, things are really hard here," and there is the chance that I will help them by sending a replacement or doing whatever I can. They do not feel so locked into the situation if I tell them to go to the West.

The first lama that I established in the West was Lama Tsengyur Rinpoche at Vancouver, British Columbia in 1971. Following that, there was a second wave of lamas to the West, which included Lama Lodo of San Francisco, and a third wave which included Lama Karma Dorje of Santa Fe. In the future there will be more lamas coming to stay in cities in the West.

The result of founding centers and sending teachers has been a significant growth and spread of the teachings in the West. Slowly but surely the centers are getting themselves on a firm basis and actually being able to branch out. The center in San Francisco has land which is providing the opportunity for a Three-Year, Three-Month retreat center to be built in the future. Projects like this are going on all over the world and that is cause for celebration.

On a purely mundane level, we are all aware of the fact that the more power and influence and wealth one has, the more problems and complications there are in one's life. There is an analogy to this on the spiritual level, because the more profound one's practice, the more profound are the obstacles one is likely to encounter. As much effort as one makes in developing one's positive qualities, one is quite likely to find that there are equal responses, either from inner negativity and obscuration in one's own character or negative forces in the world around one, and each of these cause obstructions. This seems to be something of an equation; the deeper the practice, the deeper the obstacles. One of the most serious obstacles from the point of view of one's practice of dharma, is disharmony, the falling out with one's spiritual teachers, one's center of dharma, one's vajra brothers and sisters; in so doing, one is really cutting oneself off from the benefit that one has personally received from these sources. Of course we all know the

way of the world is one of friction and conflict. It seems to be part of so-called human nature that friction can increase to the point that a situation becomes unworkable. This is a very grave thing if it happens on the spiritual level. Harmony between teachers and students, and between students and students who are brothers and sisters in the teaching, is very important; the concept of samaya, the bond or commitment one has to another, due to the connections one has through teachings and practice, is a very crucial element in one's spiritual development. To cause serious ruptures of samaya is something which will cause much unhappiness and suffering in this life, and also turn the mind toward lower states of existence contrary to the spiritual path.

The resident teachers at centers in the West may function as lamas by having students who have faith in them and have accepted them as gurus; or they may function as teachers in the ordinary sense of the word. Some people may not have faith in them as gurus or are not prepared to approach them on that level, but will approach them as instructors in the dharma, people qualified through their own experience and understanding of the teachings to talk about and explain the teachings. One could even think of them as a kind of translator or conduit for information that has been transmitted from the Kagyu lineage. Regardless of the particular way in which one relates to the resident teacher of the center, the connection remains a very positive and important one.

Faith and confidence is an interesting phenomenon because the benefits are so personal. If one has faith in a very worthy principle or person, one can receive tremendous blessing. The Tibetans tell a story to illustrate this which concerns an individual named Ben who came from an area known as Kbngpo in southeastern Tibet. He was called Kb'ngpo Ben and he was an extremely simple fellow who was gullible but had a great deal of faith.

Ben had heard much about the Jowo Rinpoche or Precious Lord hi Lhasa, which is a very beautiful statue of the Buddha Shakyamuni as a young prince. This is one of the most holy and important images in the whole of Tibet and it rests in a cathedral known as the Jokhang, the Lord's House. Ben was not quite sure if it was a god or a man or what, but he was determined to go see for himself what the Precious Lord was all about. So he put on his boots and got his knapsack and his stick and went walking through southeastern Tibet for weeks and weeks to get to Lhasa, the capital in central Tibet.

When he arrived there, he asked his way, and found himself in the Jokhang. There was the beautiful smiling statue of the Buddha and he walked up to it and said, "Oh, I'm very glad to be here; I've heard a lot about you and I'm very glad to meet you." He stood smiling and nodding to the statue and the statue smiled back benignly.

Since he had walked such a long way, Ben was quite hungry and thirsty. He looked around and saw a table in front of the image on which people had put all kinds of butter lamps and special cakes which are made as offerings for the shrine. Ben thought to himself, "Hmm, some kind person has put these out for the Precious Lord and his visitors to eat." He took one of the cakes

and dipped it into one of the butter lamps and ate it while looking up at the figure which was still smiling benignly at him. He thought to himself, "What a nice lama that is."

When he was no longer hungry and thirsty, he said, "I wonder if you could watch my things for me; I'm just going to do a quick circumambulation around you just as a sign of respect and then I'll be back." The statue replied, "Yes," so he took off his muddy old boots and his knapsack and stick and put them down in front of the image and off he went to do his circumambulation.

While he was circumambulating this rather large building, the custodian of the shrine came in and saw to his horror that somebody had been disturbing the offerings and leaving their dirty boots in front of the statue. Outraged, the custodian was throwing them out the door of the cathedral when he heard the statue say, "Kbngpo Ben left those and told me to watch after them. Leave them here."

Kongpo Ben had a very basic faith. He spent many days in Lhasa visiting the Precious Lord and having audience with him. When he was ready to return to his home country, he said, "Why don't you visit me during the harvest? I've got a field of barley and we can make some good barley flour and brew up some barley beer. I have a friend who can slaughter a pig and we'll have a real feast going. I'll be happy to really host you in style." The statue said he would come, so Ben started his long journey.

When Kongpo Ben finally returned home, his wife greeted him and asked him if he had accomplished his goal. He said, "Oh yes, I met the Precious Lord, and he's a very fine lama. I've invited him to come in the ninth month, so we'll have to prepare then for this very honored guest."

When the ninth month came, he said to his wife, ' 'Whenever you go outside, look for signs that someone special is coming." One day when she went to the river for water, the river was glowing as if the sun were shining up from under the water, and she thought, "That's it!" She went running back to her husband and said, "I think he's here. I went down to the river and there's this light in it that I've never seen before." Her husband told her to put on the tea water and went running down to the river.

When he got there, he could see the form of the Precious Lord in the river. He thought the Lord was drowning so he dove in the water and came up with the form of the Precious Lord, and they had a nice chat. Then Ben carried the Precious Lord along the road and when they came to a certain bend in the road where there was a large rock face, the Precious Lord said to him, "I won't be visiting you," and he dissolved into the rock face. To this day in southeastern Tibet, there are two special places to visit. One is the rock face in which there is a form of the Buddha, and the other is a form of the Buddha which can be seen in a certain river. These are known as the Water Lord and the Rock Lord and are famous sites of pilgrimage.

Kbngpo Ben's was a situation where blessings and benefits arose from faith hi something very exalted and noble. This does not preclude the possibility of someone receiving the same kind of benefit even if the object of faith is quite

ordinary; it is the quality of faith that counts. The Tibetans tell another story to illustrate faith in something ordinary.

There was an old woman in Lhasa whose son was a trader. Once a year he went to India to do business. His mother was a very devout Buddhist. She said to her son on numerous occasions, as he was setting off on his trips, "You know, you're going to the land of India, which is the most holy country on earth as far as Buddhists are concerned, because the Lord Buddha appeared there and first presented the teachings of Buddhadharma in that country. Do your old mother a favor and bring back some relic or some holy article or object from India that I can use as an object of worship on my shrine. I'll place it on my shrine and do prostrations to it, pray to it, make offerings to it as a way to develop my faith and merit."

Every time the son would say, "Yes, mother," but he would become so involved in his business that he would completely forget about it, because to him it was a very trivial thing. When he would return, his mother would ask, "Well, did you bring me my relic?" And he would tell her he'd forgotten. This was repeated many times.

As she got older, the woman became a little desperate and she finally said to her son, "This may be the last journey you will make in my lifetime. This is your last chance to bring me a holy relic from India. If you fail, this old mother of yours is going to kill herself in your presence." Realizing she was serious, he tried his best to remember, but again he became involved in travelling, trading, and making profits.

On his return journey, he sat by the side of the road to brew up a cup of tea. Suddenly, he remembered his promise to his mother and in his desperation, saw the bones of a dog that had died by the side of the road. He had an inspiration and broke off one of the teeth from the jawbone of the dog, wrapped it up in very fine silk of different colors, and carried it home.

When his mother said, "Did you remember?" he said, "I remembered." He unwrapped his gift and said,' 'This is the Buddha's tooth. I brought this back from India just for you, Mother, because you wanted something very holy. It is a very, very blessed and holy object." His mother was overjoyed. She took it and put it on the crown of her head and then put it up on her shrine. She would spend the whole day doing prostrations to it, making offerings to it and praying to the Buddha in the presence of what she felt was the tooth of the Buddha. The remarkable thing was that relics started to emerge from this dog's tooth. Not only did these benefit a large number of people, but the old woman was enveloped in a rainbow of light as she died and a shower of blossoms rained down from the sky as an indication that she had definitely made a significant step forward on the path to liberation.

So, even in situations where the object of one's faith seem to be quite ordinary, one should never exclude the possibility that one's faith and confidence in that situation will open one to a great deal of blessing and benefit. This in fact was the basis for the proverb in Tibet that says, "Even a dog's tooth can give off relics."

In sending resident teachers to centers, I considered the fact that these people have been involved in the practice and study of dharma from a very early age, that they have spent their lives trying to practice and to understand as much as they can, and that they have all done the Three-Year, Three-Month Retreat program of training in meditation and study which qualifies them as a teacher. When I see the needs of centers, I feel that to send such an individual is beneficial. I only send someone who I feel is going to be helpful for the situation. It seems to me that the people I send do their best, out of affection and compassion for the people at that center, to direct and guide the development of the center as best they can. Perhaps the source of one's faith is an excellent one, such as the story about the old man and the statue; on the other hand, perhaps we are in a very ordinary situation, but let us not forget that dog's teeth can bring out relics for those of us who have faith.

This should not be interpreted as saying, "You must have faith in such and such a situation." Even someone like His Holiness the Dalai Lama or His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa would not say that. One should discover one's own faith. It remains an entirely personal decision. The only thing a spiritual teacher can say is, "It is very good to have faith." Faith is a very positive and beneficial quality to have in a spiritual context. At the very least, one can regard a lama as someone like a parent or teacher in school who is doing their best to help in the situation. It is important when there is a lama in the center for there to be harmonious relationships. The members should respect the lama as they would their parents or their teachers. It is also necessary for the lama to have an affectionate and compassionate view toward the students and members of the center and the same concern and commitment as a parent.

When there is harmony, then things can only develop for the good. In addition, there is the concept of samaya, the commitment that one receives when one begins Vajrayana or tantric practice. When one is associated with a center, with other people, and a teacher, and when one has received the same teachings and empowerments and transmissions, one shares a very strong bond with those individuals as one's vajra brothers and sisters. Harmony is especially important on this level, because it is that which contributes to the extreme rapidity of the tantric path. To deliberately spurn that bond is correspondingly very negative. So, harmony becomes important not only on a general social level of benevolence and good will, but also on a level of samaya. One has taken on oneself a commitment that must be respected.

In a center, the lama is the head and the students and members of the center are the body. One cannot live and work without the other. There is a sense of a collective experience as they travel together to the highest heights; if the samaya is broken, they will all go down together. If lamas and students can work together in harmony, then I see nothing but positive development in the future.

What, you may ask, is the purpose of all the empowerments, teachings and transmissions that one receives? They function to further one on the path to

liberation. This should not imply that there is no effort on one's own part. One's own physical, mental and verbal involvement in virtuous and positive action and spiritual practice is a very significant factor in receiving the benefits of the teachings and transmissions that one has received.

As a way to develop one's practice of the dharma, the importance of the fundamentals cannot be overemphasized. The most fundamental aspect of one's practice of the dharma is the taking of refuge. We have already discussed the sources of refuge: the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; and the Three Roots of the Vajrayana practice, guru, meditational divinities and dharma protectors. As for someone practicing the dharma, one needs to renew this sense of taking refuge each and every day, if not more frequently. At least when one first awakens, one can renew the commitment through the recitation of taking refuge. It is important to give something from the heart during this recitation.

Also, the element of bodhicitta, the enlightening element of altruistic compassion and concern for others in one's spiritual practice, cannot be overemphasized. Every morning when one has renewed their commitment through taking refuge, it is important to renew the samaya of bodhicitta as well. One may recite, "This day, whatever I take part in, physically, verbally or mentally, may this be for the benefit of all beings. I aspire to help all beings in all situations as much as possible." Whether it is in this simple context or in a formal spiritual practice during the day, if one has those two as a basis to work from, then one will find one's mind coming more and more into the dharma, and the Dharma will become more and more a path for one. In a certain sense, this arises from the fact that one is emphasizing the foundations and the practice develops from that.

The Tara meditation is an excellent morning practice and is offered at many centers. The particular function of the Bodhi-sattva Tara is to remove fear and obstacles. The efficacy of the practice relates to all kinds of threats or fears in the external environment, which can prove to be serious obstacles for one's well-being and also for one's spiritual practice.

The Mahakala ritual is often offered at centers in the evening. This protective influence shelters one's practice against obstacles, whether they arise from within oneself, one's own negativity, or from the external situation. The Six-armed Mahakala practice carries particular protection and benefit which is realized in the Bar do or after-death state.

Chenrezig, the bodhisattva of compassion, is one of the single most basic and powerful forms upon which to meditate; it is also an extremely simple practice which is imbued with very profound implications in terms of one's spiritual development. Because of the great benefit of the practice, and the relative ease with which one can learn to put it into practice, I have felt that it is a very worthy meditation for centers to use as their main focus.

Whether one approaches resident lamas as gurus, as teachers, as translators or channels of information, they exist for the purpose of transmitting that information on one level or another to the people who are interested in using those techniques.

To conclude these teachings, it is important to dedicate the merit and virtue. We are inspired to follow the examples of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and spiritual teachers in our attempt to share the benefits of spiritual practice for the good of all. The particular benefits that we derive from spiritual practice depend upon our own efforts and on our own perceptions of spiritual practice. Dedicating our efforts to others encourages us to develop positive qualities conducive to spiritual development and to eliminate negative, harmful tendencies and actions in our way of life. In the last analysis, it all comes down to this: our personal efforts to make the distinctions between virtue and non-virtue and to make the appropriate choices based on those distinctions.

Questions of General Interest

What are the karmic implications if terminally ill people voluntarily take themselves off of life support? If they are in a coma, what are the karmic consequences of their families removing them from life support, allowing them to die? What can someone who is working with the terminally ill do to prepare them for death?

It is very difficult to say something simple about such a complex situation. Perhaps the most basic observation to make is that from the point of view of the person who is working with the terminally ill patient, the crucial difference would seem to be whether that person's basic motivation is one of compassion and concern for the patient in trying to alleviate suffering and preferably, cure the disease. If that is the basic motivating factor, then it is very doubtful that the healer or therapist will do anything wrong karmically. We may not be able to save the patient's life. We may not be able to relieve the person's suffering. But we are trying our best, motivated in the purest way possible. Whatever we do, even if it is not ultimately successful, can never be thought of as karmically damaging or karmically negative.

If we are negligent, if we deliberately abuse the patient's health out of carelessness or lack of concern, then of course, that is a different matter. We are not motivated by basic concern, nor do we have the proper commitment to the patient's well-being, and there are different karmic consequences.

The person who decides that they have had enough suffering and wish to be allowed to die is in a situation that we cannot call virtuous or nonvirtuous. We certainly cannot blame someone for making that decision. It is not a karmically negative act. It is simply the wish to avoid suffering, which is a fundamental wish of all living beings. On the other hand, it is not a particularly virtuous act, either. It is a karmically neutral act to decide in that situation not to allow one's disease to run its course and kill one. Rather than being a wish to end one's life, it's a wish to end suffering. Therefore, it is a karmically neutral act.

When a healer is instructed by a patient to remove life support systems, that puts the healer in a difficult position, because the instincts of the healer may

be telling them, "If this person stayed on the life support system they would remain alive. If I take them off, they will die." The karmic consequences depend upon the healer's intent, because the healer will be depriving someone of the means to stay alive, regardless of the fact that it was that person that told us to do it. If the basic motivation of the healer has always been to help and benefit that person and relieve their suffering, then, from that state of mind, it seems as though nothing karmically negative can develop.

Do the skandhas, the psychophysical aggregates of an individual's character, arise as aspects of ignorance? How can we use them as concepts? Also, can we utilize the Six Perfections of the Mahayana as antidotes to particular mental poisons or emotional complexes?

We can think of the skandhas, the aggregates of our psycho-physical character, as manifestations or aspects of ignorance, but then, what isn't an aspect of ignorance from the point of view of an unenlightened being? The entirety of our experience, the universe that we experience, is, on one level or another, a manifestation of our ignorance. So, from that point of view, it is not a particularly remarkable statement to say that the skandhas are aspects of ignorance. In fact, they are an attempt to describe the totality of a given being's mental and physical experience.

The skandhas are the five aggregates of form, sensation, perception, volition or formation, and consciousness. The first is fairly easy to understand. It refers to the phenomenal world and the physical body, the form aspect of our experience, from the physical body which is compounded of atoms and molecules; to the external world with its various objects and phenomena which may be tangible and composed of atomic matter, or its intangible experiences such as sound.

The second skandha, that of sensation, is partly physical and partly mental. There are already physical sensations due to the fact that there is the form skandha, involving the physical body as one of its components. Based upon the physical body, we have sensations of heat and cold and pain and pleasure and so forth. There are also purely mental sensations of suffering and well-being, of happiness and unhappiness and so forth, and so this skandha has both physical elements and purely mental elements.

Perception, volition, and consciousness are a little more subtle and the best way to think of these three is not as three separate things but as different points on a continuum that runs from pre-conscious perception to conscious experience. The best example we might think of is that of the surface of the ocean when a wave begins to form. First there is a swelling of the water in one direction or another, a shift due to the motion of the wind or tide. This swelling is like perception. Once there is an initial perception of heat or cold or whatever, this begins to stir the mind toward actual conscious experience.

The next stage is like the wave actually beginning to form, the water moving up into a kind of peak. This is analagous to volition, which is not yet conscious experience but is, for example, in seeing a form, the clear

presentation of that form to the mind's eye through the organ of sight. The mind becomes perfectly aware of the form as a form before recognizing it as a particular form with particular characteristics.

In the fifth skandha, that of actual conscious experience, the mind perceives that each form is a particular kind of form which is good or bad or neutral. There is an evaluation of experience at that point which is conscious mental activity, and that is like the wave actually cresting, as a fully defined wave. Thus this scheme of the five skandhas is an attempt to describe the totality of our experience, physical and mental.

In regard to the Six Perfections of the Mahayana path, generosity, morality, patience, exertion, meditative stability and wisdom, these are specific techniques or attitudes that are particularly beneficial and effective for our spiritual development. We could arrange it neatly so that each one of these paramitas or perfections is related to a particular emotion. For example, we could say that, of the six fundamental emotions which the texts make reference to, one is avarice or greed. Generosity is the antidote to avarice or greed; we share instead of take. We could arrange it that way, but each one of the paramitas is actually an effective antidote for any negative emotion.

Rinpoche, my father has become senile. I am wondering how to share the Dharma with him before he dies.

We are dealing with a number of limitations, because, for example, it is doubtful that your father was someone who was particularly inclined toward Buddhism even when he had all of his mental faculties. To approach him on a formal level of explaining the teachings is not only something which is severely limited due to his declining awareness and intelligence, but is also something to which he has not been predisposed. In this situation, the benefit that the teachings could give him would be perhaps in the form of your recitation of mantras or the names of Bviddhas in his presence. You will be planting seeds. Your own aspirations and altruistic concern for him in this situation are very important. In offering this service to your father in his unhappy circumstances, you must go about it with the best of intentions, out of a true concern for his welfare and happiness. That is a very important factor in your relationship to him in these times.

The most important thing is that you have a very strong connection to him as his daughter. The karmic connection between parents and children is very strong. Much benefit can be worked on subtle levels because of that bond, if our approach to our parents is marked by compassion and concern and our involvement in spiritual practice is not only for our own sake, but for the benefit of other beings as well, particularly, in this case, our parents.

How do you feel about the threat of nuclear war and the spread of Buddhism in North America, as two parts of our present experience?

The spread of Buddhism represents one very great source of hope, because the more people who involve themselves in the dharma, or, rather, the more people who are behaving in ways which are in accord with the dharma, the

better the entire situation becomes. The Buddha frequently said that the experience of the human race as a whole depends upon the behavior of the human race as a whole. If the vast majority are engaged in unskillful and harmful and evil actions, the general situation degenerates rapidly; if the majority of people become involved in spiritual practice, or at least in activity which is in accordance with spiritual practice, then the general situation improves. It is a collective result of the individual actions of human beings that determines the collective experience of beings in the human realm, for better or for worse.

Dedication

Whereby sentient beings who are tormented by the three kinds of suffering recognize the condition of limitless samsaric suffering and the state of Buddhahood—the nature of the Five Wisdoms and the Four Bodies—in the continuum, they apply a small amount of practice in their mind streams through deep faith and compassion, the two kinds of precious Bodhicitta, and the profound generation and completion stages. May they, having sown each seed of liberation, come to obtain the level of Buddhahood step by step.

With only this intention and also through this presentation of whatever is remembered of the essential instructions which are taught from the sutras and tantras, may all beings who will touch, remember, hear or see this work be liberated from the ocean of samsaric suffering.

Thus I, Kalu Rinpoche, the yogi of the royal domain, who have acquired faith in the tradition of Dharma that is not bound in sectarianism, have spoken. May there be favorable and auspicious prospect!

Exemplary Life

and

Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche

Lama Gyaltsen's Memories

Lama Gyaltsen's life is remarkable. His father was a younger brother ofKalu Rinpoche. When Lama Gyaltsen was 10 years old, he met his unde for the first time and soon became his close companion. At first, Lama Gyaltsen was Kalu Rinpoche's servant, then his secretary, and his disciple for more than forty years. Lama Gyaltsen was 53 years old when the death of Kalu Rinpoche, in 1989, seemed to definitively interrupt this long common road. However, a year later, a son was born to Lama Gyaltsen, and the chUd was recognized as the reincarnation of Kalu Rinpoche! A privileged witness of the life of his master in Tibet, India, and the West, Lama Gyaltsen was a confidant of other lamas and Kalu Rinpoche's mother. This is an account of the direct and indirect memories that he has wanted to share during a trip in France in the summer of 1992.

THE STORY OF A NAME

Kalu Rinpoche was born in Kham, the eastern province of Tibet, in a mountain chain called Tracho. His family's name was Ratak, a deformation of Ratsa, a term meaning "goat skin." To understand the origin of this name, we must go back to the time of the first Karmapa, Tusum Khyenpa.

Tusum Khyenpa was born to a poor family that bred animals on a mountain-side. In this region, one could distinguish poor people from the rich by their clothes. The poor families wore jackets of goat skin, while the rich families were clad in sheepskin. This detail is not without significance in our story.

When Tusum Khyenpa was born, no one realized that a holy man was being born. He was not granted any particular attention. Tusum Khyenpa kept herds, taking care of cows and goats like many children of his age. However, some events should have caused people to realize that he was not an ordinary being.

For example, water was rare in this region, which created difficulties for people and animals who needed it One day, people noticed the young future Karmapa scratching at the ground around a boulder. He did this the next day and day after day after that. What was he looking for scratching like that? Children and other people began to wonder. However, water soon started to spring forth, to the astonishment of his friends who never thought that this dry place could conceal such water.

The future Karmapa was teased by other children because his family was poor. Sometimes, they chased him and threw stones. Again, he demonstrated his extraordinary nature on several occasions. One day, while he was seeking to avoid the rocks being thrown at him, he leaned for an instant against a cliff. Tusum Khyenpa's back left an impression on the cliff that is still visible to this day. Another time, while he was throwing stones back at his tormenters, the attackers ran away; but the stones hit them,

regardless of how far they ran. These unusual events were regarded as the strange acts of a poor child who deserved no special attention.

However, since the young future Karmapa struck water in a place where its lack was sorely felt, he was shown some kindness by the people of the region, who found relief for themselves and their animals. Later, people began to notice that this water was endowed with healing properties. It especially healed those who had tumors of the digestive system. The spring still flows today, and people continue to come and drink its curative water.

When he became an adult, the future Karmapa went to central Tibet and was soon recognized as a lama of extraordinary capabilities. He had numerous disciples and his person gave rise to a great faith among the people. Because of the greatness of his realization, he was named "The One Who Knows The Three Times'7 (the past, the present, and the future).

The news of the Karmapa's achievements reached his native country where people finally decided that it was necessary to somehow show him their veneration. "This lama, whose reputation is now so great in Tibet, was a child of our village. When he tended the herds with us, we understood nothing of his magnificence. Now he is far away and we cannot meet him. We must find a way to evoke his presence among us. We need to find an object that could be the support of our devotion" They began to look for an object that had belonged to the child. Because of his poverty, however, Tusum Kyenpa had possessed very little. The villagers finally found the Karmapa's goat skin jacket that he wore when he was little. Wishing to make it into a sacred support, they decided to cut it into small pieces—one hundred thousand pieces,1 according to the story. Then, they made the same number of small statues of the Karmapa and inserted the pieces of goatskin in them. They built a stupa in which to place the statues, and called it the Stupa of The One Hundred Thousand Statues with Goat Skin (Tibetan, Ratsa Kumbum Choten). The place became known as Ratsa, and the family linked with the first Karmapa inherited the name. Its members became the Ratsa; later the word was deformed into Ratak, which is the family name of Kalu Rinpoche.

Later, when the father and mother of the Karmapa passed away, the people of the region wanted to thank them posthumously for engendering such a holy being. They erected two small stupas on the right and the left of the main stupa in their honor. These three stupas are still visible today.2

FATHER & MOTHER: A MEETING SET BY FATE

Kalu Rinpoche's father was called Lekshe Drayang and had the title of Ratak Tulku, that is, the tulku of Ratak. He was the thirteenth incarnation of a lineage of tulkus stemming from the family of Ratak and, therefore, related to the first Karmapa.

Kalu Rinpoche's father was also the last representative of this lineage. Just before his death, Lekshe Drayang told his disciples that it would be useless to search for his tulku. Possibly, he would continue to work for the benefit of all beings, but this activity would be in other places and no longer within the family of Ratak. His disciples and benefactors insisted he manifest among

them. Lekshe Drayang told them that they should not feel abandoned because he was leaving them a son far superior to himself. Nevertheless, in the region of Minyak near the Chinese border, a child was born who declared himself to be Ratak Tulku and who demonstrated the qualities of a great being.

In the retreat center of Tsadra Rinchendra (founded by Jamgon Lodro Thaye),3 dependent upon Palpung Monastery, and directed by Situ Rinpoche, the young Ratak Tulku accomplished a three-year retreat, and then stayed there for a few more years.

In the course of his meditations, he had the experience of a yidam who told him. "You have to marry a woman, because your union will produce a child who will perform wonderful acts. The woman you will marry will be a dakini of wisdom whose name is the same as Drolma Karmo 4 (White Tara)."

During this same retreat, Situ Rinpoche offered him a statue of White Tara to show Ratak Tulku how much he appreciated his practice of years in retreat and to advise him to take White Tara as his main yidmn. Situ Rinpoche thought that this practice would allow Ratak Tulku to gain experience and realization.

The same day Situ Rinpoche gave him this statue, a young woman arrived at Tsadra Rinchendra and offered Ratak Tulku a jar of the best curdled milk that one could find in the area. "What is your name?" asked Ratak Tulku to the young woman. "Drolkar,"5 she answered.

The future father of Kalu Rinpoche found these coincidences odd. After the yidam talked to him, Situ Rinpoche gave him a statue of White Tara. The very same day a young woman with the name of the deity came to offer him curdled milk, in the same manner that the shepherdess Sujata had offered the milk to the Buddha Shakyamuni. He wondered if the young woman was not the one predestined for him. He asked her numerous questions about herself and her family. By her replies and his observation of her physical characteristics,6 he was soon convinced that he was dealing with a dakini.

Nevertheless, some doubts remained. Would this union be beneficial? Would it really bear an exceptional son? Therefore, he asked the advice of the greatest lamas of the region, such as Situ Rinpoche and Dzokchen Rinpoche. They confirmed that these coincidences and signs were not random, but significant. He married the young woman, returned with her to his native village and moved into the residence of the Ratak Tulkus.

Drolkar, Ratak Tulku's spouse, was a member of a family related to Jamgon Lodro Thaye; her parents were Jamgon Lodro Thaye's benefactors. Situ Rinpoche would say later that not only did she have the same name as the deity White Tara, but that she was also Tara's emanation.

Very soon, Drolkar became pregnant. Lekshe Drayang immediately thought that the child to come would be the son announced by the yidam. It was a girl, and he was disappointed. A second pregnancy followed soon after. Lekshe Drayang was sure this time. He had no doubt that the yidam's prophecy would be realized, but again the child was a girl.

Thinking that he must not deserve to accomplish what had been announced by the deity, Lekshe Drayang sank into a deep sadness. Among the lamas he considered his root lamas, the main one was Khyentse Rinpoche from the monastery of Palpung. Lekshe Drayang decided to offer Kyentse Rinpoche everything he possessed—his house, his animals, his belongings, and his money—keeping nothing for himself.

His disciples and benefactors were both admiring and anxious. They pointed out to him that it was excellent to offer all his belongings to the lama, but added that they were concerned for him and his family as they would need at least a roof to shelter them! How did he envision that?

"I can do no good for anyone" replied Ratak Tulku. "It is useless for me to stay here. It is better if I leave. I have decided to take my wife and my two girls with me, go near the Indian border, and earn my living there by begging"

He left. However, two or three days later he was reached by emissaries of his disciples and benefactors who would not let their master live such a life. The discussion was intense. Lekshe Drayang flatly refused to return. His disciples begged him not to continue any longer, but at least to stay where they had found him. They would build a house for his use and provide whatever was necessary for his living. After arguing a long time, Lekshe Drayang accepted the compromise, but only for a one- or two-year period. After that, he would go elsewhere, probably where Jamgon Lodro Thaye had lived, because he had such great devotion for this teacher. The benefactors built a small house where Lekshe Drayang lived for a year or two. This house can still be seen today.

THE BIRTH

The retreat center of Tsadra Rinchendra was created by Jamgon Lodro Thaye, but his main residence was a small monastery called Dzongsho Gompa. It was there that Ratak Tulku went after honoring his commitment to his benefactors. He lived there with his family for some years following the death of Jamgon Lodro Thaye.

During this residence, Ratak Tulku had a dream one night in which Jamgon Lodro Thaye appeared and told him, "I will come to your place and borrow your house" This is the same night that the future Kalu Rinpoche was conceived.

Some months later, Ratak Tulku and his family moved to a small monastery called Ridrak Gompa, which was located in an area known for its variety and quantity of medicinal herbs. Ratak Tulku was a lama and a physician. In Tibet, physicians assumed the complete making of their pharmacopoeia.

One morning Ratak Tulku went to pick plants with his wife and his helpers. He noticed that on the right side of the house a great number of plants were blooming, although it was not the season for them to blossom. He saw that as an auspicious sign. Later that day, his wife did not feel well and he advised her to return home. It was not time to give birth, but it was better to be cautious. Ratak Tulku continued to collect plants.

Drolkar returned to the house. While climbing the stairs leading to the door, although not in pain, she felt that she was ready to give birth. She hurried inside and told her mother that the child was ready to be born. "Do not worry" answered her mother, "Where did you hear that children were born so easily?" Nevertheless, Drolkar went to her bedroom and the child was born without pain or delay.

"The child is born!" she shouted to her mother.

"What are you telling me?" replied the mother. "It is impossible!" Going to the bedroom, she added, incredulously:

"So, where is it, this baby?"

She was forced to face the evidence. The child was there. Witnesses have said that birds started to sing in an unusual manner and a special rain, which Tibetans call metaphorically the "rain of flowers," fell on the house. Ratak Tulku, hearing the birds and seeing the rain, wondered what had happened. Returning home, he could not believe what his servants were telling him. His son was born.

It is also said that at the moment of birth, many wonderful signs manifested at the monastery of Jamgon Lodro Thaye and great lamas such as Situ Rinpoche, Dzokchen Kongtrul, and others felt particular inner experiences.

A FATHER DOES NOT GIVE UP HIS SON

When the child was older, his father taught him to read and write. The student appeared extremely talented and seemed to assimilate everything effortlessly. People in the neighborhood started to think that he was an extraordinary boy, without doubt a tulku. They told Ratak Tulku, who was known to be difficult. He told them that he did not want them to talk about his son in this manner. "My son, an extraordinary child? Perhaps. If so, he himself will reveal it. Meanwhile, I forbid you to speak of him as you do."

The child then took the monk robes 7 at the monastery of Begen. This monastery had no tulku, which was considered a disadvantage. The head of the monastery spoke with Ratak Tulku. "This child is your son and you are yourself a tulku; he seems to possess extraordinary qualities. Could we give him the title of tulku and enthrone him in our monastery?" Ratak Tulku gave a sharp answer, one more time: "You consider that the fact that this child is my son gives him a certain magnitude, and, due to his gifts, you would want to give him the title of tulku. I do not want to hear such words. If my son is a wonderful being, he himself will reveal it when he becomes an adult. It is useless to say that now. So, stop your comments and your projects. My son is now a monk; I do not want him to be treated differently than any ordinary monk at this time."

At other times, the young boy met such eminent lamas as Palpung Situ Rinpoche,8 Dzokchen Kongtrul Rinpoche, Sechen Kongtrul, and Kado Situ. They also noticed his qualities, declaring that he certainly was a tulku. They asserted that he was no doubt an emanation of Jamgon Lodro Thaye.9 It would be a good idea, they thought, to take him to Tsadra Rinchendra, the monastery founded by Jamgon Lodro Taye. Ratak Tulku did not change his

answer. "Perhaps my son is a tulku. The future will tell. Meanwhile, I beg you not to proceed with an enthronement, and allow him to have the life of an ordinary monk"

Dzokchen Kongtrul and Setchen Kongtrul insisted. Admitting that it was not necessary to take the child to the monastery of Jamgon Lodro Thaye for enthronement, they wanted him to remain in their own monastery as a monk, particularly to provide him with careful training. Ratak Tulku remained firm. He would give his son to no one.

The young Kalu Rinpoche continued his studies at the monastery of Begen, and was so brilliant that at the age of eleven, he received the title of khenpo.10 This was a new source of wonder and admiration for everyone. The intelligence of the child was so prodigious that, in little time, he assimilated that which normally requires the intellectual maturity of an adult and a dozen years of study.

Not only did the child devote this period to study, but he received the foundations (initiations, ritual readings, and explanations) of the traditional transmission from the great masters of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. He also received major ordination from Situ Rinpoche, who gave him the name of Karma Rangjung Kunkhyab. This name prophesied that his activity would spread in a spontaneous (rangjung) and universal (kunkhyab) manner—in other words, over the entire earth.

THE MASTER WAITS FOR THE DISCIPLE

When he was 16 years old, Kalu Rinpoche prepared to accomplish the traditional three-year retreat, that is, the usual training for the lamas of the Kagyupa school. The druppen (retreat master) of the retreat at Tsadra Rinchendra was Lama Norbu Tondrup. Lama Norbu Tondrup lived on a small hill before arriving at the retreat center. In order to get there, it was necessary to pass through a door opening onto a small path leading to the lama's residence. This door protected his tranquillity. No one could get through without receiving the approval of the two guardian monks, the lama's nephews. They questioned all newcomers about their visit.

However, one morning, Lama Norbu Tondrup requested that his nephews leave the door open because he was expecting the visit of an exceptional guest. "You must let him come to me as soon as he arrives" he ordered.

Lama Norbu Tondrup did not divulge any more details to his nephews, but he explained the reasons to Situ Rinpoche. The previous night, the protector deity Chadrupa (Six-Arm Mahakala) had appeared to him. Chadrupa announced that a disciple would arrive the next day. This disciple, possessing all the required qualifications, would later benefit many beings. Chadrupa concluded by announcing that he was going to welcome the disciple holding a great kata11 in his hands. This is why Lama Norbu Tondrup had given the order to keep the door wide open.

The two nephews awaited the arrival of this exceptional guest. They thought this could only be a person of high rank, such as the King of Dergue or perhaps a minister. The day was almost over, yet no one had come. At four

or five o'clock in the afternoon, they finally saw an ordinary monk followed by two companions carrying loads on their backs. The nephews went to see Lama Norbu Tondrup. "It is late, and the guest you are waiting for has not yet come. However, a monk and two companions are coming, should we let them enter?"

"Yes, yes, let them enter," answered the lama. After having introduced the visitors, the two nephews went down to the retreat center and told the monks that Lama Norbu Tondrup was expecting a special guest and that only an ordinary monk with two companions carrying his luggage had come. That made them all laugh.

The special visitor had indeed arrived. It was Kalu Rinpoche.12

RETREATS

During the three-year retreat, Kalu Rinpoche became Lama Norbu Tondrup's disciple. He received the complete transmission of initiations, ritual readings, and explanations of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage from him. During this same retreat, he also received many other initiations from passing lamas. After completing the retreat under the guidance of Lama Norbu Tondrup, Kalu Rinpoche returned home and, for two years, continued to receive teachings and initiations from a great number of lamas. He then decided to live as a complete recluse in places of retreat without telling anyone where he was.

Kalu Rinpoche's father was a famous physician. Up to the time of the retreat—with the exception of the last three years in Tsadra Rinchendra—Kalu Rinpoche had always helped his father harvesting plants, preparing remedies, and practicing medicine. From that time on, Kalu Rinpoche completely gave up all medical practices.

Kalu Rinpoche's places of retreat were, for the most part, so wild that an ordinary person would not have been able to stay there for a single day.13 Take the case, for example, of the cave of Radung Pu, a cave an opening so large that wind continually howled through it It was also populated by all kinds of insects that the darkness prevented one from seeing. How could one dwell in such a hostile place? Nevertheless, Kalu Rinpoche resided there for several years. Living in difficult places was not always a systematic objective. Sometimes, he stayed under a tent in a pleasant place near the family house where herds were grazing. During those years of retreat, he never worried about food, and apparently sometimes went a long time without eating.

THE DEER-GUIDE

Once, Kalu Rinpoche went on a retreat without taking any food. He did not tell his parents or anyone else where he was staying. Only two or three people had seen which direction that he had taken. His mother was extremely anxious. She would have preferred him to be in retreat at their place or, at least, at the monastery. Instead, he would go to uninhabited places without telling anyone where he was going and without food! Was he not going to die? Waiting for him became too difficult. His poor mother could not rest easy. Carrying food, she went to look for her son. She had gotten an

idea of the place where Kalu Rinpoche was meditating by questioning people. She walked a long time in the mountains, until she could no longer see a path or know where she was going. She felt lost. What could she do? Should she continue to climb this unknown slope, or descend into the valley? What chance did she have of finding her son? She started to cry.

High above her, at the bottom of a boulder she could not reach, appeared a small animal, a kind she had never seen before. It was like a deer but not much bigger than a dog. Not understanding how such an animal could suddenly appear, she was surprised. At first, she thought nothing of it. She decided it would be better to return home because there was no chance of finding her son. Then, the animal quickly went away. Finding this strange, she changed her mind and decided to follow. Unable to see the animal, she followed the tracks it left in the snow. They led her high into the mountains until she saw smoke. At that instant, the animal and its track completely disappeared. When she saw the smoke, this sign of life, the mother felt an immense joy believing it revealed the presence of her son.

She called his name several times with all her energy, until finally Kalu Rinpoche appeared at the entrance of a cave. She hurried to him. Her happiness at finding her son was mixed with sorrow. She saw that he had nothing to eat, not even tea to drink. Besides drinking the red juice of the large leaves of a local plant, it appeared that Kalu Rinpoche took no food at all.

The mother was so worried that, hugging her son, she started to cry again. She begged him not to stay in this hostile place and said that he would certainly die there. He should absolutely return home with her. Kalu Rinpoche did not listen to her and assured her that he would not die, as he was dwelling in meditative absorption. It was useless for her to worry.

"Come back home with me for just a few days" she insisted. "We will load the horses and give you food and everything that you need. Later, if you want, you will be able to come back to your retreat. But do not stay here with nothing!"

"It is not necessary for me to go home," said the hermit. "I do not even need the food you have brought me. You can take it back with you."

"Please, at least keep this food."

"All right, I will keep it. But it will not be for me only," Kalu Rinpoche cheerfully replied. "I have many small companions with me here. They are ants. We are going to share. When you go back to the village, do not tell this to anyone. If you speak out, that would create obstacles to my retreat. People would want to bring me food and this would create disturbances. You can tell my father, but no one else"

Returning home, she told her husband what she had seen. He was not particularly surprised. "My son is in the stage of asceticism. To devote time to austerity is wonderful. We should not prevent him from doing so"

This answer hardly satisfied the mother, who yelled with anger, "Beautiful words are good, but meanwhile you are letting our son die! It would be better to have food delivered to him there!"

The father replied that if she was concerned for her child, the best thing she could do would be to accumulate a lot of merit. This would certainly be beneficial to the young meditator.

ONE OR SEVERAL?

Although Kalu Rinpoche had wished to keep his retreat secret, some animal breeders noticed that the cave was inhabited. First, they were not sure if it was inhabited by a madman or a lama. Approaching, they observed that it was a yogi. They began to visit him, bringing him tsampa,14 curd, and other food. When they asked his name, he answered "My name is Karma." All the nomads discussed with admiration a certain "Lama Karma."

The disturbance, however, became too much and Kalu Rinpoche decided to look elsewhere for greater solitude. He traveled to a wooded area, and installed himself under a great tree. He wore no clothes and covered his body up to the neck with a great heap of leaves.15 He dwelled so long in retreat in this strange outfit that he created fear on the part of some people who no longer knew whether they were dealing with a man or a demonic creature. When asked his name, he replied, "My name is Lodro," using the name he received when taking the bodhisattva vows. The result was that people were now talking about "Lama Lodro"

Again, visitors became too numerous, so he left and went to a cave in which he had nothing besides three stones that he used as a stove to boil water, and a small quantity of tsampa. Yogis who meditate in caves generally do not enjoy a comfortable situation, but they at least have a minimum of commonly used objects. Kalu Rinpoche lived in complete destitution. Later, when Kalu Rinpoche founded retreat centers, he sometimes would hear retreatants complaining about dampness, smallness, or other defects of their cells. He would respond to the complainers, "You are right," but at the same time, he could not hold back a smile.

Another place he sometimes chose for his retreat was close to an elevated lake, accessible only in summer. He lived there several winters, and no one could bring him food. Each time he changed location, he also changed his name. In Kham,16 some people were heard talking about the famous hermit called "Lama Karma"; others about the famous yogi, "Lama Lodro"; and others of the solitary meditator Lama so and so. No one suspected that it was the same person with different names.

It was a widespread belief that Kalu Rinpoche remained 12 years in solitary retreat, but Lama Gyaltsen thinks a more precise calculation is 15 years. To fulfill a request of Situ Rinpoche and Lama Norbu Tondrup, Kalu Rinpoche again started to be active in helping others by founding and supervising retreat centers. He also taught monks and laypeople, first in Kham, then elsewhere in Tibet.

MYSTERIOUS WORKERS

When Kalu Rinpoche, following Lama Norbu Tondrup, became retreat master of the center of Tsadra Rinchendra, he wanted to renovate and enlarge it.

This project had already been envisioned by Jamgon Lodro Thaye, Situ Rinpoche, and Lama Norbu Tondrup himself. However, they had backed away from the project. The work was extremely difficult because of the presence of boulders, which seemingly hindered any new construction. Kalu Rinpoche said to Situ Rinpoche, who was in charge of Tsadra Rinchendra, "I know, you want to enlarge the retreat center. I am ready to take responsibility for this task. If you simply provide the necessary materials, I will manage the work"

"I do not believe this work is even possible" answered Situ Rinpoche.

"Yes, it is," insisted Kalu Rinpoche.

"And how will you do it?" asked Situ Rinpoche.

Then, Kalu Rinpoche presented a plan. He had drawn up the details for the future construction and was fully committed to accomplishing the work. Despite the fact they believed it was impossible, Situ Rinpoche and his counselors, facing the persistence of Kalu Rinpoche, agreed to provide materials and necessary workers. All those who had seen the plans would continue to believe that Kalu Rinpoche could not possibly undertake this project. Nevertheless, he told everybody not to worry. "We will do it," he assured everyone.

The laborers began to work hard, thinking that their efforts would be without result. They did not know they were going to benefit from mysterious helpers. Soon, they observed that each time they returned from a meal break or each time they resumed their task in the morning, some work had been done in their absence. What first appeared impossible to accomplish was finally finished. They noticed tracks of unusual size on the ground, marks left by four people who seemed to have been giants. Nevertheless, they saw no one. Everybody was amazed.

Kalu Rinpoche alone held the key to the mystery, from a dream he had. In this dream, a troop of tall and powerful men had come, holding in their hands spades, pickaxes, and other necessary tools for the construction.

"Where do you come from?" asked Kalu Rinpoche.

"We come from the monastery of the 'Accomplishing Wishes' 17 We have heard that you wanted to accomplish a very difficult task. We are here to help you." Then they introduced themselves.

"I am Chetrapala" said one of them. "These are Zinamitra, Takiradza, and Dugon Trakshe."18

Thanks to the assistance of the invisible workers, the new buildings were constructed: 25 rooms for retreatants, a temple devoted to Six-Arm Mahakala, a temple devoted to the deity Chakrasamvara, the residence of the retreat master, a kitchen, a yoga hall, and so on.

KALU RINPOCHE FOUND A TULKU

Once, Kalu Rinpoche was invited to teach and give initiations in the two great Gelukpa monasteries of Sera and Drepung, near Lhasa. At Sera monastery,

he was invited by two of the most eminent Gelukpa lamas, Mochok Rinpoche and Thome Rinpoche, and he gave empowerments to hundreds of monks.

During that time, traveling in the province of Tsang, he dreamed of three children coming to him. "I am Tsultrim Gonpo's Tulku,//19one of them said, "and these are two karmic friends. But now, I have met some obstacles"

"Do not worry about these obstacles" replied Kalu Rinpoche and, in the dream, he gave the child a skull cup and a knife.20

Some days later, continuing on his pilgrimage, he saw a village child playing. The child was similar to the one in his dream, and accompanied by the same two friends. The child seemed happy to see Kalu Rinpoche and spontaneously came to talk with him. This confirmed the feeling that Kalu Rinpoche had in his dream, and he knew then that he was in the presence of an exceptional child.

Somewhat later, Kalu Rinpoche went to Shangshung Dorjeden, a monastery founded by Khyungpo Naljor. The monastery had first belonged to the Shangpa lineage, and had later become a Gelukpa monastery. It had been supervised by a geshe21 of Drepung, deceased for several years. The general secretary had expended great effort to discover the geshe's reincarnation, but in vain. He was very old and tired. When Kalu Rinpoche came to visit him, the secretary told him, "You are a representative of the Shangpa lineage. It is true that this monastery, now belonging to the Gelukpa lineage, was once the seat of the Shangpa lineage. I have not been able to find the reincarnation of our geshe, and I no longer have a lot of energy. Since you have arrived, I believe that it would be good to offer you this monastery. You take responsibility for it. I can no longer take care of it"

Kalu Rinpoche considered this a very happy set of circumstances. Announced by a dream, he had met Tsultrim Gonpo's Tulku, one of the past holders of the Shangpa lineage. Then the monastery, the lineage seat, was being offered to him. He decided to find the family of the child, which happened to be a rich family, and reveal what the dream had said. Although the family was of the Gelukpa lineage, the father and the mother had great confidence in Kalu Rinpoche, and they received the news that their son was a tulku with joy. Kalu Rinpoche suggested placing the child at the monastery of Shangshung Dorjeden22 just given to him. It was agreed, and some time later, the child was led to the monastery and enthroned. Later, he received the totality of the Shangpa transmission from Kalu Rinpoche.

LAMA GYALTSEN'S MISSION

In the 1950s, although Kalu Rinpoche wished to go to Sikkim to hold a retreat, the Karmapa requested that he go to Bhutan. The Karmapa wanted the Dharma to recover all of its splendor in the country that had been strongly marked by the presence of Padmasambhava. Kalu Rinpoche took charge of a monastery in Bhutan for some time. Then he went to India and founded several retreat centers in Dalhusy, in Tso Pema, in Madhya Pradesh, and finally in Sonada.

In the early 1960s, when no Tibetan lama had dreamed of teaching in the West, Kalu Rinpoche said jokingly, "I wonder if it would not be necessary to spread the Dharma in the country of the red-hair people" an expression by which Tibetans sometimes refer to Westerners, as they are noticeable in Asia by their reddish or blond hair. Sometimes it happened that Kalu Rinpoche's jokes were prophecies. Lama Gyaltsen asked. "Do you plan to go there?" "No, I am only joking," replied Kalu Rinpoche. However, the future would reveal that this joke was far from insignificant.

Indeed, a short while later, Kalu Rinpoche went to Rumtek23 to see the Karmapa. During their meetings, they discussed the question of the possible introduction of the Dharma to the West. Their conclusion was that to have an exact idea of the situation there, it would be best to send someone to survey Western countries. Therefore, they asked Lama Gyaltsen if he would be willing to accept this role. He had begun to learn English in Darjeeling, but, aside from the rudiments of the language, he knew nothing of the distant countries of the "red-hair people." But, because his teachers were asking him, he accepted.

At this time, Tibetans had a blurred idea of the West. For them, because it was so far away, it was almost a mythical land from which no one returned. To go there was to disappear. When people dose to Lama Gyaltsen knew he was getting ready for this great journey, they were astonished. What strange reason could persuade him to undertake such a crazy adventure? He simply replied that the only reason for his departure was the request made by Kalu Rinpoche and the Karmapa.

In 1970, he flew first to England. Up to this point, he remembers, he did not feel entirely lost. From India, countries were next to each other. It was reassuring. America was more stressful. To go there, he had to cross an ocean that seemed limitless. Moreover, everything looked so strange, even the day was night and the night, day—compared with India.

Lama Gyaltsen stayed a year in the United States, visiting places as varied as New York, Texas, Minnesota, and Oklahoma. Zen Buddhism and Hinduism were taught a little, but not Tibetan Buddhism. Our "man with a mission" made many friends. Talking with people, he realized that not only did they have no idea of Tibetan culture, but sometimes they did not even know where Tibet was. He, especially, had begun to understand the Western paradox: a material comfort, unbelievable to an Easterner, accompanied by a strong inner discomfort. Many of his new friends had no religion, but he felt their need for something although their search was largely undefined. He explained concepts concerning the Buddha, Lama, Dharma, and so on. He particularly insisted on the notion that, according to Buddhism, all beings possess the seed of Buddhahood, the potential of becoming awakened, an idea that often provoked certain interest.

His observations led him to the following conclusion. It was probable that the Dharma of Tibet would be beneficial to the West because it seemed to answer some needs. However, it had to be taught by a realized lama. A scholar would risk transmitting nothing beneficial for the mind, and also lose his way.

The links of friendship forged by Lama Gyaltsen in America were very strong. Many people who served as his hosts considered him as their own son. They wanted to keep him with them and pay for his studies at a university. Despite the sadness created by his leaving, he decided to return to India. It was now necessary to report what he had found in his mission.

Back in India, he shared his impressions of traveling with the Karmapa and Kalu Rinpoche, emphasizing the fact that a lama who was only a scholar would be unable to efficiently bring the Dharma to the West. An accomplished lama was needed. After examining this issue, the Karmapa declared, "If Kalu Rinpoche can go to the West, he will certainly accomplish much benefit. He is a real bodhisattva and his realization is very great" Therefore, the Karmapa asked Kalu Rinpoche if he would accept the assignment.

"If it is a matter of benefiting beings, I am ready to go, even if I become ill or die" replied Kalu Rinpoche.

THE WEST: FOR AND AGAINST ALL

With the exception of Trungpa Rinpoche and Akong Rinpoche,24 who were young and thoroughly trained in western culture, no Tibetan lama had ever taught in Europe or America. Most Tibetans wondered whether their tradition could interest Westerners as something other than a mere object of curiosity. When Kalu Rinpoche decided to go, a number of his compatriots wondered if the old lama had not simply lost his reason. They told him that he was already very old, that he knew neither the languages nor the customs of these distant countries, and that he would encounter immense difficulties.

As far as Kalu Rinpoche was concerned, he already had a few disciples from Europe or America, but he did not deny the extreme differences in lifestyle, culture, or manner of thinking that distinguished Tibetans from Westerners. Nevertheless, he profoundly believed that the mind was the same, not only as Buddha nature, but also in its aspiration for happiness and its wish to avoid the suffering engendered by the flow of conflicting emotions and karma that hold the mindprisoner. The teachings of the Buddha function to liberate all beings, whoever they are, from their common prison. This is why Kalu Rinpoche was convinced that Tibetan Buddhism was more universal than just Tibetan and that Westerners could also find a spiritual nourishment within it.

Circumstances were favorable for Kalu Rinpoche's project. It happened at this time that a wealthy American disciple named James Ebin decided to invite Kalu Rinpoche to his country. Therefore, Kalu Rinpoche left India in 1971, going first in Jerusalem where he paid homage to holy places, then to Rome where he had an interview with Pope Paul VI, and finally to Paris where he stayed a few days with Anne Berry, his first French disciple. He spent a year in the United States and Canada, then returned to France.

Tibetans, as we have seen, hardly believed in the possibility of introducing the Dharma to the West, and they were not the only ones. During Kalu Rinpoche's first sojourn in Paris, a Frenchman who had some knowledge of

Buddhism because he worked at the Burmese Embassy, and who later helped spread Tibetan Buddhism in France, came to see him at Anne Berry's home to express his point of view about this visit.

"We are happy you are in France, but above all, do not teach Buddhism! Here, everyone is a Christian and if you were to teach, no one would be interested. On the contrary, you would only make people uncomfortable. Do not hope to make the Dharma known here."

"Your viewpoint undoubtedly has certain value," replied Kalu Rinpoche. "However, Christian people practice religion. They believe in a superior reality, God, and they also believe that the consequences of their acts can lead them to heaven or hell. I, myself, have met with the Pope and felt great joy at this meeting. I have a great esteem for Christians, and I believe that they also would appreciate Buddhist teachings"

The man burst into laughter, showing his profound skepticism.

"Christianity and Buddhism have the same goal, which is to help all beings" added Kalu Rinpoche. "Both traditions share in preventing beings from falling into inferior worlds and in guiding beings toward liberation. They can understand each other, and I hope my teaching will be beneficial. I will go now to America" he concluded, "but I will return to France and teach. My sole wish is that everyone who sees me, hears about me, touches me, or thinks of me, who has a connection with me in one way or another, will obtain Buddhahood. This is why I believe that I can be useful."

After returning from America, Kalu Rinpoche was again invited to visit by Anne Berry. He taught in many places and had many disciples. Two or three years later, the skeptical Frenchman met him again and acknowledged his misjudgment. He had not believed it possible to teach Buddhism in France and interest people. He was surprised and expressed his admiration.

This first trip opened the gate to the teaching of Tibetan Buddhism in America and Europe. An anecdote may help us to appreciate this influence. In the USA, in the west coast city of Seattle, a Sakyapa lama of the same generation as Kalu Rinpoche made his residence. His name was Deshung Rinpoche. He was both a scholar and a realized being. American authorities had invited him to teach Tibetan language at their university. Conscientiously filling his duties, he noticed that his students were showing interest in Tibetan culture and civilization. However, he did not think that North Americans would become intimately involved in the Buddhist approach. How surprised he was one day to see a young American wearing a mala around his neck. He asked the American if he wore the mala as a necklace or if he used it. Yes, the young man used it. He had taken refuge, recited mantras, and had come to ask Deshung Rinpoche some precise questions. Who taught him all this? It was none other than Kalu Rinpoche. Deshung Rinpoche was impressed. From then on, he changed his thinking about Buddhism for Westerners. He began to teach and was followed by many disciples. He had not even imagined that they would be interested in a 1000-year-old doctrine coming from the Land of Snow!

Back in India, Kalu Rinpoche reported on his journey to the Karmapa and encouraged the Karmapa to go to the West. Because of his privileged relationship with many great lamas of other lineages, Kalu Rinpoche inspired the Dalai Lama (Gelukpa), Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche (Nyingmapas), Sakya Trizin (Sakyapa), and others lamas by his own experience of teaching in these far-away countries.

SPONTANEOUS ESTEEM FOR CHRISTIANITY

After Jerusalem, the second stop made by Kalu Rinpoche in the West was Rome, where he obtained an interview with Pope Paul VI. This certainly was the first encounter between a Pope and a Tibetan Lama.

Lama Gyaltsen, who was present during the interview, retained vivid memories of it. First, Kalu Rinpoche introduced himself, explained the situation in Eastern Tibet, and stated the direction of his activity. "I try to benefit all beings"

As for the Pope, he talked about his preoccupations. "Nowadays, there are wars and great difficulties on the planet earth; this is because people do not keep the vows and commitments they have made. From that, there is misfortune and suffering in this world. I beg you to pray for people to respect their vows and commitments in order for harmony to reign throughout the world"

According to Lama Gyaltsen, happiness at this encounter was visible on the face of the head of Catholicism, as well as on the face of the Tibetan lama. Mutual understanding and appreciation appeared to be very profound. Kalu Rinpoche would later repeat that he was encouraged by the words of the Pope for his mission in the West.

Concerning this and other matters, the thought of Kalu Rinpoche always exceeded Tibetan norms. Generally, Tibetans had no interest in meeting representatives of other religions. Before his first journey, Kalu Rinpoche had said that, as far as he was concerned, he wanted to meet qualified representatives of Christianity. Other people found this quite strange. Why did a great lama want to have contact with Christians? "It is beneficial" replied Kalu Rinpoche.

In Kham, Kalu Rinpoche had already heard about Christianity from missionaries who were living there. They translated some Christian books into Tibetan; spoke about God, heaven, and hell; and they helped the poor. However, the purpose of the teaching was viewed differently by the missionaries and the lamas. Missionaries preached far and wide in order to convert people to Christianity. As for the lamas, they considered that if there was an aspiration by someone to become Buddhist, they would reply to it, otherwise they contented themselves with praying for the benefit of all beings. They did not think it was absolutely necessary to convert people to Buddhism. This desire of the missionaries to convert people hardly pleased Tibetans. For example, at Kandze Marathong, a town in Kham, missionaries had erected large buildings and the Khampas, insulted by the display of this conquering attitude, ended up burning down the buildings.

When he lived in Kham, Kalu Rinpoche had read some books translated by the missionaries. He was disappointed to discover the lack of profundity in them. They only described the good that leads to heaven and the sin that leads to hell. They contain no vision of ultimate reality or any equivalent to liberation or Buddhahood. This disappointment was far from being a judgment. From then on, Kalu Rinpoche used to say that Christianity was certainly an authentic tradition, but that the external presentation of it was, no doubt, a primary approach. As presented to him, its deeper aspects were not manifest.

Moved by the wish to know Christianity better and meet priests capable of revealing the profound meaning of their tradition, he wanted to visit holy places in Israel and meet with the Pope in Rome. Then, in America and Canada, he met many priests and ministers. A particularly interesting encounter took place with the help of M. Lalungpa, a Tibetan living in the United States who had a perfect command of the English language. Kalu Rinpoche asked questions of the Christians and answered their questions as well. Both the Christians and Kalu Rinpoche were happy with the answers to their questions. After this, Kalu Rinpoche often said that the Christian tradition appeared good to him, and that it was certainly capable of helping many people.

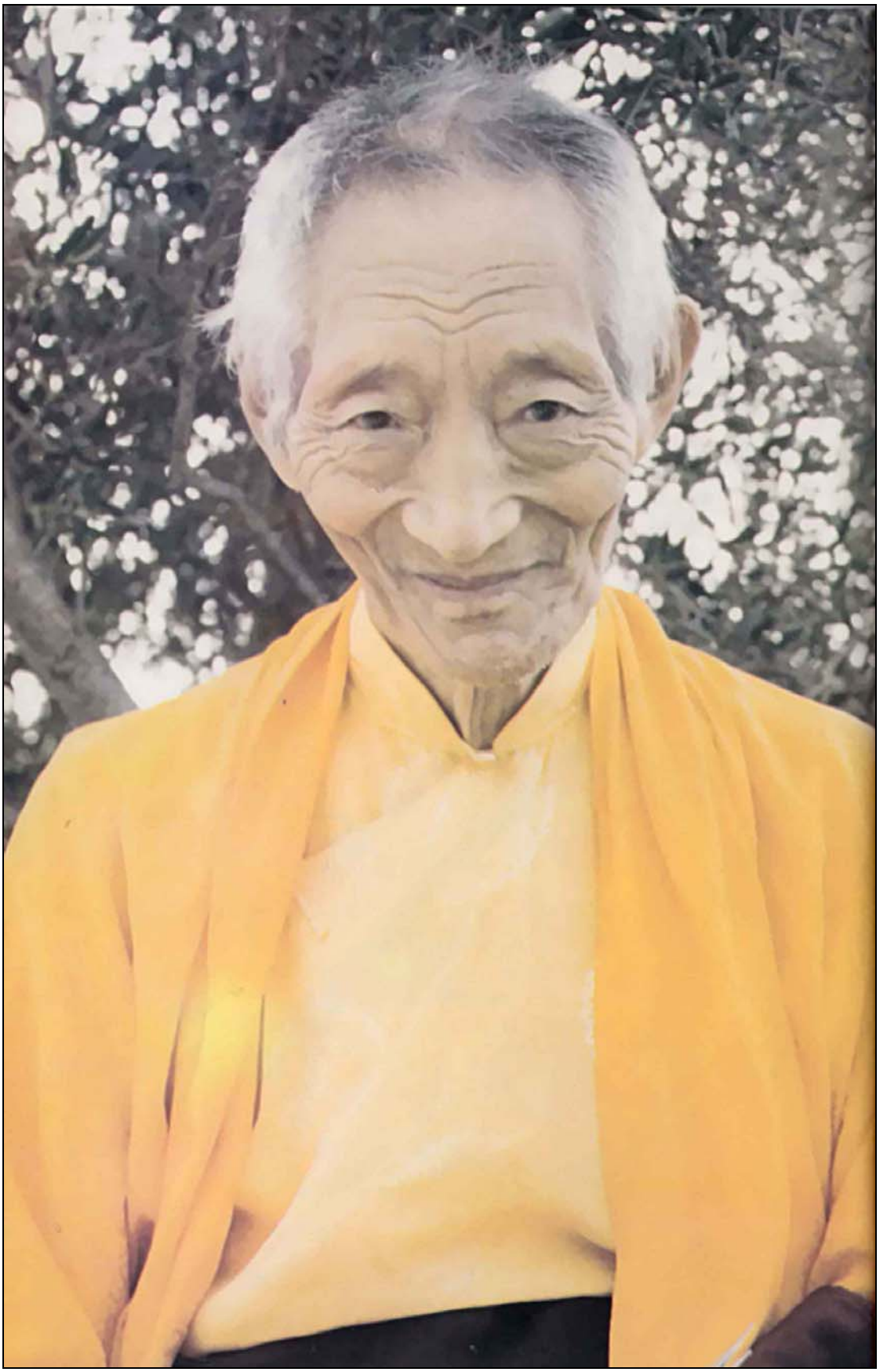
GIVING EVERYTHING AWAY

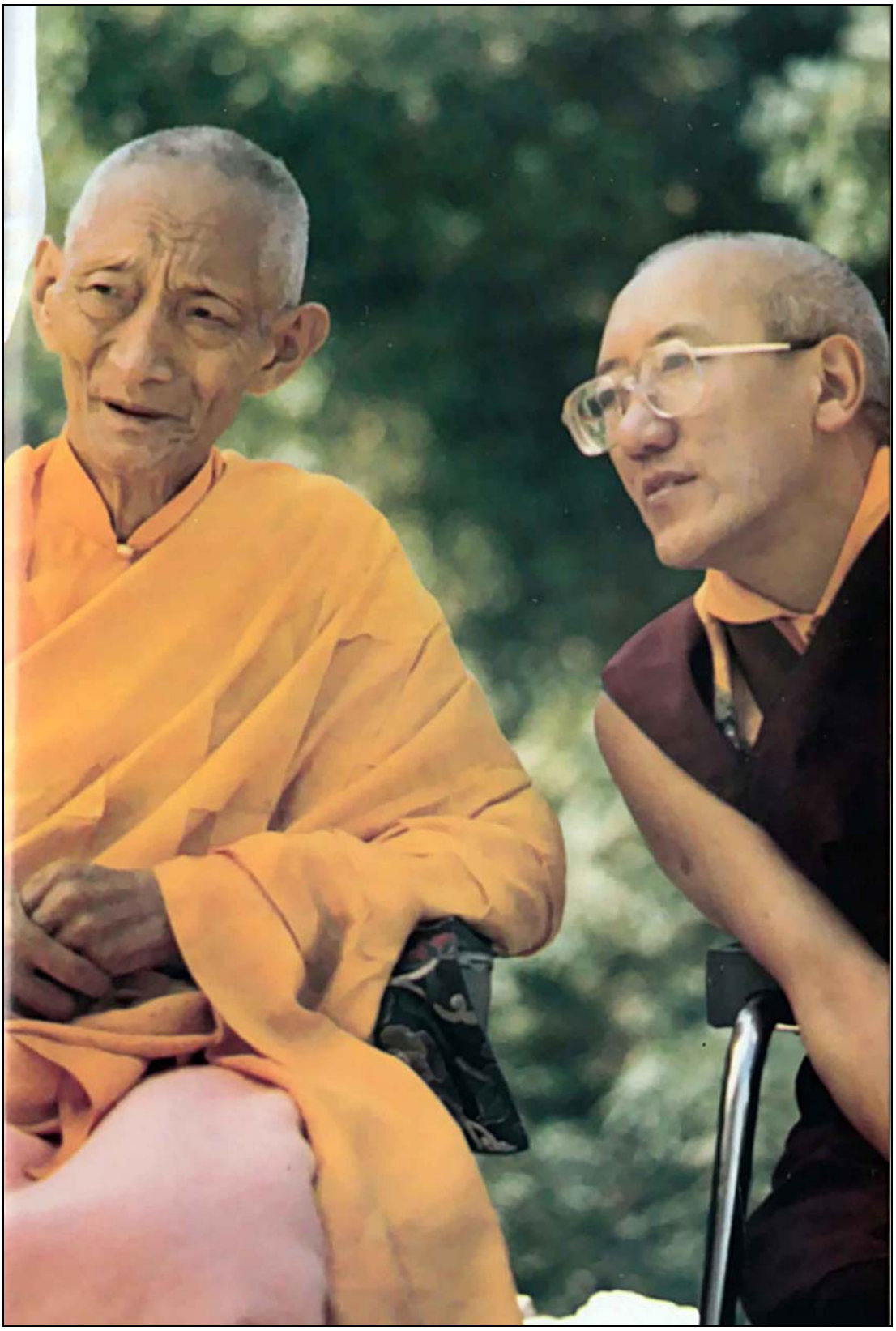
One of the practices of Tibetan lamas is to offer all their possessions to their master. Lama Gyaltsen witnessed this several times on behalf of Kalu Rinpoche. The manner in which Kalu Rinpoche dealt with such material donations is explained by Lama Gyaltsen. The response was sometimes surprising and disconcerting for people when it was not perfectly understood. Although Kalu Rinpoche never asked for anything, he never refused to teach, and never discriminated between the poor and the rich. He never refused an offering, and sometimes he gave the impression of accumulating. And it was true that he accumulated things for two or three years, giving donated money to Lama Gyaltsen, who was in charge of the money without being allowed to use it. When Kalu Rinpoche thought the sum in his possession was sufficient, he divided it into three uneven parts. The largest one, he offered to the Lama, and, in one way or another, to the Three Jewels. The second portion was reserved for the poor, and the third was devoted to the feeding of animals. In the end, he kept nothing for himself, being free of all attachment.

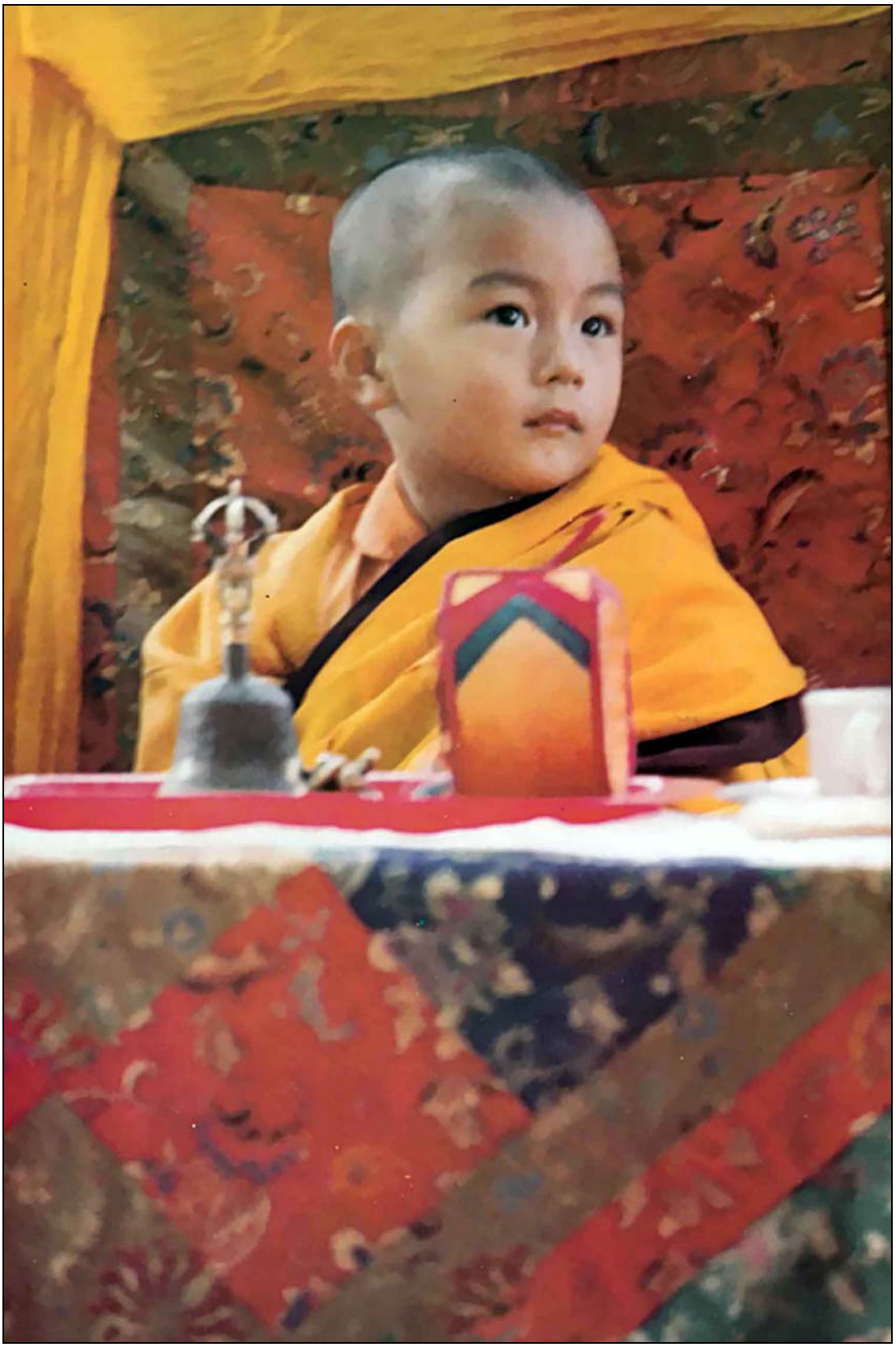
He was always satisfied. If someone gave him food, he did not request another kind. If he wore a piece of cloth, he did not wish to have another one and was concerned with neither cold nor heat. He could wear a heavy piece of clothing during the summer heat, and not request warm clothing during the cold season. He often wore clothes made of fine and beautiful fabrics. They were offered to him by his disciples and servants. He, himself, did not feel any need for them. In India, when a single mosquito seeks to sting, we do everything to chase it away; Kalu Rinpoche never budged when mosquitoes devoured his arm. In everything, he was extremely simple and completely detached.

Through these episodes of Kalu Rinpoche1 s life, we have some idea of the person. However, as far as knowing the extent of his beneficial activity and the profundity of his realization, we cannot. The activity of bodhisattvas is indeed so vast; it goes beyond our capability of understanding.

The First Karmapa, Tusum Kyenpa (1110-1193)







The Events of Kalu Rinpoche's Life

Bokar Rinpoche wrote this short biography just after Kalu Rinpoche passed away.

THE NURTURING OF FAITH

A Summary of the Awakened Activity of the Sublime Lama

OM SOTI

> *With the majesty of countless eons of the two accumulations, you have nurtured your being,*
> *You have gained the mastery of creation, completion, and bodhicitta*
> *And enjoy the magnificent fulfillment of the two benefits, for self and others*
> *Rangjung Kunkhyab, Naturally-Arising and All-Pervading,*
> *I prostrate at your feet.*

These words of eulogy introduce the account of the glorious and holy Lama, a supreme guide, whose perfect kindness and wonderful activity encompass all teachings and beings in these times of degeneration. When it is necessary to speak of him by name, he is called the Lord of Refuge, Khyabje Kalu Rinpoche, the Lama Vajradhara. This brief summary of the activity of this Awakened Lama is offered as a reminder and incentive to nourish the faith of those who are devoted to him. As many beings of great vision have attested, he is the manifestation of Awakened activity of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye. Jamgon Kongtrul, whose life was prophesied by the Buddha, was the light of the teachings of all traditions and the crown ornament of all the learned and accomplished ones in the Land of Snows (Tibet). The Lord of Refuge, Lama Vajradhara, Khyabje Kalu Rinpoche, was born amid marvelous signs and portents in the chain of snowy mountains of Tresho in Kham, eastern Tibet, in the year 1904. His father, Lekshe Drayang, was a mantric adept, the thirteenth in the series of incarnations of Ratak Palsang; and Drolkar (White Tara) was his mother. Even from a very early age, he exhibited signs characteristic of a spiritually advanced being and indicative of prior training. These signs included renunciation of cyclic existence, compassion for beings, and faith and devotion toward lamas and the Dharma. He learned to read and write and developed an understanding of the meaning of the Dharma without any effort, simply by receiving these teachings.

During his thirteenth year, at the major Kagyu seat in eastern Tibet, the monastery of Palpung, he received monastic ordination from Jamgon Tai Situ

Pema Wangchok and received the name Karma Rangjung Kunkhyab, Naturally-Arising and All-Pervading. The fact that his name and its significance were in perfect agreement was later recognized by all.

At the age of 16, he entered the great retreat center of Tsadra Rinchendrak, the seat of Jamgon Lodro Thaye, where he completed the retreat of three years and three months. At that time, he received ripening empowerments and liberating instructions of the old and new translation schools, and in particular, the instructions and practice techniques of the Five Golden Teachings of the great siddha Khyungpo Naljor. These he received directly from the retreat master, Lama Norbu Tondrub, who had brought his own experience and realization to perfection. All these teachings were bestowed and received, just as the full contents of one vase are poured into another. While cultivating the familiarization with and accomplishment of these practices, he exhibited unusually excellent faith, diligence, experience, and realization.

Both before and after this retreat, he studied, meditated on, and practiced innumerable cycles of ripening empowerments and liberating instructions connected with the sutras and tantras of the old and new translation schools. He received these teachings from many great beings of all traditions. These included the erudite Tashi Chopel, a disciple of Jamgon Kongtrul, Situ Pema Wangchok, Khyentse Shenpen Ozer, Palden Khyentse Ozer, Pawo Tsuklak Mawe Wangchuk, Tsatsa Drubgyu, Dzogchen Rinpoche, Zhechen Gyaltsap, Zhechen Kongtrul, and Khyentse Chokyi Lodro. Wishing to give up all the comforts and riches of this life and being satisfied with whatever was at hand, he dedicated himself exclusively, to nurturing the force of his heartfelt aspiration to practice meditation in a mountain retreat.

Consequently, at the age of 25, he renounced everything, externally and internally—companions, servants, family ties, material comfort, and so on. He lived in solitary mountain retreats at Lhapu, in the region of Derge, and in various other places. For 12 years, he practiced the strictest possible asceticism with indefatigable perseverance.

Subsequently, at the command of Situ Pema Wangchok, he returned to Palpung and served over a period of many years as the retreat master and lama of the two retreat centers, Naroling and Niguling. Of the numerous disciples who completed the retreat, bearing the victory banner of practice, many are still living today in eastern, central, and western Tibet. When he was 40, Kalu Rinpoche visited and made offerings before the Jowo and Sakyamuni, the two principal statues in Lhasa, and visited important places of pilgrimage in central and western Tibet. When in Lhasa, he bestowed the ripening empowerments, liberating instructions, and supportive scriptural transmissions for the Five Golden Teachings of the glorious Shangpa Kagyu to many beings, such as Kar Dorje from Sera Monastery, to Lhatsun Rinpoche, to Tokme Rinpoche, and to Mokchok Je of Drepung Monastery. In this way, he entrusted them with the teachings of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage.

Kalu Rinpoche revitalized the teachings of the Jonang and Shangpa traditions at such places as Taranata's monastery of Takten Puntsokling, the

seat of the Jonang—a tradition enriched by the majesty of both its cultural and spiritual heritage. He fostered these systems of teachings at Khyungpo Naljor's monastery, the Vajra Seat of Zhang Zhun, and Mokchokpa's monasteries at Lhapu and Nyetang. Thus, he initiated great activity beneficial to both the doctrine and beings. After that, Rinpoche traveled to Eastern Tibet and resided in Palpung Monastery and Horkok. There he received teachings, which he contemplated, cultivated, and accomplished. He then propagated these through imparting empowerments, scriptural transmissions, and explanations. Rinpoche thus furthered the development of the teachings and brought significant benefit to all beings connected to him.

In 1955, because of the unsettled conditions in eastern Tibet, Rinpoche returned to central Tibet. Princess Ashe Wangmo of the Kingdom of Bhutan was a being who had developed noble aspirations and was of excellent character. Hearing of the fame of this great lama, she became extremely devoted to him. She fervently requested His Holiness, the supreme and glorious 16th Karmapa, to appoint Rinpoche as the abbot of Jangchub Choling Monastery in the Kurto region of Bhutan, and as the personal lama of the royal family. As a result, His Holiness issued a directive that Rinpoche should go to Bhutan, which he did in 1957. For many years, he maintained, protected, and propagated the teachings. He established new retreat centers for the teachings of both the Kamtsang and Shangpa traditions, and built new stupas. Through his activities in that region, Rinpoche led many disciples on the path to freedom and omniscience.

In 1966, Rinpoche moved to Samdrup Darjayling Monastery in Sonada, Darjeeling District, India. The first project that he carried out there was the building of a three-year retreat center. At Rumtek Monastery, in 1973, following the directive of His Holiness, the great 16th Karmapa, Kalu Rinpoche fully bestowed various cycles of teachings to the four Eminences who are the light of the Kagyu traditions—Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Rinpoche, and Gyaltsap Rinpoche. These teachings included instructions for the path of skillful means of the Karma Kamtsang practice lineage—the Six Doctrines of Naropa that derive from the tradition of the four transmissions—and the path of liberation, mahamudra. Moreover, he bestowed the complete cycle of the Five Golden Teachings of the Shangpa tradition. The entirety of these teachings was imparted and received just as the contents of one vase are poured into another.

Similarly, following the directive of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Rinpoche bestowed empowerments and scriptural transmissions to many spiritual friends, such as abbots and lamas of His Holiness1 own monastic college, Namgyal Tratsang, and to those of the upper and lower tantric colleges. Included were the Five Golden Teachings of the Shangpa tradition, the cycle of Thirteen Empowerments of the Protector, and Dorje Phurba of the New Treasure tradition.

From 1971 until 1981, Rinpoche traveled many times to various lands: the United States, Canada, Europe, Southeast Asia, and so on. Rinpoche nurtured those who became his disciples by first giving them the vow of refuge in the Three Jewels. He gave instructions in the paths of the Small

and Great Vehicles, emphasizing the law of karma, the cultivation of virtue, and the elimination of unwholesome actions. In particular, he bestowed the ripening empowerments and liberating instructions of Vajrayana, and most significantly, he conferred the great empowerment of glorious Kalachakra many times. The principal way, however, that Rinpoche fostered the spiritual growth of his disciples was to impart full instructions in the meditation of the Great Compassionate One, Chenrezig. In various countries, Rinpoche established more than 70 Dharma centers and 20 retreat centers and built 20 stupas. Rinpoche entrusted the responsibility of these centers to more than 30 lamas who were his students and had completed the three-year retreat. His spiritual activity and extraordinary kindness toward beings had a tremendous influence on all beings throughout this world and gave the Buddhist teachings added impact.

In 1983, Rinpoche further manifested his great concern for others by bestowing the Treasury of Precious Revealed Instructions to the Crown Ornaments of the Kagyu tradition, Their Eminences, the Regents of His Holiness Karmapa.

In all, several thousand lamas, tulkus, members of the sangha, and faithful disciples from India, Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, and all parts of the world, both East and West, gathered to receive this cycle of essential instructions. Out of compassion toward all beings, Rinpoche resolved to further their understanding and practice of the three vehicles of the Buddha's sacred Dharma. Accordingly, in 1986, he established a translation group called "The International Translation Committee" for the translation of the Encyclopedia of Knowledge (the Great Treatise, All-Pervading Knowledge, the Condensation of the Ocean of Buddhist Sutras, Tantras, and Culture). Translators from various Western countries are presently continuing this work under the guidance of qualified Tibetan scholars of all traditions.

In 1988, Rinpoche began construction of a 100-foot stupa beside a major thoroughfare in Salugara, near Siliguri, West Bengal, in the eastern part of India. This stupa will hold five types of relics, and will be an object of veneration that will bring liberation to anyone who sees it.

In February of 1989, Kalu Rinpoche traveled to Sherab Ling, the seat of His Eminence, Situ Rinpoche. He joined Situ Rinpoche and other eminent Regents to preside over the ritual of Mahakala, to observe the sacred dances, and to participate in the elaborate festivities celebrating the new year.

From there, Kalu Rinpoche journeyed to Dharamsala to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. At that time, His Holiness expressed his appreciation for Rinpoche's various activities in the interest of Buddhist teachings and all beings, and His Holiness offered his encouragement for these projects.

On the fifteenth of March, Kalu Rinpoche returned to his home, his monastery in Sonada. From then on, Rinpoche showed signs of increasing physical discomfort. His closest attendant, his nephew Lama Gyaltsen, felt unable to take the responsibility for Rinpoche's medical care upon himself. He therefore encouraged Rinpoche to travel to New Delhi, France, or another

country in the East or West, to take advantage of superior medical facilities. Rinpoche, however, did not accept this suggestion, saying that wherever he might travel, it would ultimately be of no benefit to his health, and that it would be best to remain where he was. After that, Rinpoche's health deteriorated, and, following the advice of his doctor, he went to a nursing home in Siliguri to receive medical attention and stayed there for three weeks. At this point, his health showed signs of improvement.

On the fifth of May, Rinpoche returned to his monastery in Sonada. After a few days, however, his health again became critical. On the tenth of May, 1989, at 3:00 P.M., at the age of 85, this exemplary being appeared to have left his physical body. His mind, in the pure state of clear light, merged inseparably with the expanse of totality. He has put aside his physical manifestation in this world for a period, out of the noblest of intentions: to provide incentive for those who, like me, have become more untamed in spite of our connection with the Dharma and cling to notions of permanence, and out of consideration for beings in other realms in need of his influence.

All of us—his disciples, followers, and those in any way connected to him—were plunged into the darkness of despair, without refuge or protection. At that time of complete helplessness, Their Eminences Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, Shamar Rinpoche, Chadral Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Gyaltsap Rinpoche, and others arrived, in succession, and paid homage to the ku dung, Rinpochefs sacred remains.

They offered fervent prayers that the vision and noble intentions of Kalu Rinpoche might be fully and ultimately realized. Above all, they lightened our sorrow by giving us the firm assurance that a precious tulku will soon appear to become once again a protector of the teachings and a guide for all beings—myself and all his disciples and followers. To that end, they composed and gave us several prayers for his swift rebirth. Moreover, each presided over the rituals performed during the seven successive weeks and manifested uplifting care and kindness.

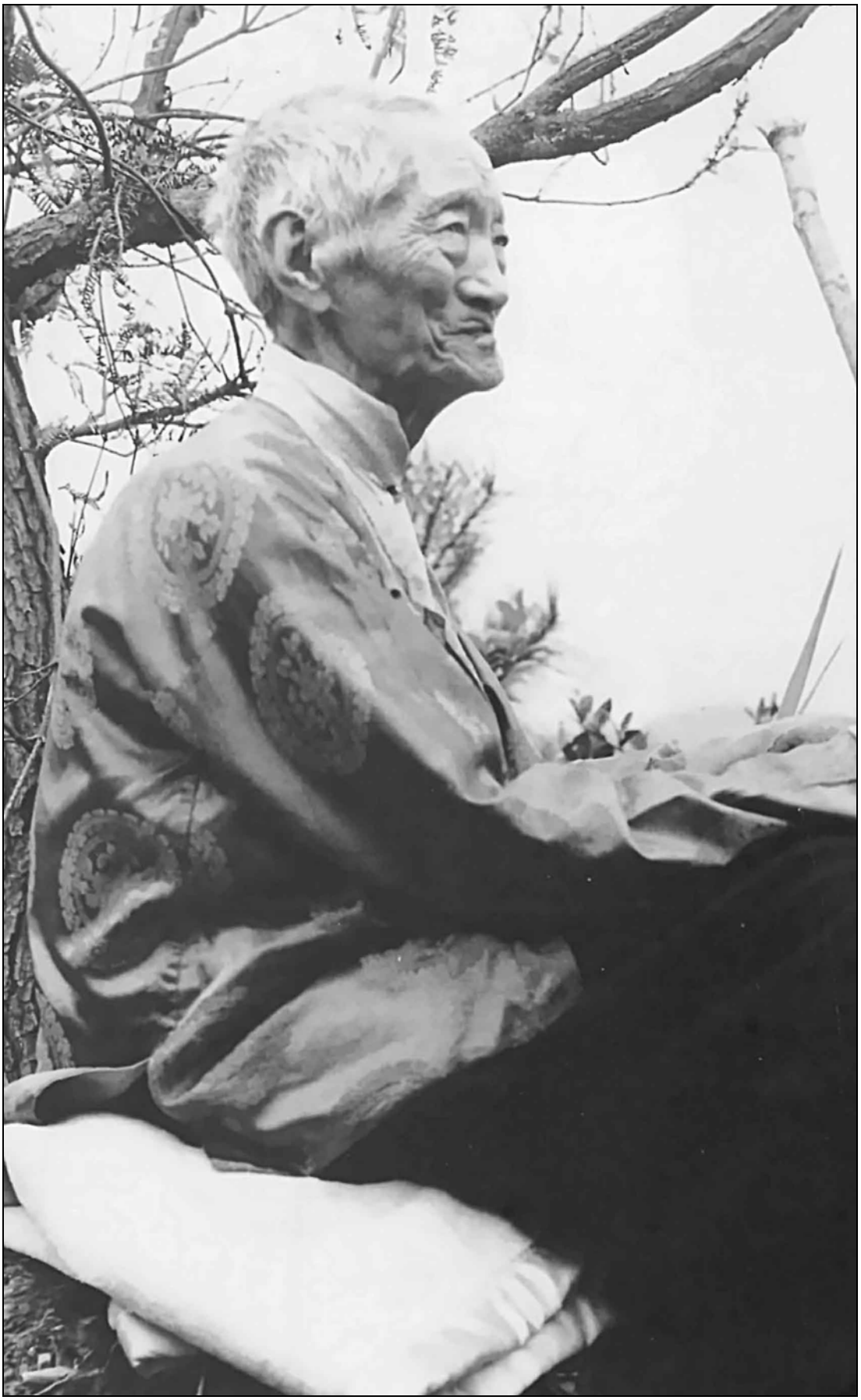
In summary, from a very early age, our Noble Lama developed a feeling of disinterest in worldly life, which led him to renounce cyclic existence and enter the gate of the Buddha's precious teaching. This great Vajra-Master came to hold the three types of ordination—the individual liberation vows, the bodhisattva vows, and the Vajrayana vows.

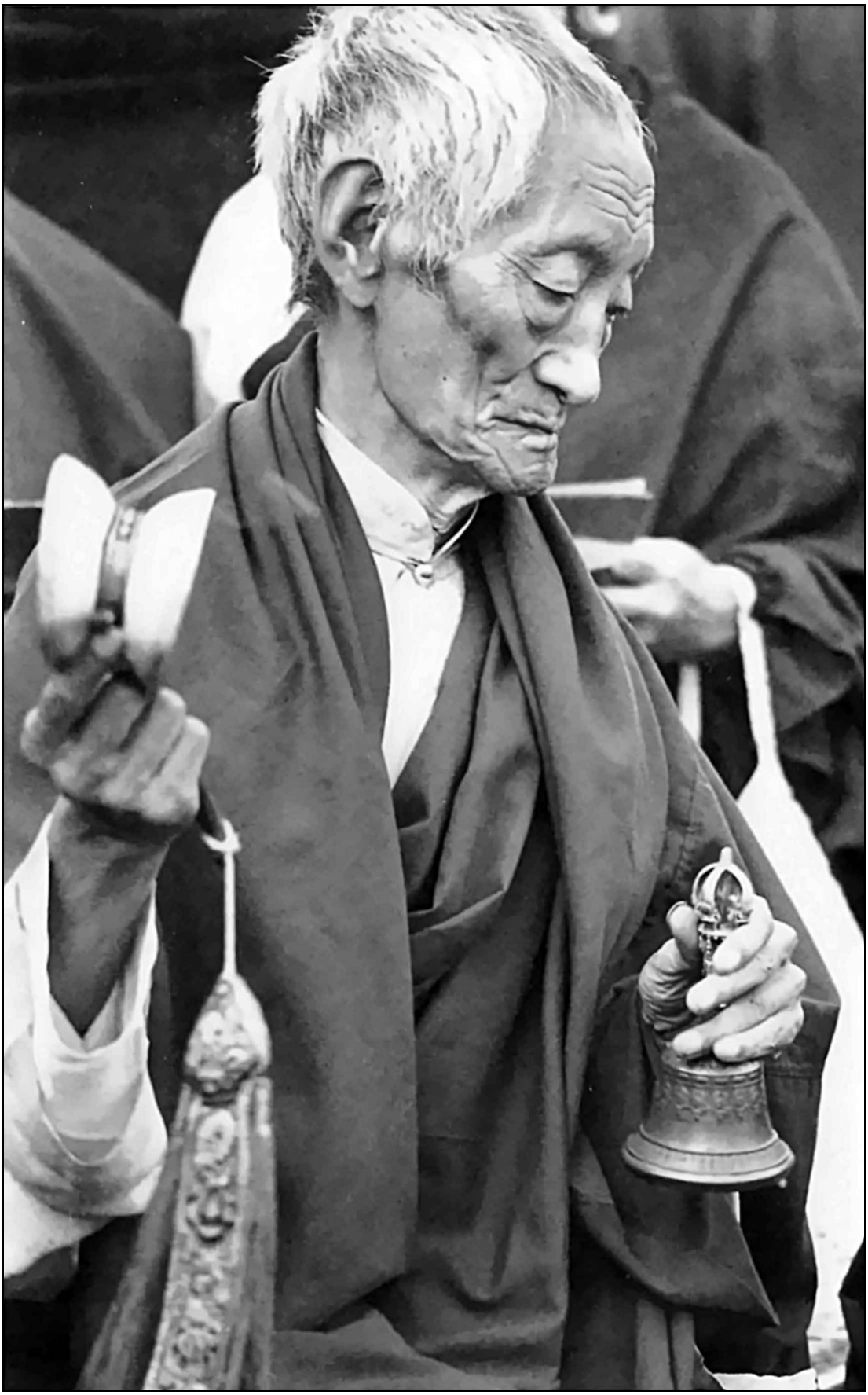
Through listening, reflecting, and meditating, he furthered his personal spiritual development. Through exposition, debate, and composition, he benefitted others. Through his qualities of intelligence, nobility, and integrity, he benefitted himself and others. Through the nine qualities characteristic of spiritually developed beings, he explained, propagated, maintained, and protected the teachings of the Conqueror, and most particularly, the precious teachings of the Karma Kagyu and Shangpa Kagyu traditions. Out of his exceptional kindness and bodhicitta, he furthered the propagation of these teachings by establishing communities of ordained sangha, the very foundation of the Buddhist doctrine, and by founding centers for the study and practice of the Dharma. He has carried out this activity throughout the world—in the central and wider regions of Tibet, in India, China, Bhutan,

Sikkim, and so on. In these ways, he has been unequaled in enriching and extending the life of the sacred instructions. Among his numerous disciples who are lineage holders are many exceptional spiritual friends: the eminent Regents of the Kagyu tradition who are the spiritual sons of His Holiness Karmapa, as well as lamas and incarnate tulkus of all traditions. Moreover, in the world, there are countless people, both men and women, who have had the good fortune to be his disciples. And, there have been numberless beings who have had significant connection with him. He has placed all of them on the path to freedom and omniscience.

This brief account of the events of Rinpoche's life has been written by a disciple of the lowest capability, one who has enjoyed for many years the kind protection of this Noble Lama, Great Vajradhara himself. I, the one called Bokar Tulku or Karma Ngedon Chokyi Lodro, have composed this on the third of June, 1989, in front of the precious ku dung. By this, may I and all beings attain the state of realization of this Noble Lima. Sarva Mangalam.

White Tara





CANADA DRY
GINGER ALE

Young Kalu Rinpoche (July 1992)
His father, Lama Gyaltsen Ratak
His mother, Kalzang Drolkar

Kalu Rinpoche's Last Moments

What follows are two open letters addressed to all disciples of the Lord of Refuge, Khyabje Kalu Rinpoche, from Bokar Tulku Rinpoche, Rinpoche's principal disciple and Dharma heir, Lama Gyaltsen, Rinpoche's nephew and life-long personal attendant, and Khenpo Lodro Donyo, abbot of Sonada Monastery. These letters are in Bokar Rinpoche's handwriting, while the content represents their shared experience.

OPEN LETTERS TO DISCIPLES AND FRIENDS OF THE LORD OF REFUGE, KHYABJE KALU RINPOCHE

At 8 P.M., Wednesday, May 10, 1989, our precious Lama, Khyabje Kalu Rinpoche, passed from this world into the pure realms. In the interest of bringing Rinpoche's presence closer to each of his disciples at this time of our shared loss and grief, we would like to present an account of the events of the last few months, as well as of the events that will now unfold. In late November, Rinpoche traveled with the lamas and monks of his monastery, and with the members of his translation committee, a total of about 100 persons, to Bero Khyentse Rinpoche's monastery in Bodhgaya. Rinpoche made it dear that he wanted everyone to travel together with him, and so the monastery drove in a caravan of two buses and two cars—Rinpoche surrounded by his monks and disciples—from Sonada to Bodhgaya. Having established the activities of the lamas, monks and the translators, Rinpoche traveled to Los Angeles for a visit of a few weeks, during which he gave a number of empowerments and teachings. Rinpoche was invited to stay in America to build up his strength, but he was determined to return to India to support the translation work that had been his principal concern for the last two years.

Upon returning to India, Rinpoche visited Bodhgaya briefly, encouraging his monks and translators in their activities and meeting with Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, who was completing a Drupchen (great ritual) at the Kagyu monastery; then he traveled to Sherab Ling, the monastery of Tai Situ Rinpoche. Kalu Rinpoche had been invited on many occasions to visit Sherab Ling and had been unable to go there in the past. He felt this trip would allow him to participate in the losar (Tibetan New Year) festivities with Situ Rinpoche at Sherab Ling, and also to visit His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, who was in residence in Dharamsala at the time. He stayed about one week at Sherab Ling.

While there, Rinpoche was able to visit His Holiness in Dharamsala. They had a long visit, shared a meal, and discussed a number of subjects. His Holiness expressed pleasure with Rinpoche's activities, promised to do whatever he could to further the work of Rinpoche's translation project, and showed his concern for Rinpoche's health by having his personal physician examine Rinpoche. His Holiness commented that of all the lamas working to

spread the Dharma throughout the world, there was none whose activity and kindness were greater than that of Rinpoche.

Rinpoche returned to Bodhgaya and stayed for another two weeks before moving his lamas, monks, and translators back to the Darjeeling District on February 22, traveling together as before.

Since Kalu Rinpoche had embarked on the construction of a major stupa in Salugara, near Siliguri, he remained there with all of his monastery for a period of three weeks, during which time the lamas and monks worked on the painting of the relief sculpture adorning the enclosing wall and the making of 100,000 tsa-tsas for the stupa's eventual consecration. The translators continued their work on the translation of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye's Encyclopedia of Knowledge. During this time, Rinpoche spent several hours

each day at the stupa site, personally supervising various projects. Throughout this period, Rinpoche's health remained good, his activity undiminished.

On March 21, Rinpoche moved his monastery back to Sonada. Over a period of several weeks, Rinpoche seemed to become weaker, although medical opinion was that he had no specific illness. Lama Gyaltsen, myself, and others in Rinpoche's entourage encouraged Rinpoche to travel to Singapore or France to take advantage of better conditions there, but Rinpoche steadfastly refused to travel at that time. It was difficult for Rinpoche to eat, and the weakening of his body continued. On April 15, Dr. Wangdi of Darjeeling insisted that Rinpoche enter a hospital in Siliguri. Rinpoche was visited in the hospital by many Rinpoches, including Chadral Rinpoche, a great Nyingma lama and dose friend; Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche; Gyaltsap Rinpoche; and others. Rinpoche's health improved slightly while he was in the hospital, but he continued to refuse any suggestion that he seek medical help elsewhere. After two weeks, Rinpoche was determined to return to his monastery in Sonada. The doctor felt strongly that he should remain in the hospital another three weeks. Finally, at the encouragement of myself and Khenpo Donyo, he agreed to remain one more week before returning to Sonada.

Rinpoche arrived home late in the afternoon on Friday, May 5. He was obviously happy to be home as he was carried up to his house, seated in a sedan-chair carried on the shoulders of several of his lamas, smiling and waving to different people. Rinpoche remained in strict retreat except for a short period the morning following his arrival, when he received the traditional welcoming scarves from all the members of the monastery. He remained alert and engaged throughout, occasionally speaking to people and showing concern for their well-being.

During these few days, Rinpoche was in good spirits and his health seemed stable. Lama Gyaltsen noticed that, whenever Kalu Rinpoche was asked about his health, Rinpoche would respond that he was well. Even when there seemed to be some external sign of physical difficulty, Rinpoche apparently would feel no suffering. So it was during those days. When asked how he was, Rinpoche responded, "Day-time is the cultivation of the experience of illusion. Night-time is the cultivation of the experience of dream."

Lama Gyaltsen and I both felt that this was a statement of Rinpoche's own state of mind at this time.

On one occasion, Kalu Rinpoche told me that having lived 85 years, he felt his life had been full and complete. While ordinary persons are never satisfied with their lives, or crave to live indefinitely, Rinpoche had no such regrets. One concern he did express was the fact that the translation of the Encyclopedia of Knowledge had not yet been completed, that perhaps his efforts to establish the translation committee had begun too late. Khenpo Donyo and I assured him that the committee was well established, the work well underway. We both promised to see the project through to completion. Even if Rinpoche was unable to see its realization, the work would be finished and would bear Rinpoche's name.

At two in the morning of May 10, Rinpoche's condition deteriorated dramatically. Only later did we discover he had suffered a heart attack. When he left the hospital, the doctor said his lungs were only working at 40 percent of capacity and that this placed additional strain on his heart. Khenpo Donyo was sent immediately to Siliguri, three hours away, to call the doctor from the hospital. Another car was sent to Darjeeling to call Dr. Wangdi. Chadral Rinpoche was called from his nearby monastery, and Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche was called from Rumtek. Chadral Rinpoche and the doctors were able to arrive quickly. Kalu Rinpoche was encouraged to return to the hospital in Siliguri, but refused. He said doctors could be called, but he was not leaving the monastery. Later in the morning, all of us having insisted that he return to the hospital, he finally said we could do what we liked. Everything was prepared for the move, the luggage was in the cars, when Rinpoche indicated he wanted to rest a few moments in his inner room. As he moved into the inner room, he was in full control of his body.

In the inner room he was put on oxygen and given glucose intravenously. His bed was pulled out from the wall, and to Rinpoche's right were Lama Gyaltsen and Khenpo Donyo, to Rinpoche's left were myself and Chadral Rinpoche. At one point Rinpoche asked to sit upright. The doctor and nurse forbade him to do so. A short time later he again indicated he wanted to sit up, and again the doctor and nurse adamantly refused to allow this. Lama Gyaltsen felt terrible, but powerless to contradict the doctor. Then Rinpoche himself tried to sit up, and had difficulty doing so. Lama Gyaltsen, feeling that perhaps this was the time, and that not to sit up could create an obstacle for Rinpoche, supported Rinpoche's back as he sat up. Rinpoche wanted to sit absolutely straight, both saying this and indicating with a gesture of his hand. The doctor and nurse were upset by this, so Rinpoche relaxed his posture slightly. He nevertheless assumed meditation posture. Tears were flowing down our faces uncontrollably and our hearts were filled with anguish.

Rinpoche placed his hands in meditation posture, his open eyes gazed outward in meditation, and his lips moved softly. A profound feeling of peace and happiness settled upon all of us and spread within our minds. All present felt that the indescribable happiness filling us was the faintest reflection of what was pervading Rinpoche's mind. Lama Gyaltsen also felt a fleeting experience of profound sorrow characteristic of compassionate awareness of

the suffering pervading cyclic existence. This was felt to be a gift of Rinpoche's awareness. Slowly Rinpoche's gaze and his eyelids lowered and his breath stopped. The doctor and nurse wanted to try some extraordinary means to revive the breath, but Chadral Rinpoche indicated that Rinpoche should be left resting peacefully.

I have witnessed a number of people passing from this world. Occasionally there is a short rasping breath, occasionally a long inhalation or exhalation. With Rinpoche, there was none of these, but a most extraordinary passing into profound meditation.

The doctor performed his examination and then Chadral Rinpoche and I arranged his clothing and left him in his tuk dam, the Lama's final meditation. The environment was to be kept quiet, and Rinpoche not disturbed as long as the ttik dam lasted. An hour or two later, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche arrived and spent a short time with Rinpoche. Both remarked how vital Rinpoche's form was, as though any moment he might begin to speak. The morning of the third day, Saturday, May 13, all the signs indicating that the tukdam was complete had appeared. As we washed Rinpoche's body and changed his clothes, there were none of the usual traces of body waste or impurity. Also, the body remained soft and flexible, without any stiffness whatsoever. Rinpoche's body, now called ku dung, was placed in a prepared case covered with brocade and resides in Rinpoche's audience room.

In consultation with Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche and Chadral Rinpoche, the decision has been made not to cremate the ku dung, but to prepare it as a mar dung, so that it will always be with us. This was a tradition practiced in Tibet. In this way, the physical aspect of the Lama's form remains as a relic, a basis for religious inspiration. The Lama's activity continues as beings are liberated through seeing, hearing, considering, touching, or praising the relic of his mar dung. It is said that any connection whatsoever becomes beneficial, whether the mind of the being is positively inclined or not. In this way, the mar dung becomes the basis for the propagation and longevity of the teachings, the basis for both temporal and ultimate benefit of beings.

The departure of Khyabje Kalu Rinpoche from this world is a moment of extraordinary sadness for all sentient beings. The world has become a darker, poorer place because of his absence. His gentleness, the pervasiveness of his kindness, the brilliance of his wisdom, and the irresistibility of his sense of humor touched hearts in every part of the world. The subtlety of his insight and his total mastery of mind and phenomena are beyond the grasp of our ordinary understanding. It is difficult to fathom our extraordinary good fortune to have met and established a Dharma connection with such an Awakened being. Now there is no avoiding a feeling of profound personal sorrow at our loss.

Through Rinpochefs teaching, however, and our understanding of the Dharma, we know that all composite phenomena are impermanent, and that where we truly meet our Lama is in the ultimate openness of mind. The Lama is never separated from us, and never will be separate from us. What remains for us to do is to be true to Rinpoche's vision, his example, his teaching, and advice. This we can do through shedding our sorrow and

celebrating the gifts of immeasurable kindness he has given us, through maintaining the purity of our commitments and our vajra bonds, through cultivating the qualities of an Awakened being that Rinpoche so dearly demonstrated to us. We should do this with the deepest prayers to Rinpoche that he quickly take human form, and return again to be with us.

With sincere best wishes to you all,

Bokar Tulku Rinpoche

Lama Gyaltsen

Khenpo Lodro Donyo

Sonada Monastery, May 15,1989

ཤཱཀྱ་ཐུབ་པ།

Shakyamuni Buddha

The Story of His Reincarnation

The seven seas the dolphins roam
May drain from time and waves,
But Buddha's activity to guide his children
Will never be erased.

As this quote from the sutras indicates, it is the nature of spiritually advanced bodhisattvas to feel neither weary nor disheartened in their task of guiding those under their care, those in the endless and measureless realms of beings. These bodhisattvas aspire to uphold, nurture, and further the precious teachings of the Buddha, the source of comfort and joy in this world. Once they have donned the armor of this aspiration, they never waver in their goal. In response to the needs of others they produce delightful manifestations in a steady stream until the end of time. Their acts in service to Buddhism and for feeding the entire world will prove to be of lasting benefit.

An example of this can be found here among us, in the arrival of the reincarnation of the supreme manifestation of Awakening, our fearless guide, our omni-present spiritual master, Buddha Vajradhara incarnate, Kyabje (Lord of Refuge) Kalu Rinpoche. His return represents for us, his students in particular, and for the countless beings of this world, and for the boundless range of the teachings of the Buddha, a glorious flourishing of our merit. The following short account will describe his return among us.

A few years before Kalu Rinpoche's previous incarnation passed away to the realm of perfect peace, he told a group of disciples, "When I die, it will not be a dog's death. I will go having prepared every last detail"

On another occasion a patron who had faith in Rinpoche asked him, "Rinpoche, although you have now reached an advanced age, please allow your lotus feet to remain in this world. But when you cannot stay any longer, do not let your compassion grow faint. Please return in a supreme manifestation of Awakening to serve Buddhism and humanity in the future!"

In reply, Rinpoche said jokingly, "If you need my new incarnation, ask Gyaltsen."

Later, in his final years, Rinpoche ate only a tiny amount of food. Lama Gyaltsen begged him to eat more, but Rinpoche said in jest, "Why should I? When you are old and I am urging you to eat more, then you will understand!" Furthermore, in his will, composed in 1976, Rinpoche bequeathed all he owned—particularly his principal monastic seat at Sonada, India, and his other monasteries and Buddhist meditation centers in India and in foreign countries—to Lama Gyaltsen Ratak.

If we examine these and other examples, it is evident that even from that time Rinpoche had decided to return in a supreme reincarnation of manifest Awakening and that he had foreseen details of his future life, such as the identity of his parents. As dearly related above, he had also made definite

verbal predictions of those events: how could we have failed to understand the true meaning of his words? All of us have fallen under the pervasive power of habitual, mistaken thinking. Our faith, respect, and pure appreciation of our spiritual master and guide are as limited as a glimpse of him through a slit in a blindfold. Our aberrant view of him was as an ordinary companion no different from ourselves. Therefore, how could we have understood?

The Awakened qualities of this master's mind were especially profound and vast. It was difficult for anyone to plumb their breadth and depths. Now, with the benefit of hindsight, it is obvious that in whatever he did within the spiritual and worldly spheres of life, he acted with complete personal integrity. His acts did not contravene social norms, yet were in perfect harmony with the ways of spiritual life. His impeccable honesty prevented him from being unduly influenced by patrons or by other powerful individuals. He kept his own counsel entirely. In particular, he exercised complete mastery of his mind in the two forms of the precious mind of Awakening, and so dedicated his life to providing material and spiritual aid impartially to any person who needed them. His dedication was reinforced by his main spiritual practices: training in the mind of Awakening and the Aspirations of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, which include the Seven-Branch prayer. All phenomena—sights, sounds, or thoughts—were without reality for him, like the illusion of a dream. He remarked that for him everything became part of that experience. In everything he undertook, this master never acted on the basis of hopeful anticipation or fearful apprehension, and never made choices based on his own desires. To the depth of his being, he was content with whatever came his way.

In brief, this reincarnation, which has appeared so soon after his physical form dissolved into the ultimate realm of reality, represents the timely ripening of the fruit of his life devoted entirely to prayer and to the aspiration to serve Buddhism and all beings. He has been reborn as a descendent of the Ratak dan, whose members have included the majestic victor, the Karmapa Dusum Kyenpa, and many other great meditation masters. The father of this new incarnation is named Lama Gyaltsen, his close attendant and nephew during his former life. His mother is named Kalzang Drolkar, from Kurlo in the Southern Kingdom of Bhutan.25 In the midst of many wonderful dream-signs appearing to both parents during the pregnancy, this supreme manifestation of Awakening intentionally reentered the world. During the monthly fulfillment offerings to the Six-Arm Mahakala on September 17,1990 (the twenty-ninth day of the eighth lunar month of the Iron Horse year), the flower of his perfect form first blossomed in Darjeeling, India. He was born without any harm to his mother. Even at that time, some faithful patrons of his previous incarnation felt unusually joyful, both physically and mentally, simply upon seeing the child's face. His monastery at Sonada was covered with a canopy of rainbow clouds and a number of significant, wonderful, and wholly positive signs appeared. From that moment on, people near and far spread the news, "The supreme reincarnation of our spiritual master has been born!"

As the child grew with the days and months, his character revealed itself to be peaceful, disciplined, and completely fearless. His greatest joy was found in playing the various ritual musical instruments, such as radung (long horns) and gyuling (short horns). This provides but one example of the fact that he acted naturally in ways that surpassed the behavior of ordinary children. Genuine indications of being a truly spiritual person who had previously cultivated the path were very clearly evident to all who met him.

During this period, the Lord of Refuge, the protector Loving-Kindness incarnate, Tai Situ Rinpoche, saw convincing signs that this child was indeed the supreme reincarnation of the previous Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche. However, Tai Situpa insisted that the supreme head of the Buddha's teachings, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, be consulted to consider this candidate through his omniscient vision. Accordingly, this supreme refuge and protector confirmed that in the domain of his pure wisdom, the child, then one-and-a-half years old, was surely and unmistakenly the reincarnation of Kalu Rinpoche. On the auspicious day His Holiness1 decree was received at the residence of the former Kalu Rinpoche, the monastery called Samdrup Darjay Choling at Sonada, Darjeeling, India. We, the abbot, disciples, and monks together, first performed a purification and washing ceremony for the new incarnation, then offered him robes, a name, and the representations of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind. Following this, ordained and laypeople came to meet him, led by the monks of this monastery.

In July 1992, the new incarnation was invited to visit the Buddhist meditation centers founded by his previous incarnation in France. During this tour, his disciples and many other people who met him were amazed and moved to faith by his presence.

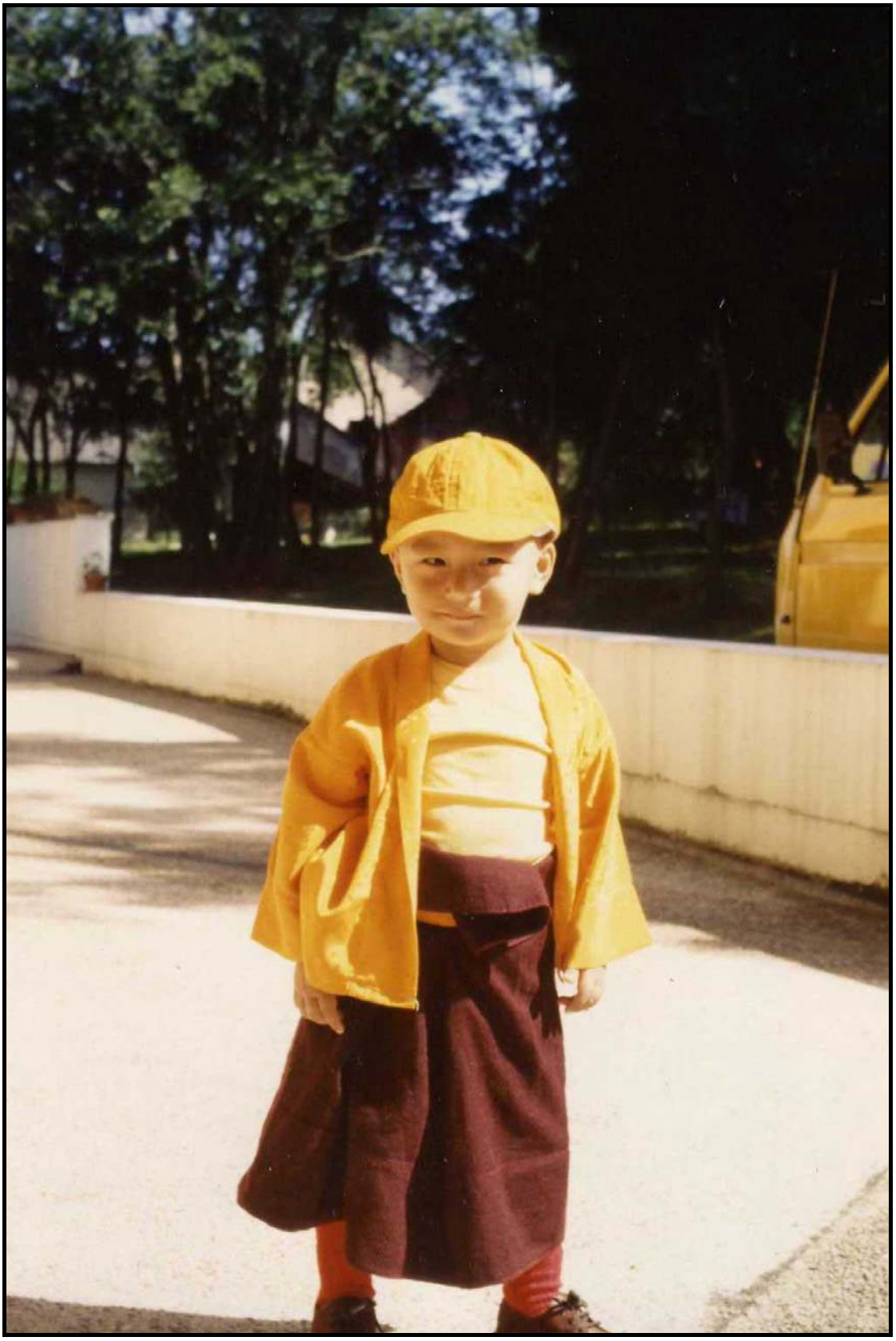
In December 1992, he made his first pilgrimage to the supreme sacred place, the Vajra Seal (Bodhgaya in north-central India). Although still very small, he daily attended the great gathering to recite The Aspirations of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. While sitting at the head of the assembly, he played the ritual hand drum and bell proficiently. While in Bodhgaya, he prostrated and made offerings to the representations of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind, and gave gifts to the beggars there without having been taught to do so. His natural pleasure in doing these acts astonished everyone and led them automatically to have faith in him.

On February 25, 1993 (the fourth day of the first lunar month of the Water Bird year), the monastic seat of Samdrup Darjay Choling will be blessed by the kind visit of our supreme refuge and protector, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. On this occasion, His Holiness will graciously cut the topmost strands of the supreme reincarnation's hair, bestow a name, and give him his blessing. Following that, spiritual masters, reincarnate masters, and members of the spiritual communities of monasteries from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism; spiritual teachers representing Buddhist meditation centers in the West and Asia; Buddhist ordained and lay people, and members of the public will participate in the profound and complete ceremony of investiture and enthronement of this new incarnation.

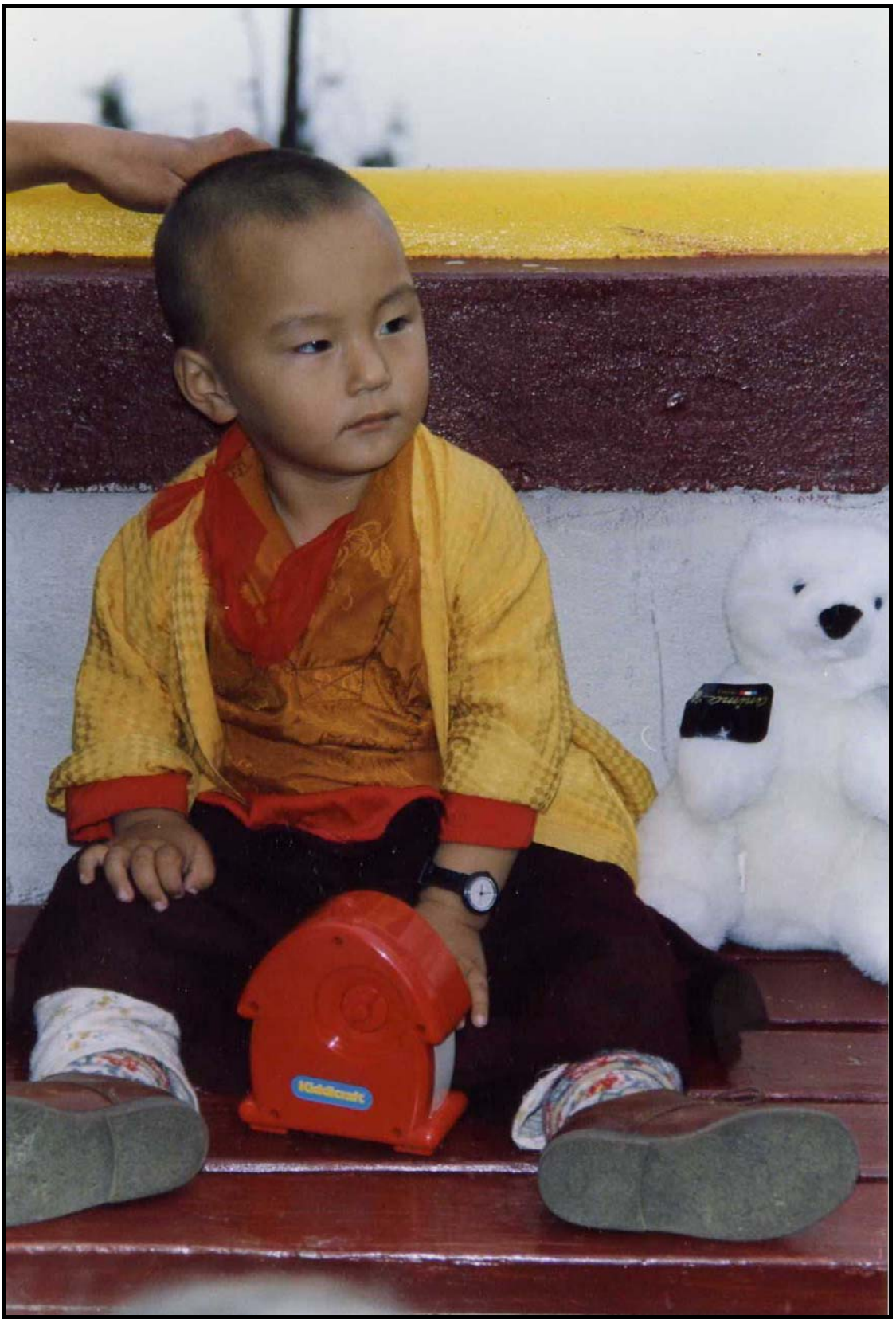
This account has been written by Kalu Rinpoche's respectful servant, the one known by the name of Bokar Tulku, who lives within the cooling shadow of this protector's compassion. These words are accompanied by the request, prayer, and wish that the lotus feet of the three secret expressions—the body, speech, and mind—of this new incarnation of our illustrious, supreme spiritual master should remain upon his indestructible vajra throne for countless eons, and that upon completion of his study, reflection, and meditation, his Awakened activity sliould reacJi the limits of the earth in emulation of the Awakened life of his predecessor.

Translated at Samdrup Darjay Choling Monastery, Sonada, India, by Kalu Rinpoche's International Translation Committee far Buddhist Texts.

Yangsi Kalu Rinpotche 5 days old
Photo lama Gyaltsen

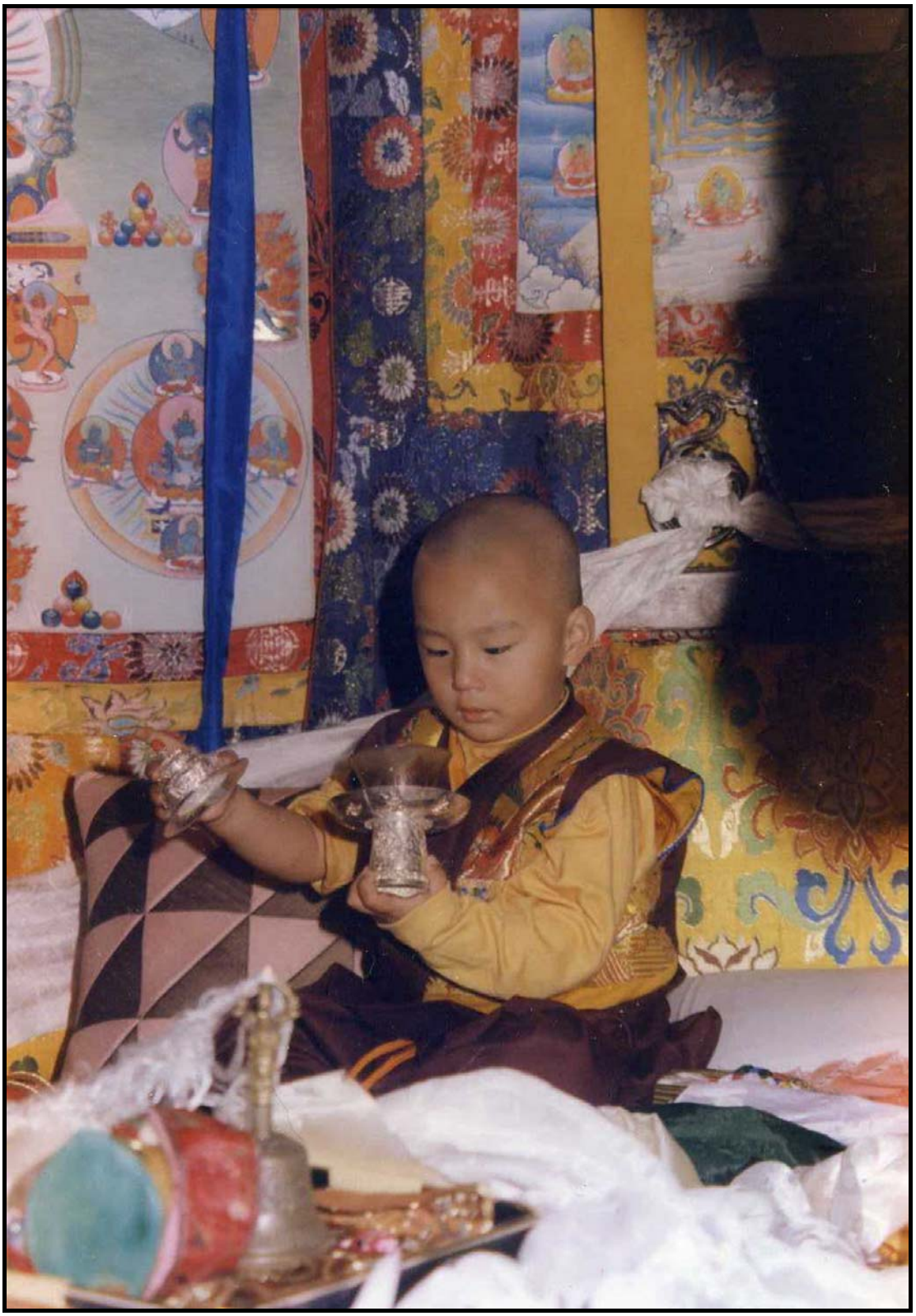


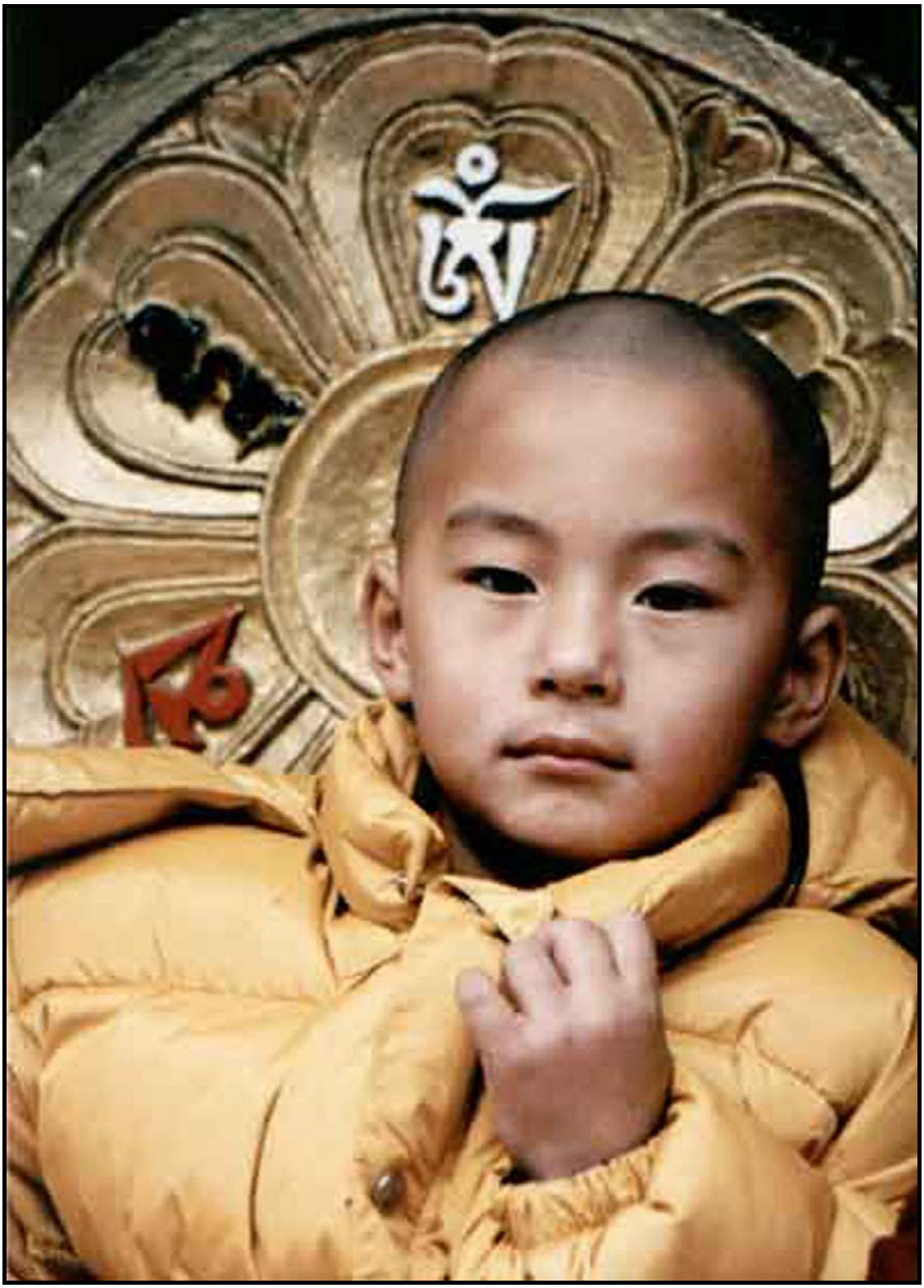
Kagyu Ling 1992



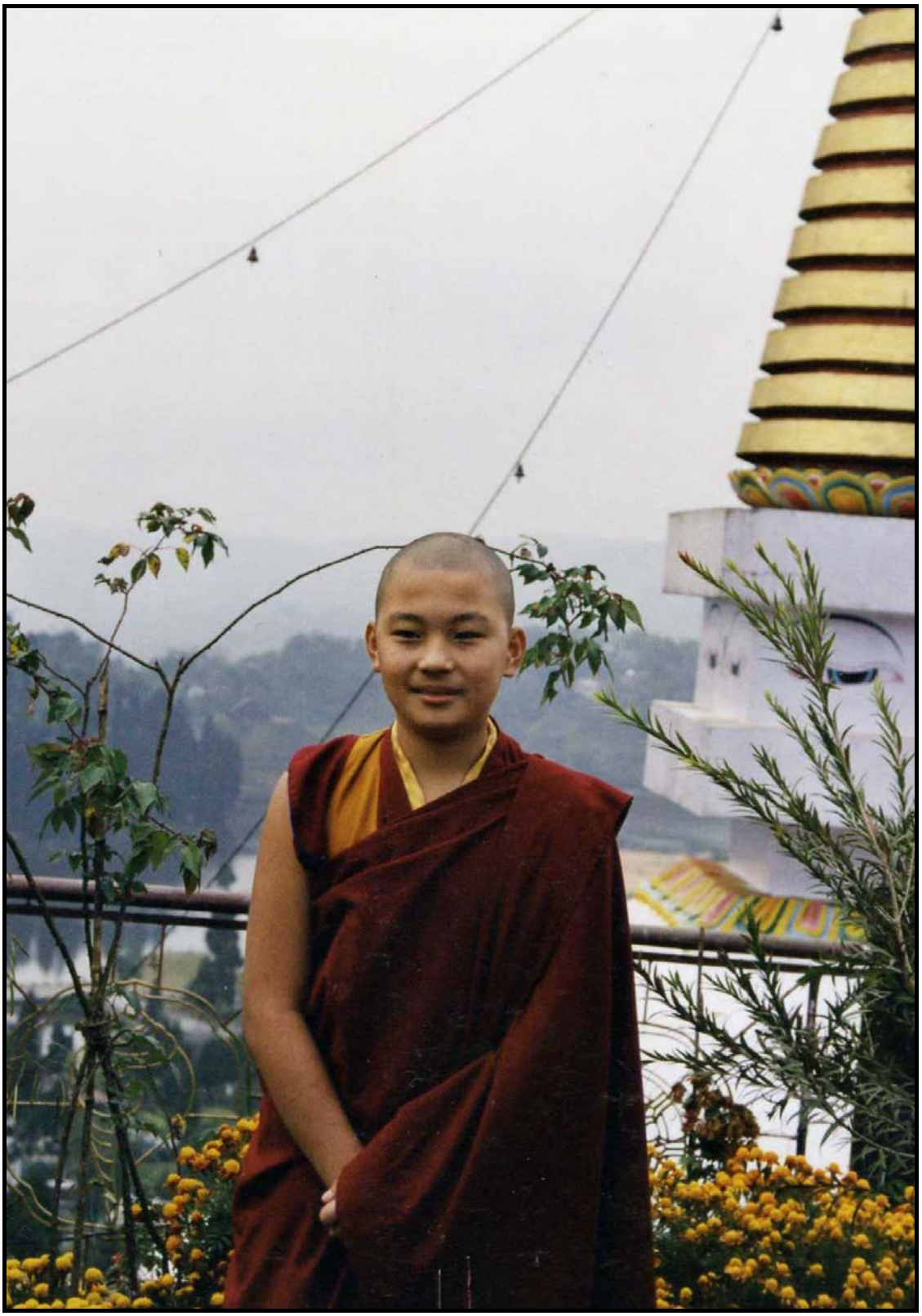
Kagyu Ling 1992

With his parents: Lama Gyaltsen and Drolkar





Brasilia 1995



Salugara

2003

Sherab Ling - 2009

2013

Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche - 2014

Contribution of the Dharma to the World

I am an Easterner, as are the people who accompany me. You who listen to me this evening are Westerners. Despite this geographical difference, we are here together to approach the subject of the Dharma in daily life, because of karmic connections established in our past lives and our aspirations.

Sometimes East and West are considered two very different worlds. People, languages, and cultures appear to be separated by impassable borders. Nevertheless, one cannot draw such sharp lines between them. Easterners and Westerners share the same experience of human existence, through the supports of body, speech, and mind. Differences in customs and behavior are not fundamental.

To whichever civilization one refers, one always encounters the two aspects of temporal and spiritual life. The first aspect deeds with the needs of this existence and seeks to improve material conditions. The second aims to maintain peace and happiness of the mind for this existence and beyond, leading to superior worlds and liberation.

PEACE IN THE WORLD, PEACE IN THE HEART

Beings live in numerous conditions of existence, which can be divided into inferior and superior worlds. The inferior worlds are characterized by great suffering felt during long periods of time. The superior worlds are not completely lacking in suffering, but they know some degrees of happiness. Human beings like us dwell in the first of these superior worlds.

Within the framework of human life, two things are important; the establishment of outer peace and happiness, and the establishment of inner peace and happiness. From an external point of view, right up to the greatest level, happiness depends on the relationships between nations. If they get along, seeking not to harm, but help each other, citizens enjoy peace and favorable conditions in life. Inside a country, the relationship between leaders and the people is another important factor. If leaders avoid quarrels and create harmony, acting in the interest of the people they govern and if the people respect their leaders, that will bring forth a happy situation.

Nevertheless, the most important domain for the external conditions of life to be favorable to happiness is the family. Harmony between parents and children, between husband and wife, between brothers and sisters, is essential.

FRATERNAL TRADITIONS

Religion is another element of the social fabric. There are numerous religions, and the Buddha had predicted the multiplicity of religious beliefs to

follow him, while underlining the point that they were all rays of light of the same awakened activity benefitting beings according to their capacities and mentalities. This is why religions and spiritual traditions have to maintain fraternal relationships, never quarrelling, criticizing, or condemning each other.

The diversity of spiritual traditions is explained by the diversity of cultures and individual modes of thinking. Traditions try to bring an adequate answer to each context. Though having apparent differences, at least all the religions have the goal of avoiding conditions of inferior existence. According to the capacities of the beings, these traditions allow birth as a human being or in the divine worlds of the gods—in the sphere of desire, form, or formlessness—which, while remaining in samsara, provide beings with a happy and

long existence. At best, traditions lead beyond samsara, to individual liberation which Buddhists call the states of shravaka, arhat, or pratyeka Buddha, or to the complete Awakening, Buddhahood. It depends on the capacity of the disciples.

All traditions share the same goal, which is to guide beings toward some states of superior existence. However, conflicts, and even wars, are present within these traditions. The cause does not have to be attributed to the traditions themselves, but to the people who represent them, as they are sometimes moved by conflicting emotions instead of spiritual convictions. If the nations could establish harmonious relationships and if different social groups within a country could do the same, followed by the members of the same family, the situation on earth would be happy. No war, no conflict, no starvation could exist.

NOBLE MIND, VILE MIND

In the political and social world, as well as in the domain of spiritual traditions, one encounters some people with noble motivations, others with base preoccupations. The predominance of one or the other constitutes an essential factor of progress or degeneration. A Tibetan saying is, "One recognizes countries by their language. One recognizes noble or vile people by their behavior" What type of behavior would allow us to distinguish the two categories of people? Let us suppose that a "noble mind" travels in the company of a "vile mind," through an arid region, in overwhelming heat. Both of them are tormented by thirst when they arrive at a place where there is a glass of water. The "noble person" arriving first will drink half of the glass of water, thinking that his or her companion arriving later, will also need to quench his or her thirst. If the "vile person" comes first, the glass of water will be swallowed at once without concern for anyone else.

Having a good heart, being concerned not only with oneself but also with others, is very important in the temporal domain as well as the spiritual one.

From a spiritual point of view, one is drawn to the teaching that others are more important than oneself. It is difficult to apply this principle to the rules of temporal life, but at least, it is possible to wish for others what one wishes for

oneself, "If I need what is good and pleasant, then others do too." This type of egalitarian vision can only be beneficial.

WHO GOVERNS?

The happiness and misfortune of the world depend essentially on the minds of people. Body and speech are only the means of obeying the orders of the king, that is the mind. If the mind leans toward what is right, body and speech will be in the service of righteousness. If the mind is oriented toward evil, body and speech will be in the service of evil.

We are ordinary beings and we have little control of our own mind, which is placed under the direction of three elements:

-karmic tendencies inherited from past lives

-conflicting emotions

-discursive thinking

The mind has hardly more freedom than that of a small baby.

In order for it to grow, mature, and gain more freedom, it is necessary to meditate or, at least, to develop a good knowledge of the temporal and spiritual domains.

GREED AND CONTENTMENT

Buddhism divides the totality of possible existences into six classes, which are themselves divided in three spheres: the sphere of desire, the sphere of form, and the sphere of formlessness. Human beings belong to the sphere of desire. That is why desire and attachment are so restraining for them.

From this point, greed travels in two directions, toward oneself and toward others.

Greed toward oneself manifests in the desire to have one's own belongings; once they are obtained, strong feelings of ownership arise. "It is my house, these are my belongings, it is my family" Greed toward others is based on others' belongings. "They have a beautiful house, a beautiful car, and so on. I need to get the same!"

In its turn, greed is followed by many other complications, such as jealousy, pride, possessiveness, aggressiveness, hatred, and so on. Together they produce innumerable problems and lead us to commit negative acts. It is necessary for us to find the remedy for greed.

This remedy is contentment, the capability to be satisfied by what we have, and thinking, "This is enough for me, I am happy with what I have" Contentment is as useful a quality for the wealthy as for those who are not. Thanks to contentment, there are poor people who think, "I have enough to eat and to wear, I am happy. If I cannot acquire more, it is without doubt because of my past karma."As for the wealthy, they learn to not always want more, and particularly to not constantly look at others who possess more than they do. Through contentment, jealousy, pride, and many other defects

spontaneously disappear. The Buddha said, "Contentment is the greatest of all treasures. No wealth can compete with it"

THE WEALTH OF THE SERVANT

In Tibet, one tells the story of a merchant who possessed a hundred dzos,26 each carrying a load of tea. He had a worker to whom he gave one third of a load. This worker had no great needs. Without really knowing what to do with this tea, he thought that it was sufficient. Always cheerful, never missing an opportunity to laugh, he had happy days. On the other hand, the merchant always worried. Concerned about losing his possessions, and greedy to acquire more, day and night, he was always planning to increase his business. Finally, the servant thought, "My poor master is always anxious. A hundred loads of tea do not make him happy, he always thinks of getting more. As for me, I have all I need to eat and dress myself. I am happy like that. I really do not need my share of tea. It would be better to give it to my master. Perhaps he will feel better"

He went to find his master and told him, "Do not be so anxious. Do you need more tea? Here, I give you mine."

This servant is an example of contentment. Satisfied with his situation, he is always happy!

INFINITE DISSATISFACTION

Contentment teaches us to be satisfied with what we have. In reality, we do not have the choice to do otherwise. Indeed, the mind is empty. Nothing can ever fill it. This is why dissatisfaction is limitless. The person who possesses $100,000 and is not content wants $200,000, but this will not satisfy the mind. The person who possesses a million and is not content wants 2 million, then 3, 4, 5 million, but the mind is never fulfilled.

This principle is not limited to material goods, but also pertains to human relationships. A man living with a woman with whom he is happy will nevertheless desire to have a relationship with another, then with a third one, and so on, if he his not content. This has consequences with multiple complications, suffering and quarrels. On the other hand, while living with a companion in what one considers to be a satisfactory relationship, life automatically becomes easy and pleasant.

In any situation, it is necessary to master our mind. If we allow it to follow its fantasies, we are sure to face many problems.

Let us suppose a husband becomes angry with his wife, or a wife with her husband. If one of them reacts with patience, anger will cease by itself. In order to practice patience, it is necessary to be the master of our own mind. If we answer violent words by violent words, anger will spread like fire. Fire will not extinguish fire. It is important to know how to control one's own mind.

A BED OF FLOWERS OR A BED OF THORNS

From the point of view of scenic beauty, houses, and material goods, the West resembles the world of gods. Nevertheless, people's minds seem to experience a lot of suffering. Why? Because, when conflicting emotions arise, one never seeks a remedy, but allows oneself to be carried away by the power of the conflicting emotions. When the mind is at peace, free of anger or any other conflicting emotion, a person is like someone lying on a bed of flowers. For the person full of anger or aggressiveness, it is like lying on a bed of thorns—each movement is painful.

At the moment, the world is under threat of many wars. These wars have no source other than conflicting emotions. Each country possesses land, goods, and wealth. Nevertheless, it happens that a country, wishing to grasp the wealth of a neighboring country, invades it. Where does the war come from in this case? It comes from desire. It can also happen that a country is simply jealous of the superior living style of another and, because of that, decides to go to war. Or again, pure hatred can motivate armed conflict. Whatever it is, desire, jealousy, or hatred, the source of war is not found anywhere other than in the conflicting emotions agitating people's minds. If conflicting emotions disappear, peace generates itself.

HUMAN BEINGS AND GODS

In several sutras, the Buddha expounded that human acts have consequences for the general harmony of the universe. When human beings let themselves be violently carried away by anger, aggressiveness, and conflicts, this encourages the demi-gods (Sanskrit, asuras) to attack the gods (Sanskrit, devas). When demi-gods achieve victory, the result is that wars, famines, epidemics, and other catastrophes occur on earth. When the gods are victorious, peace returns to the earth. Furthermore, the victory of demi-gods is sustained by negative acts accomplished by human beings, while the victory of the gods is sustained by positive human actions. Consequently, the person who reduces his or her conflicting emotions and negative acts automatically contributes to peace and general harmony.

TIBET, A SIMPLE COUNTRY

Tibet was a particularly fortunate country, because it received the complete transmission of the Buddha's teachings from India. Translators and scholars, working in collaboration with Indian scholars, have translated the totality of sutras and tantras into Tibetan, with the result that the Buddhist tradition was completely integrated with Tibetan civilization. The Tibet of the past did not resemble, in any way, the West of today. It was an unpolished and simple country where people had enough to eat and doth themselves. Temporal activities were not very developed, and that left a lot of free time and energy for practice of the Dharma. The faith and diligence of Tibetans are great and, because of that, Buddhism has known, in their country, an extraordinary blossoming that remains to this day. Tibetan tradition has now spread throughout the entire world. There are several reasons for this.

THE WEST, A FERTILE SOIL

First of all, the Dharma is in itself very precious and beneficial. It can be received only by those who are the right vessel, and who have prepared themselves in their past lives by some purification and accumulation of merit. These are the people who are now interested in Buddhism in all the parts of the world.

A second factor favoring the introduction of Buddhism is constituted by the values taught by Christianity, certainly the most powerful religion on earth. Within Christianity, one meets the notion of a superior reality in the form of God and, therefore, the ideas of faith and prayer. One also finds there a strong emphasis on loving all human beings. From this love, generosity can be generated. Ethics, in this context, rejects negative conduct in favor of positive conduct.

These values are shared with Buddhism in this form and another. Therefore, Buddhism can be easily understood in a Christian context.

Third, most Westerners receive elaborate intellectual training, which allows them to approach and appreciate the profound and vast concepts proposed by Buddhism without difficulty. Finally, one considers that in the immensity of their compassion, Buddhas and bodhisattvas spontaneously produce an answer each time beings need help. This is why such great masters as the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, and many others visit numerous countries in order to turn the Wheel of the Dharma.27 All of these reasons explain the spread of the Dharma in the West.

SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL LIFE

Some people think the Dharma is on one side and ordinary life on the other, that they are separate. However, the Dharma and temporal life sustain each other. Without temporal support, the Dharma cannot be sustained. Thanks to the Dharma, the world enjoys a certain peace and happiness, and at the same time people can prepare for rebirth in superior woHds, and begin the path to liberation.

THREE LIFESTYLES

The Dharma itself can be approached in three ways.

In the first, one completely abandons any concern for this life and ordinary activity; one then goes to a hermitage to be exclusively devoted to meditation. This is following the example of Milarepa, who, in this manner, was able to obtain realization in one lifetime. Doing this is extraordinary.

Atisha and Gampopa provide us with perfect examples of the second approach which consists of adopting the life of a monk, observing the 253 vows that characterize it, and teaching the Dharma.

The third way is to remain in the world, to continue temporal work while developing faith, compassion, knowledge, and generosity, and by practicing the Dharma with ardor. The most beautiful examples of this lifestyle are

found in people such as King Indraboddhi of India, the Tibetan kings Songtsen Gampo and Trisong Detsen, and Marpa the Translator.

Whatever mode of practice we choose, we must deal with the problem of conflicting emotions, whether by rejecting them, transforming them, or recognizing their essence.28 If someone cannot devote a lot of time to the formal practice of the Dharma, has many worldly preoccupations, and needs a method to reduce the emotions, he or she will find this a great help. It will make life easier and much suffering will be avoided. On the contrary, the situation of people who have no spiritual path is a very difficult one. They ding to the strong notion of "me" as a definite reality. They give the same reality to desire, anger, or other emotions, thinking that these truly exist by themselves. They cannot avoid submitting to their power.

EMOTIONS ARE EMPTY

Conflicting emotions, as well as the notion of "me," come from the mind which, in itself, has no form, color, or shape. It is, therefore, empty. Since the mind is empty, the emotions that it produces are also empty. When one recognizes their empty nature, their power disappears.

When an emotion arises, it arises from an empty mind. When the emotion is present, it stays empty in essence; when the emotion disappears, it reabsorbs itself in the empty mind. You can go to the seashore and look at the play of waves which rise, sometimes becoming immense. When the wave forms, it is nothing other than the water of the sea; when it is reabsorbed, it goes back to the water of the sea. In a similar manner, conflicting emotions are always part of the emptiness of the mind. They come from this emptiness, their essence is emptiness, they return to emptiness. They do not truly exist by themselves.

If we understand the nature of emotions, it is then easy to retain mastery of our minds. If we were animals, all that we have said this evening would be useless and beyond any possibility of comprehension. Since we are human beings, we have the ability to understand; we realize that we wish peace and happiness for this life and for our lives to come.

Then Kalu Rinpoche allowed a question-and-answer session.

Question: If the mind is empty, are the physical actions directed by the mind empty also?

Kalu Rinpoche: In truth, our acts are also empty, because all outer or inner phenomena are empty, stemming from emptiness of the mind. We can understand this by referring to our dreams. In them appear landscapes, houses, famous people, all kinds of things that exist nowhere other than in the mind. It is the same for every manifestation. It also explains the miraculous powers great yogis have over matter.

MILAREPA PARTICIPATES IN A POWER CONTEST

Once, Milarepa went to the shore of a lake not far from Mount Kailash, where a Bonpo yogi called Naro Penchung resided. The latter had obtained magical powers without having reached the realization of the empty nature of all phenomena; he was very proud of these powers. Naro Penchung was not very happy when Milarepa, whose reputation was very great, came to live in the same region and overshadowed him. He went to talk to Milarepa. "Your fame is great and I would like to challenge you in a power contest. If you are victorious, the region will be yours. If I win, the territory will be mine" Milarepa agreed.

To demonstrate his powers, Naro Penchung put one foot on the shore of the lake and, enormously expanding his body, placed his other foot on the other shore. As for Milarepa, he laid down on the lake. His body did not become larger and the lake did not become smaller. His body covered the complete surface of the lake. This was possible only because Milarepa had the realization of the empty nature of the phenomena.

Naro Penchung requested a second contest. He proposed that the two competitors leave an imprint of their hand or foot on the cliff overhanging the opposite shore of the lake. Lengthening his leg as much as he could, Naro Penchung could not exceed half of the lake's length in that direction. Milarepa simply raised his hand and an imprint immediately appeared on the cliff.

Naro Penchung did not accept failure. He requested a definitive test. The first one to arrive at the top of Mount Kailash the following morning would be victorious. At dawn, the next day, he sat on his magical drum and, beating it with all his energy, he quickly began to climb the mountain. Meanwhile, Milarepa did not move. He apparently did not prepare to begin his ascent and did not even watch the progress of his competitor. The disciples who accompanied him began to become anxious. Was their master going to lose?

Milarepa told them not to worry. From time to time, he asked them where Naro Penchung was in his climb. When they told him that he was not far from the summit, Milarepa pointed his finger in the direction of the drum, and it was immediately stopped. It could go neither up nor down. Then, Milarepa turned his head and, in an instant, he was on the mountain summit. By his own power, he made Naro Penchung climb to the summit. "You have lost the contest" he told him, "nevertheless, I will allow you to live on the small mountain you see there."

These wonders accomplished by Milarepa illustrate that all is possible after one has realized the empty nature of phenomena.

Question: Rinpoche has told us during an evening that it is possible to deal with emotions by simply looking at their essence, with the result that they will disappear by themselves. I see this possibility for anger and desire, because these emotions carry some energy that makes them present. However, I do not see how we can apply it to blindness or ignorance, which by definition keeps the mind in apathy and darkness. How is this possible?

Kalu Rinpoche: One must react to this apathy with diligence. This is possible by praying to the lama, the yidam, or the Three Jewels. In order to be cured with this method, all emotions require a certain will, necessary to react to the power of desire and anger, or the weight of torpor.

If one looks at the essence of emotions, if one does not allow oneself to be carried away by them, it is a source of great peace. Supposing you truly apply this method for one, two, or three years, this would be wonderful. There would no longer be any argument among you. I would receive a letter from Lama Tsewang Gyurme 29 telling me how Vancouver has become such a wonderful place!

Question: Shakyamuni Buddha was the fourth Buddha manifested in our kalpa. When can we expect the coming of Maitreya, who will be the fifth Buddha?

Kalu Rinpoche: Maitreya is now a bodhisattva on the tenth level. He has the capability of producing many emanations in order to work for the benefit of all beings. It is not impossible that some of these emanations are now present on Earth, but I cannot tell when Maitreya will effectively incarnate as the fifth Buddha.

Question: One hears a lot of talk about living initiation lineages and very powerful masters of achievement. If they are so powerful, why have they not solved the problems of the planet?

Kalu Rinpoche: It is necessary to understand that each individual has to experience the result of his or her own karma. If this were not true, the compassion of the Buddhas would have liberated all beings of the six classes long ago. Consciousness functions at an individual level and not at a collective level. Otherwise, it would suffice that one person feels a certain desire and the entire world would feel it at the Same time.

Vancouver, B.C., Canada 1982

Human Existence

We now possess the ideal support of existence for practice of the Dharma, the precious human existence. Far from being the fruit of chance, the human condition is foremost of the superior worlds in the system of the six classes of beings, and results from the conjunction of several elements from past lives:

- a vast accumulation of merit
- less negative activity than positive activity
- connection with the Buddha, the Dharma, or Sangha

Without meeting these factors, the precious human existence cannot be obtained.

RARE AS STARS DURING THE DAY

The number of beings is incalculable because they are infinite in number. However, texts use comparisons to give an idea of the relative quantity of beings in every possible existence:

- beings who populate the eighteen types of hell are said to be as numerous as atoms composing the planet Earth
- hungry ghosts are as numerous as grains of sand forming the bottom of an ocean or the bed of a long river
- animals are as numerous as snowflakes falling during a storm in winter

These comparisons show that beings from the three inferior worlds are innumerable.

As for those of the three superior worlds together—human, demi-gods, and gods—their quantity equals that of the stars of the night sky. This number seems very large, but compared to that of inferior worlds, it remains small. Without a doubt, the quantity of the human beings residing on our planet alone appears important. But this is only relative. Without mentioning hell beings and hungry ghosts we cannot see, if we consider the realm of animals, we observe that they are infinitely more numerous than we are.

THREE CATEGORIES OF HUMAN BEINGS

In general, merit and karma are the causes of obtaining human existence, but the quality of karma varies according to people. Three categories are envisioned:

- Inferior human existence is the existence of those having no knowledge of a spiritual way, or who have no interest in it and continually accomplish serious negative acts. Their existence is called "inferior," not in itself, but in the prospect of the karmic result that it entails. After death, it leads to a birth in inferior worlds, and there one experiences great suffering.
- Mediocre human existence refers to those who accomplish neither great negative acts nor great positive acts and devote all their efforts to

ordinary activities of this world. It includes the vast majority of human beings. This existence is mediocre from the point of view of karma. It will entail a type of mediocre rebirth, neither low nor high, not comprising the possibility of being reborn in divine kingdoms, or of even reaching Buddhahood.

- Finally, there are those who reject negative acts, and on the contrary, find joy in accomplishing positive acts. They possess a superior human existence. In their future lives, they will be born in the best conditions in the world of humans, or in divine realms. Better yet, those who come in contact with the Dharma, follow the teaching of masters, and receive instructions of the Hinayana, Mahayana, or Vajrayana, form the "superior among the superior existences" called the "precious" human existence.

MORE PRECIOUS THAN A DIAMOND

If you use the example of the country where you live, you will see easily that most of its residents can be classified in the category of an inferior or a mediocre existence. Very few are those who avoid negative acts and cherish positive conduct. Among them, still more rare, are those who have made contact with the Dharma and follow the teaching of the masters. They are compared to stars shining in a daylight sky.

This distribution of human beings was taught by the Buddha and continues to be taught by the lamas. You can also observe this by yourself. Among the millions of people who reside in your country, how many are interested in a spiritual path, how many practice it, and how many follow a master?

Diamond and gold are substances whose rarity determines their price. In the case of a human existence, it is not only its rarity that confers value, but that the human existence abounds in wealth. You know the holy Dharma, you have met lamas, you have received teachings and instructions, and you possess all conditions favorable to practice. Because of this, you can liberate yourself from the ocean of samsaric suffering and reach the definitive and authentic happiness of Awakening. You now have this extraordinary human existence so difficult to obtain—you should become deeply conscious of it.

Having this consciousness should not lead us to pride, but rather to a feeling of responsibility. We should always make the best use of the situation and use it to attain Buddhahood. To do so, we should put our body, speech, and mind in its service. If we waste these circumstances that are extraordinary and difficult to obtain, and if we let them pass without using them, how can we hope to find them again?

LIMITS OF THE TEMPORAL DOMAIN

In the course of our life, we continue to follow temporal or spiritual goals. The precious human existence offers thepotential to reach both. We often think that the Dharma is a good thing, but it is equally important to concern ourselves with this present life. In a certain sense, it is true that this world is not to be neglected. It is necessary for us to eat correctly, to dress decently, to live in good conditions, and so on. It is normal to take care of these things. However, the importance of all that we can accomplish in the temporal

domain is made relative by our certain death, which makes it amount to nothing.

The efforts we use to reach our objectives in this life can take two turns. Either, we will not have sufficient karma for our efforts to succeed; or, we will have the necessary karma and, according to what we wish, we will obtain wealth, reputation, and so on. However, even then, our success will not be eternal. It is necessarily limited by death, leaving behind nothing more than a dream. We may dream of living in a magnificent region, residing in a beautiful house, having all that we wish, and living as happily as a god. When we wake up, everything disappears, nothing remains. Our wealth and well-being in this world are similar to this dream. In fact, death makes us exit into the bardo. Temporal belongings are far from possessing all the value we attribute to them.

APPRECIATING OUR CAPABILITIES

In the Buddhist tradition in general, and particularly in the framework of the four great Tibetan lineages, when approaching the practice of Dharma, one always begins by reflecting on this precious human existence in order to become conscious of its value. Through numerical relations, metaphors, and the study of causes, the disciple is brought to understand how difficult and rare it is to obtain. One understands how essential it is, now that human existence has been obtained, to make this existence meaningful by exclusively devoting oneself to spiritual practice with the goal of attaining Awakening.

We are able to better understand the specificity of human existence by comparing it to other types of existence. Let us take the case of animals, simply those closest to us: horses, cats, dogs, cows, and so on. Whatever their intelligence, you could try to explain to them the benefits of positive acts or the disadvantage of negative acts, yet they will understand nothing. You cannot teach them to pray, to meditate, or to develop love and compassion. From a spiritual point of view, their condition is disadvantageous; they have no possibility of making progress toward Awakening. We can, however, understand, explain, pray, and meditate.

HARMFUL DESIRE-ATTACHMENT

The mind of all beings in samsara is afflicted by the six basic conflicting emotions, not in an equal manner, but with dominant traits prevailing.

Humans belong to the realm called the "sphere of desire" with the result that they are strongly marked by desire and attachment. By desire-attachment one does not refer exclusively to sexual desire but to all variants that this emotion can take in relationship to people, objects, or situations.

We are fortunate to have obtained a precious human existence and be aware of it. That does not prevent the force of conflicting emotions to manifest itself in our spirit. Because of the teachings given by the Buddha, we have a large array of methods for dealing with conflicting emotions, different techniques of

rejection, transformation, or recognition of their essence so that we should not become their slave.

Conflicting emotions are the source of all negative acts, and consequently, all suffering. This is why it is important to solve the problems they create. Their suppression automatically necessitates the elimination of negative acts and suffering. It is absolutely mandatory to know how to deal with them.

Of all the conflicting emotions, desire-attachment appears, affectively, to be the least harmful in and of itself. Unfortunately, it is followed by anger, jealousy, pride, possessiveness, a complete retinue revealing itself to be very harmful. The final result is much suffering and misfortune.

Doing nothing to eliminate emotions, but letting oneself be carried away by them, allows them to flow as a river. One can be sure water will not cease to flow. In the same way, emotions will continually be followed by new emotions and, as inevitably, by new negative acts and suffering. Perhaps we cannot attack emotions head-on and reject them, but the Buddha taught other approaches for transforming them or learning to recognize their essence, neutralizing them in an efficient manner, and liberating ourselves from them.

RAZING THE MOUNTAIN OF NEGATIVE ACTS

Personality is formed by three components, body, speech, and mind, through which we can be led to commit negative acts. - with the body: killing, stealing, or engaging in incorrect sexual conduct

- through speech: lying, using harmful words, slander, and idle chatter

- with the mind: covetousness, ill-wish, and erroneous views

Our entire person is implicated in negativity .This process has been so since time without beginning. During numberless different existences, our body, speech, and mind, have served to produce negative karma. Its quantity could be compared to an ocean without limit or to the axial mountain of the universe. Now, we should rid ourselves of negativity. Good human existence offers us some possibilities.

Although human life is brief, if used wisely, it allows for the elimination of the immense potential of negative acts within us. Accumulated by body, speech, and mind, negative potential can also be neutralized by the same agents.

- the body, concentrating on prostrations and giving- speech, the recitation of prayers, rituals and mantras such as that of Vajrasattva (Tibetan, Dorje Sempa) or Avalokita (Tibetan, Chenrezig)

- the mind: the different types of meditation, such as mental calming, superior vision, phases of creation and completion of the Vajrayana, and development of love and compassion

The totality of these exercises will certainly help reduce to nothingness the mountain of negative karma.

IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL AND ORAL EXERCISES

It is true that the mind is more important than body and speech because it governs them. It is the reason a person who has received the instructions on mahamudra, or maha-ati, and is capable of genuine meditation, can maintain an internal state no longer affected by body activity (motion, sitting, sleeping, eating, or doing nothing, and so on) or speech. This person knows the real nature of the mind and can remain there without distraction. The use of body and speech no longer concerns him or her. This constant recognition of the nature of the mind is extremely difficult.

Those who are incapable of doing this and who think they can dispense with oral and physical exercises and still progress are greatly mistaken. These exercises are important supports for realization. For example, it is obvious that physical posture greatly enhances meditation.

THE YOGI AND THE MONKEY

This is the story of a yogi who used to meditate in a forest inhabited by a large tribe of monkeys. The yogi constantly maintained a perfect posture. The chief of the monkeys, who without a doubt possessed some positive karmic tendencies, found it very amusing to imitate the yogi. The monkey was so successful that his mind gradually became more peaceful, and he successfully entered a state of meditation. The members of his tribe did the same thing as their chief, as was their habit. The result was that all the monkeys achieved great inner peace. This story underlines the impact of the use of the body solely, without any other mental preparation.

Speech can play a role just as important, notably in the use of mantras. It is said that meditation is similar to fire, and recitation of mantras similar to the wind that makes it burn.

MEDITATION OF THE CROCODILES

Everybody considers meditation important, deep, and useful. Still, it is necessary to understand what it is. Sometimes, one can think that it is simply remaining still, in a sort of apathy. This will result only in strengthening the natural tendencies of torpor and ignorance. Sakyapandita said that the person who has not received the instructions of an authentic master, but who is happy to be rocked by his or her own torpor, does nothing else than prepare for rebirth in the animal world. He also said that numerous are those believing they practice mahamudra, but in fact, weave the bonds of a future rebirth in the animal world. We have a good idea of what Sakyapandita is saying by visiting a zoo. There, we will see crocodiles lying in the sun. Nothing can draw them out of their sleepiness. Neither screams nor thrown objects will move them. Hippopotami move only to yawn enormously, and there are many other animals whose mental characteristics are strongly marked by sleepiness and lack of alertness.

Whether one practices mental calming, superior vision, or mahamudra, one should do it with the perfect knowledge of what they are. At the same time, it is necessary to support meditation with devotion to the master, and

compassion for all beings. All this is the function of the mind. If we add the work of speech to it, by frequent recitation of the mantra of Avalokita (Chenrezig) or other mantras, we will receive considerable help.

When one does not know how to meditate, and is happy to sit doing nothing allowing the mind to remain in a dull state, relatively devoid of thoughts, one will feel, it is true, a feeling of well-being linked to apathy. In Tibet, one can see marmots. During five or six months of the year, they hibernate underground without eating or drinking anything. They dwell in a torpor pleasing themselves, without thinking of anything, neither eating, urinating, or any kind of thinking whatsoever. When the six months of hibernation end, they climb out of their hole in good health and resume ordinary activity. They have passed six months in a cozy comfort, but no one can tell what they have accomplished on a spiritual level.

NOT SPOILING OUR GOOD LUCK

Now that we possess this precious human existence, let us apply body, speech, and mind to the Dharma and try to understand it fully. Even if we lack time, let us do it in short sessions as often as possible. Otherwise, we risk completely wasting the extraordinary opportunity that this life offers us. Let us recall that life is brief, similar to the flash of lightning that tears apart the night sky, and that we have no idea when it will end. If we have accomplished nothing spiritually, we will then leave empty-handed, without having gathered any of the jewels within our reach.

It is indispensable to continually reflect on impermanence, death, and the suffering inherent in samsara. When you hear the lama talking about these themes, it is possible you are not willing to listen, perhaps you even feel annoyed. It is nevertheless essential to understand them well. In Western languages, there are translations of various texts where they are approached in detail, and you can refer to them: the Torch of Certainty, the Jewel Ornament of Liberation or even small books that I have written.

Permeating ourselves with the ideas of impermanence and the unsatisfactory nature of samsara allows us to develop

diligence for practice, diverts us from worldly pursuit, and urges us toward attaining Buddhahood.

WHIP COACHMAN!

Those who have been to India have seen there a lot of horse-drawn carriages. You have noticed how the coachman urges the horse forward by touching him with a stick. The more he hits the horse, the quicker the horse runs. In the same way, we need the stick of reflection on impermanence and suffering to make progress. Perhaps, up to now, you have not sufficiently used this stick and lack energy to cover the path of the Dharma.

When we read the life of Milarepa, we admire the force and extreme energy that he put into his practice. Neither death, sickness, cold weather, nor hunger, were able to stop him. This is because he had perfectly permeated

himself with the notions of the precious human existence, impermanence, karma, and suffering.

THE OLD LADY IN HAWAII

When I went to Hawaii in 1978, an elderly lady came to see me and told me the following story.

"When you taught on the West coast, I found it very interesting. But, why did you speak so much about hell and hungry ghosts? It was very unpleasant to listen to this! Please, for the teachings that you will be giving in Hawaii, do not repeat such horrors!" I then had to give a seminar on meditation lasting several days, and it appeared impossible for me to approach the subject without mentioning the different worlds. When I started to talk about the inferior worlds, I saw the poor lady leaving the room.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Buddhist Perspectives

The teaching presented here approaches, in a few pages, a great number of themes that mere dear to Kalu Rinpoche. Historical aspects of the transmission, nature of mind, the Jour veils, karma, consciousnesses, the foundations of the path, the different worlds, the value of tJie human existence, refuge, and the functioning of illusion are surveyed liere. This overall view is only a brief introduction. These themes are seen again and developed further in the two other volumes of our trilogy: Profound Buddhism and Secret Buddhism.

Being omniscient and having pure love, the Buddha possesses the power to help all beings. This power is limited by our capacities; if we do not have the necessary inner opening, gained from our merit and karma, we have no possibility of meeting and understanding his teachings.

FROM INDIA TO TIBET

In our cosmic era, three Buddhas manifested before Shakyamuni Buddha. The latter lived in India more than 2500 years ago; it is said that 996 other Buddhas will follow him.

Shakyamuni Buddha, after accomplishing twelve great acts, began his vast activity for the benefit of all beings. In particular, he gave a variety of teachings that engendered many sages in India. It is said that they are as numerous as stars in the sky.

In Tibet, Buddhism was introduced because of the aspiration and activity of kings, who were manifestations of bodhisattvas. They invited Indian masters to the country and trained Tibetan translators. The translators had learned

Sanskrit and, with numerous difficulties, went to India and studied the Dharma in order to bring it to Tibet. One of the most famous translators, Marpa, during his travels to the country of origin of Buddhism, received teachings from Naropa and many other masters. Having obtained realization, he himself had many disciples in Tibet, notably Milarepa, who was acclaimed as the sun of the Dharma rising on Tibet. Marpa is at the origin of the Kagyupa lineage. Lamas receiving teachings in India from other masters have introduced different transmission lineages to Tibet. Today, four lineages remain preeminent: Nyingmapa, Kagyupa, Sakyapa, and Gelukpa. They all carry the teachings of the Buddha.

Just as Buddhism formerly passed from India to Tibet, it is now being transmitted from Tibet to the West by numerous lamas who sought refuge in India because of the Chinese invasion.

BASIS ON THE DHARMA

When one speaks of the Dharma of the Buddha, what is it fundamentally? The Dharma provides us with spiritual benefits. First of all, one must have an attitude of love and compassion, directed toward benefitting others. On this

basis, it is important to understand the mind, the driving force of mental activity. How is it? What is it? By meditating, one begins to have an idea of its nature, and gains some control of the mind. This allows us to turn away from samsara and enter the path of liberation.

INNER BUDDHA PATH

Among numerous spiritual traditions in the world, we now study Buddhism. It is called, "Inner Way of the Buddha" in Tibetan. This expression refers to the founder of the tradition, and it also means that it concerns the mind which is the inner part of a person, similar to the inhabitant of a house.

> *It has been told by the Buddha:*
> *All beings are Buddhas,*
> *But their mind is obscured by adventitious impurities.*
> *Once impurities are dissipated, beings are truly Buddhas.*

Indeed, all beings possess Buddha nature, or the potential for Awakening. This Buddha-mind contains infinite qualities. They are all ours at this very moment but as our mind is covered with veils, they remain latent. Once these veils are dissipated, these qualities appear completely.

THE FOUR VEILS

There are four veils. Since time without beginning, the mind does not recognize itself; it does not recognize its real nature and does not see itself. This is the veil of ignorance.

From this fundamental ignorance a deep dysfunctioning arises. The total purity of an Awakened mind expresses itself with three modes called the three Bodies of the Buddha, the Absolute Body (Sanskrit, dharmakaya), the Body of Perfect Experience (Sanskrit, sambhogakaya), and the Body of Emanation (Sanskrit, nirmanakaya). Under the grasping of ignorance, however, the mind, not recognizing its own emptiness that corresponds to the Absolute Body, conceives an illusory "me" with which it identifies itself.

The mind is not only empty, it is also clarity, which means that it is able to produce all kinds of thoughts. All phenomena appear in the mind. Taking this clarity as distinct in itself, the mind conceives "another" and a polarity is formed, "me" and "another" creating a basis for the veil of latent conditionings.

A third aspect of the mind is knowledge, which is also called "non-obstruction" and it is linked both to emptiness and clarity. When the mind, basing itself on the duality "me/other," does not recognize this power of knowing itself, it becomes attached to pleasant objects, pushes away unpleasant objects, and remains in blind ignorance of the true nature of phenomena. Instead of unobstructed knowing, the three basic conflicting emotions—attraction, aversion, and ignorance—arise. They divide themselves into numerous ramifications, finally forming a network of 84,000 emotions constituting the third veil, that of conflicting emotions.

Under the influence of conflicting emotions, we accomplish with body, speech, and mind, many acts that are mostly negative. They lead to birth into the six worlds where happiness or suffering are felt, depending on each person's previous acts. It is this link which causes samsara to happen. It forms the fourth veil, the veil of karma.

These are the four great veils that cover the mind: the veil of ignorance, the veil of latent conditioning, the veil of conflicting emotions, and the veil of karma. Those whose mind is covered by these four veils are called ordinary beings.

INDIVIDUALIZED CONSCIOUSNESS

As a prisoner of these four veils, the mind produces many mental manifestations, which are ordinary thoughts. The mind then functions according to a mode called "individualized consciousness" This individualized consciousness has eight facets.

- First of all, the basis for functioning is the "potential of individualized consciousness" From it, the sense consciousnesses arise which perceive the world through the corresponding body organs:

  - visual consciousness
  - auditory consciousness
  - olfactory consciousness
  - gustatory consciousness
  - tactile consciousness
  - mental consciousness
  -Finally, there is the "disturbed consciousness" that refers to the added perturbations brought to this functioning—already impure in itself—by its identification with "me" and the conflicting emotions.

PRIMORDIAL AWARENESS

As there is a potential of individualized consciousness, there is also a potential of primordial awareness. The individualized consciousness is like water polluted by mud, sand, and other impurities. Primordial awareness is the same water, but cleared of all these impurities. When one recognizes the true nature of the mind, and when this recognition is stabilized by meditation, the mind is liberated of all its defects. The potential of individualized consciousness disappears in primordial awareness. This awareness is not something that we lack now and will have to eventually acquire. We already have it right at this very moment. For example, today the sun shines in the sky, but because of the veil formed by clouds and fog, we cannot see it. When clouds and fog dissipate, we will be able to see the sun, which has always been there. In the same manner, the eight individualized consciousnesses now veil the primordial awareness for us.

The Tibetan word for Buddha is *Sang-gye*. It is composed of two syllables summarizing the essence of the Dharma. The first of the two syllables, *sang*, means "purified," referring to the fact that the mind of a Buddha is completely purified of the four veils (veils of ignorance, latent conditioning, conflicting

emotions, and karma). At the same time the mode of being of the mind is revealed, inherent qualities are blossoming. This is the meaning of the second syllable, *gye*, "fully opened out." *Sang-gye*, "purified and fully opened out," gathers into two syllables all of the Dharma.

SEEING OUR FACE

Since the mind fundamentally possesses Buddha nature, one can wonder what has caused the veils to interfere. In fact, it is impossible to tell how they happened in a particular manner or at which given moment. In the same way refined gold is not found by itself in nature, but is encased in its mother rock. The purity of the mind has been covered by veils since time without beginning. Let us examine another image. Since the moment we were born from the womb of our mother, we possessed a face and a pair of eyes that allow us to see everything, except our own face. In the same way, the mind usually functions without being able to see itself. It is what is called basic ignorance.

However, there is a means that enables us to see our own face. It is sufficient to take a mirror and look at ourselves. In the spiritual domain, what can we use in place of a mirror? We have the word of the Buddha and the transmission of this word by masters. The master gives the teachings of the Buddha; the disciple listens to them, and puts them into practice. Because of that, the disciple can see his or her own face, his or her own mind.

Gampopa presented the possibility of reaching Awakening in the following way. First, all beings possess the fundamental "cause" of Awakening, which is Buddha nature. Second, the "support" which grants the ability to approach Awakening is provided by human existence; finally, the "factor" that allows us to effectively make progress on the path is the master that gives us instructions.

The path mentioned here does not mean that one must travel from one place to another, for example, leave this place to go to England. Rather, it is a transformation we must produce, transforming an impure mind into a pure mind.

A GRADUATED PATH

In this world, there are many teachings of spiritual traditions and sciences. Whatever the tradition or the science, it is impossible to become Awakened if the nature of the mind, its fundamental mode of being, is not recognized and if, consequently, one does not liberate oneself from the four veils. This requires the implementation of a graduated series of spiritual practices. First of all, one takes refuge. Then, one can engage in the practice of prostrations. This is followed by the practice of Vajrasattva (Tibetan, Dorje Sempa) which allows purification, then the offering of the mandala. Finally, one practices guru-yoga that opens the mind of the disciple to the grace of the master. It is then possible to accomplish profound practices such as the creation and completion phases of deity meditation, and the practice of mental calming and superior vision. Finally, one reaches mahamudra—the summit of

practices. The purpose of all these methods is to dissipate the four veils and to understand the ultimate nature of the mind.

LIMITATIONS OF INFERIOR WORLDS

Allowing ourselves to be continually carried away by conflicting emotions, we accumulate negative acts which lead us to birth in inferior worlds. In hell, beings undergo extremely great torment because of intense heat or cold. Hungry ghosts, for their part, are also constantly afflicted by hunger and thirst.

Animals, which we know better, suffer from cold, from consuming each other, from being domesticated, and from having a limited intelligence. This limitation, in particular, prevents spiritual practice. A cat or a horse has few possibilities to understand what we say and even less possibility to have a spiritual practice. For example, you have a horse, a dog, or a cat that you love. If, out of this love and compassion, you patiently try to explain to your pet that it could be reborn in a pure land such as the Land of Bliss by reciting a certain number of mantras of Avalokita, the animal will not understand. If you tell your pet that it would be very beneficial to meditate even five minutes, your explanations are useless. The animal will neither understand them nor apply them. Even the best animal existence, that of domestic animals, remains an unfavorable support of existence, because it does not allow spiritual progress.

HUMAN EXISTENCE

Human existence provides the possibility of understanding the Dharma and putting it into practice. From a spiritual point of view, it is a superior existence. Nevertheless, among human beings, many have no knowledge of a spiritual path. They have no idea of what is positive or negative, what one should or should not do. They are deeply engaged in ordinary activities of this world. Many people commit many negative acts that will cause them great suffering in the future.

Most people believe they will have a long life, nevertheless few human beings become 100 years old. Death obliges all humans to leave this world one day or another, leaving behind all their material belongings. In spite of this, nearly everyone pursues temporal objectives that never exceed the framework of this present life. Among natural substances found on earth, some are considered precious, such as gold or diamonds. The human existence that is now yours is also precious. It is meaningful, because you came in contact with the Dharma, have understood it, and have met with spiritual masters.

BEFORE SUNSET

It is essential to put an authentic teaching into practice. We can do nothing without practicing. We should be able to adopt what is positive, reject what is negative, and be capable of recognizing the true nature of mind. If we receive

instructions from a master and we correctly apply them, we tread a path which will lead us directly to Awakening. However, there are many people interested in the Dharma, gladly believing in its beneficial effects, but who do not make the effort to practice. In this case, how could there be benefits from the Dharma? When the sun is about to set and hides behind a high mountain, the shadow of the mountain, without anything able to stop it, spreads slowly over the plain. Our life is similar to the light that illuminates the plain. As time passes, the shadow of death grows more. We must take advantage of the years we have left to truly practice.

Most of you are young. When one is young and undertakes an activity with much ardor, there are good results. If you can put energy and force into the practice of the Dharma, you will certainly harvest good fruit. If you are older, ordinary activity in the world is nearing its end. You should be able to envisage death without fear or anguish, and prepare a happy future life continuing to walk toward liberation. To do so, it is necessary for you to devote yourself to the Dharma.

The precious human existence you now enjoy is not the fruit of randomness. It is the result of several causes, implying that in your past lives, you accumulated merit and a certain knowledge. Also, you already have made a connection with the Dharma and spiritual masters. Temporal activities have only relative importance, for, when we die, we will not be able to take anything with us. If death was the final end, and if there was nothing after this life, it would not be important to follow a spiritual path. But after this life, other existences will come, and if we do not do what is necessary for liberation, we will continue to wander endlessly in the sufferings of the cycle of existence.

NOTHING TO BE RENOUNCED

All of you this evening have a very good support of existence in this life. Some among you, perhaps the majority, have taken refuge. Taking refuge is excellent. The vows of refuge are easy to keep. They comprise no danger and because of them our positive acts become even more powerful.

Some people think that taking refuge presents a risk and some disadvantages, obligating them to reject other traditions they trust. In reality, taking refuge does not imply renouncing any other tradition. It simply means that one has confidence and engages in the Three Jewels, that is to say the Buddha, the Dharma (his teaching), and the Sangha (the community of those who transmit the teachings). Losing this confidence would break the vows of refuge. Nothing in these vows forbids one from having confidence in another tradition and its practice.

ETERNAL MIND

Our mind is not an object, having a certain color, form, matter, or volume. We can verify this by personal observation. Whether the mind does not exist as a substance and is not material, does not mean that it does not exist at all, or that it is nothingness. The proof of its existence is that it produces many thoughts and emotions, and that we feel all kinds of pleasant and unpleasant

experiences. Undoubtably, most of you have studied many years and accumulated a great amount of knowledge while at school and university. This shows that the mind exists and that it does not exist materially. Indeed, let us suppose you spent 15 years in school and university. If all you learned possessed a form, it is obvious that a house could not contain it, much less your body. Because the mind is without form, and empty, it can contain everything.

As we have seen earlier, the mind is not only empty in essence, it is also clarity, and intelligence without obstruction. These are the three points defining it.

This mind, that is now ours, has existed since time without beginning. It is not born at a particular moment, it has no interruption, and it will not cease to exist. Let us take the example of space. It would be nonsense to say that it began to exist a number of years ago, or that it will disappear in so many centuries or millennia. Our mind, as immaterial as space, has no beginning and no end.

THE FUNCTIONING OF ILLUSION

If the mind is permanent, and if it has no beginning and no end, how is it that we experience birth and death? In fact, these experiences have no reality. They are illusory productions of the mind. Let us take the example of a married couple. At first, husband and wife get along well, and are happy together. That which loves is the mind. After some time, they can no longer bear each other, they argue, and become enemies. What was joy and happiness is now transformed into suffering and enmity. This is not because the mind has become something else. The mind itself has remained the same, but its production has changed.

In general, our situation in samsara has three forms of bodily existence. In the waking state, we experience the world through our physical body, called the "fully mature karmic body" Secondly, when we sleep we live our dreams through the "body of latent conditionings" Finally, after death, and before talcing birth in the bardo, we have a "mental body" We stay in samsara by continually taking either one or the other of these three bodies, which are accompanied by an environment of illusory projections. In the three cases, we strongly identify ourselves with what is called "I77 or "me" For this "me" we want pleasant experiences in this very life; we want all that is good, and all that satisfies that "me" What we desire for this very life, we should desire much more for our lives in the future! In order to prepare for this happiness and progress on the path of liberation, there is no other way besides the Dharma.

Question: Is it absolutely necessary to have a master?

Kalu Rinpoche: A master is necessary because one cannot engage walking on a path one does not know; to know it, it is necessary for someone to teach us. We need a master, in the same sense that in school we need teachers for us to progress in our studies.

Question: Apparently some beings have reached Awakening without a master; that seems to be the case for Shakyamuni Buddha himself.

Kalu Rinpoche: One cannot say that Shakyamuni Buddha had no master. Before obtaining Awakening in Bodhgaya, he received, under the form of a mystical transmission, an ultimate initiation, that of the "great light ray" simultaneously given to him by all the Buddhas. Furthermore, in his previous lives during numerous kalpas, he progressed on the path by receiving the teachings of spiritual masters up to the tenth bodhisattva level. Shakyamuni Buddha, himself, said that without a spiritual master it is not possible to reach Awakening.

Question: Was Christ an authentic master and is the Christianity of today a valid tradition?

Kalu Rinpoche: I think that Christ is a completely authentic master and that his teachings have retained their value. It is said that Awakening appears under the form of numerous traditions in order to help all beings. All have value and suit different beings. This does not mean they are all identical or equal. For traveling, we have different ways of transportation. We can take a plane, a train, a car, a horse, or walk by foot; all these are ways for us to travel but not with the same speed.

I do not know Christianity well, but I think there are realized Christians. I can see that Christianity has placed a strong accent on faith and confidence, as well as emphasizing love and compassion, which is very dose to Buddhism. Whatever the religion or spiritual tradition, if one studies or practices it, one can benefit from it. On the other hand, without the support of a tradition, and without receiving any teaching from a master, meditating by oneself, is like someone trying to grasp an object in complete darkness. One should not only learn theory but also put it into practice, otherwise this would hardly be beneficial. For example, if one wants to learn how to drive, it is necessary to acquire basic theoretical knowledge; but, above all, it is necessary to learn how to hold the wheel and make the car work. To practice medicine, theoretical knowledge is not enough either. It is also necessary to know how to offer health care. Suppose you are thirsty and you knew all the qualities of water. As long as you do not drink, the thirst will not be quenched. In the same way, if you know all the qualities of the Dharma but do not meditate, it will not be beneficial. Apprenticeship in the Dharma is made of three phases: first, listening, that is to say receiving knowledge; then reflecting upon it; and finally the indispensable phase of putting it into practice, which is meditating. You may know that a dish is good and very nourishing, but if you do not eat it, you will continue to be hungry.

Question: How can one help someone who is going to die?

Kalu Rinpoche: The Dharma proposes many ways to accompany dying people. Without knowing them all, one can recite the names of the Buddhas, or a mantra such as that of Avalokita in the ear of the dying person. This is extremely beneficial.

Question: Are there women who are lamas?

Kalu Rinpoche: First of all, there are some feminine deities such as Tara, Vajrayogini, and others. Moreover, during the history of Tibet, many masters were women. Some have remained famous, like Machik Labdron or Yeshe Tsogyal. Whether a man or a woman, one possesses a mind, and consequently, the potential for Awakening. It is said that the essence of all beings is Buddha nature; it is not said that the essence of all male beings is the Buddha.

Question: What benefit are the mantras?

Kalu Rinpoche: If we have confidence in the mantra we recite, the spiritual force, the force of compassion with which it is charged, allows us to establish our mind in emptiness.

Brussels, October 1984

Bodhgaya Teaching

This teaching and the two that follow are the last teachings given by Kalu Rinpoche. They are, in some way, his spiritual will. Staying for the last time in Bodhgaya, where the Buddha attained Awakening, Kalu Rinpoche addressed a group of Westerners, many of wJwm were his dose disciples. He gave a summary of his approach to Buddhism, which was almost elliptic at times. He also made an assessment of his activity in the West.

A SITUATION SO DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN

The existence given us in this present life represents an exceptionally favorable situation. It is difficult to be born in the place where we are, the "continent of the South" "Jambudvipa".35 It is difficult to acquire what we have obtained, the precious human existence endowed with the 18 freedoms and qualifications. It is difficult to meet that with which we have made contact, the teaching of the Buddha and authentic spiritual masters. Finally, it is difficult to have the opportunity to hear what we have heard, the instructions of the Small Vehicle, the Great Vehicle, and the Vajrayana delivered by the Buddha.

We have, during our life, the choice of two paths: the spiritual way and the temporal way. The temporal way allows us to obtain happiness, well-being, success, wealth, fame, or power, in the framework of our present existence. The spiritual way leads us to mastering our mind by the knowledge of its nature and, ultimately, allows us to reach Buddhahood. Of these two paths, the spiritual path is the more important.

LET US MEASURE OUR GOOD FORTUNE

We have now obtained human existence. If this were not so, and, for example, we were born as a god, our wealth, pleasures, and happiness would be so great that we would spend a lifetime enjoying them, unmotivated to turn away from the cycle of existences. We would not have the opportunity of following the spiritual path. If we were born as a demi-god, the consequences of our past actions engendering this type of rebirth would have given way to jealousy and pugnacity as virulent as a devouring fire, so we could not possibly have the opportunity of following a spiritual path.

We could have been born in hell where beings suffer from extreme heat and cold; in the world of the hungry ghosts tormented by intense hunger and thirst; or again in the world of animals with a limited intelligence who suffer having to hunt and consume each other in order to survive. In all these states of existence, even if we heard some teachings, we would perceived the words without understanding their meaning.

A CITY WOULD SUFFICE

On our planet, there are many countries, large and small, where human beings are continually born. However, not all follow a spiritual path. Most of them have no previous connection with the Dharma, nor aspiration to discover it. If one were to gather all the inhabitants of this world into 100 cities, a single city would suffice to contain those who practice a spiritual path. If all the inhabitants of this city were involved people, it would be wonderful! Many are content with the external appearance of practice. Those who take their spiritual life seriously are as rare as stars during the day. You have entered the path, you have confidence and you try to make progress. This is a sign of a good connection in the past and a good aspiration in the present.

MYSTERY OF CONNECTIONS

You were born in different countries of the world where the teaching of the Buddha is largely unknown. However, at adulthood you have become interested in Buddhism. You have received instructions and decided to apply them. You have studied, your confidence has grown, and you have practiced with joy. This turn in your existence implies that, sometime, during your past lives, you practiced generosity, ethics, patience, diligence, concentration, and transcendental knowledge. In this manner you practiced the six paramitas as well as positive acts. You also certainly have had a particular connection with the Buddha, his teaching, and the Buddhist community.

An idea has occurred to me on this point. The Buddha, his teaching, and the community manifest a great force of compassion and blessing. When I was a child, my parents had a deep confidence in the Three Jewels. As soon as I was of an age to understand, I heard about the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha and lamas, and I have felt an extraordinary faith in them. At a very young age, I felt an unusual and intense love and compassion toward animals. Because of my faith, I recited the names of the Buddhas and mantras such as OM MANI PADME HUNG to all the insects, animals and birds that I met. To offer them something, I gave them food blended with consecrated substances. Then, I recited this prayer: "When liberated of this miserable existence, may you be born as human in the next life. May I be able to help you enter the Dharma and attain Awakening" I also fed consecrated substances mixed with tsampa36 to fish, ants, and other small animals, praying for their happiness.

Later, as an old man, I traveled to foreign countries. I do not know foreign languages, only Tibetan, my mother tongue; yet many people seemed happy to meet me and follow my teachings. Sometimes, I wonder if these beings are not the same ones whom, a long time ago, I helped and protected by reciting the names of the Buddhas and prayers.

I cannot be sure of that, having no direct vision of it, but I do not believe this is impossible. Nowadays, there are many younger tulkus, more attractive, and better educated than I. Despite this, many people are seemingly attracted to me. I believe those who come to me were born in present

circumstances because of the activity of the mantras and prayers I recited for them a long time ago.

VASUBANDHU'S PIGEONS

How is this possible? Long ago in India there lived a master called Vasubandhu, a disciple of Asanga. He lived in a house that sheltered many pigeons under its roof. When he was home, Vasubandhu recited discourses of the Buddha aloud. Every day, he offered water and seeds to the spirits. When it was done, he threw the seeds through the door. The birds heard the chanted texts and ate the scattered seeds. After their death, they were born as disciples of Vasubandhu. One became even more learned than his master in the domain of the sutras; another more expert in the texts treating monastic discipline. In their past lives, all of them were none other than the pigeons nesting under the awnings. Such a connection between facts may appear inconceivable to us; nevertheless, it is quite possible if one refers to the law of karmic connection.

EMPTY-HANDED

It would be a great loss not to practice the spiritual way and instead exclusively devote ourselves to temporal activities. Even if those brought us power, force, wealth, attraction, and well-being, our unavoidable death will leave us alone and empty-handed, as if we wakened from a dream. In a long term perspective, they appear neither necessary nor useful. While dying, we will take away nothing other than the mind and the positive or negative karma we have accumulated during our lifetime.

INNER AND OUTER DISCIPLINE

Buddhist discipline can be seen as having two sides, inner and outer. Renouncing the ten negative acts 37 and practicing the ten positive acts38 are part of the outer teachings. Because of the law of karma, and by adopting this conduct, we will no longer undergo the pain and suffering of inferior existence in our future lives. The ten positive acts will allow us to obtain a comfortable, pleasant, long, and happy existence in the world of human beings or gods.

Inner teachings comprise the respect of different vows: the vows of individual liberation, bodhisattva vows, and sacred commitments of the Vajrayana. They also concern the "phases of creation and completion" of the meditation, as well as meditation on compassion and emptiness, which lead to recognition of the ultimate nature of the mind. We then reach different stages of liberation from the first to the tenth levelsof the bodhisattva, and finally, complete Awakening—free of all suffering.

LISTENING, REFLECTING, AND MEDITATING

Practicing the teachings of the Buddha offers two advantages, a temporal benefit, obtaining fortunate conditions of existence, and an ultimate benefit—liberation. It is necessary to get a solid foundation by correctly listening, reflecting, and meditating. We must begin by listening39 to the teachings, that is to have some knowledge of them. We reflect on what we have studied until convinced of its validity. Finally, after having understood the meaning of the teachings, we meditate, taking them as the basis of our meditation. When these three steps, listening, reflecting, and meditating, are correctly done, our practice automatically becomes efficient and beneficial. If we begin to practice Buddhism without listening, studying, or reflecting, we will have an insufficient and superficial comprehension that produces a practice that is not correct, authentic, or beneficial.

Let us take an example. The teachings of the Buddha inform us that the human existence is characterized by sufferings due to birth, sickness, old age, and death. From listening, we obtain some knowledge of this. We then reflect on these different types of suffering. Becoming aware of what they are, we begin to see that we have to live in a way to rid ourselves of them in this and future lives. We will decide to realize the nature of mind, beyond birth and death, beyond all suffering. Having passed this step of reflecting, we undertake the practice of meditation in order to reach liberation.

39The term "listening," in this context, means "to be informed, having knowledge"; therefore, it refers not only to the effective listening of oral teachings, but also to the reading of authentic texts.

PRECIOUS HUMAN EXISTENCE

If we follow the instructions of a lama, first, we will be taught the ten qualifications and the eight freedoms of the precious human existence that we possess now. The difficulty of obtaining this life will be explained through "causes, numbers and metaphors"40

The "causes" refer to obtaining a precious human existence. It is necessary to have practiced the ten positive acts and abandoned the ten negative acts in our past lives. The being who has not acted in this way cannot enjoy all the freedoms and qualifications which make human life to be the precious human life. There are few who observe right ethics, and are able to be born in these favorable conditions.

The "numbers" refer to the small proportion of human beings compared to those in other conditions of existence. For example, we see that a relatively large number of people reside between Bodhgaya, where we are, and the neighboring city of Gaya. The number of insects living underground in this area is without doubt 100 times, perhaps 1,000 or 100,000 times greater than the number of human beings. Comparatively, the number of humans is relatively small. Likewise, compared to animals, hungry ghosts are even far more numerous. If we reflect on it, we will come to think: "Now, I have obtained human birth. If I do not give meaning to this life by following a spiritual path, this opportunity will be ruined."

A SOLID FOUNDATION

It is necessary to reflect on the impermanence of our human existence. Our life can be reduced to a succession of years, months, days, hours, or even seconds. Like the flow of a large river, our life is impermanent, and changes from instant to instant until death. After this, life ends and we no longer can make any use of it. When we meditate on death, we understand it is necessary to use the time we have left to study authentic spiritual teachings.

When we think of the suffering in the cycle of existences, we become convinced that we must avoid this rebirth, so we study the means for this, that is, the teachings of the Buddha.

Finally, by studying the law of karma, we understand that positive acts are the cause of happiness, and negative acts the cause of suffering. We are led to accomplish positive activity and to avoid the negative. By a progressive approach, we assimilate the teachings of the Buddha. We reflect upon them, and then we meditate. Doing this, we are sure to establish an authentic and correct spiritual practice.

VARIOUS VEHICLES

We can practice the Small Vehicle, the Great Vehicle, or the Vajrayana.

By practicing the Small Vehicle, we become aware of the cycle of existences—an ocean of suffering. We see that this cycle creates suffering, and it is impermanent by nature and we turn away from it. Following the directives of our master, we learn to meditate by concentrating on the emptiness of the individual. Through meditation, we overcome our enemies which are our own conflicting emotions. This results in the path of the "listeners" called "the victory over the enemies" (the state of arhat). Going beyond the simple emptiness of the mind, one then meditates on the emptiness of all animate and inanimate phenomena; one reaches the realization of a "solitary Buddha" Listeners and solitary Buddhas are in the framework of the Small Vehicle.

We arrive at an understanding of our own emptiness and that of others because of the instructions of our master. In fact, we see that suffering has no own existence, and we develop compassion for all beings. Not perceiving this emptiness, beings are attached to the appearances of samsara and their suffering never ends. Great compassion toward beings is linked to meditation on emptiness. From here, we enter the path of the bodhisattva. The Great Vehicle puts in practice the six perfections, which are generosity, ethics, patience, diligence,concentration,andtranscendentknowledge,keeping as a foundation the union of emptiness and compassion. By this path, the practitioner reaches the first level of the bodhisattva, then passes through the levels that lead to the tenth stage.

FROM IMPURE TO PURE

As long as we have not realized the nature of our mind we remain ordinary beings. Our consciousness is not at one with innate primordial awareness. It is an impure individual consciousness that makes us perceive phenomena in a dualistic mode. Forms, sounds, tastes, contacts with earth, water, fire, air, and space in the external world are on one side, and on the other—our flesh, blood, breath, bones and articulations, nervous system, pores of our skin, and so on, in our body. Their totality falls into groups which are the aggregates, elements and senses, and become the source of suffering.

Each of these groups contains a certain number of aspects. One example is the enumeration of five aggregates: forms, sensations, perceptions, volitions, and consciousnesses. All are supports for suffering, in which one can say that "suffering is inherent in all compounded phenomena"

Suffering comes from an impure mind. When we study the teachings of the Buddha and put them in practice, we understand that this impure mind, as "potential of individual consciousness" (Sanskrit, alayavijnana), is comparable to muddy water. Pure and dear water corresponds to the realization of the nature of the mind, and is referred to as the "potential of primordial awareness" (Sanskrit, alayajnana). From the point of primordial awareness, the five elements of the external world (earth, water, fire, air, and space) are perceived as the five feminine Buddhas. The five aggregates (forms,sensations,perceptions,volitions,and consciousnesses) are the five masculine Buddhas. The five conflicting emotions (desire, anger, mental opacity, pride, and jealousy) are the five wisdoms. All negative aspects of our experience become positive. All appearances are transmuted and realized as the nature of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, divine and pure appearances. It is why the "wisdom deities," Buddhas and bodhisattvas truly exist.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas have given human beings teachings that constitute a treasury of instructions shared today by many masters. If we receive initiations and instructions from these masters, we will be able, by practicing meditation, to accomplish the transmutation of the potential of individual consciousness into the potential of primordial awareness. In the Vajrayana, one uses techniques including visualizations of deities, recitations of mantras, meditative absorption states, and mudras. With these means we can hope to reach Awakening in this very life, like Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, or Khyungpo Naljor.

THE GOOD PEASANT

Since 1971,1 have traveled to many countries in the world, from north to south, east to west. I have given many initiations, explained the Dharma, and given instructions. I have created retreat centers and Dharma centers. I have spread the teachings of the Buddha using various methods. It can be said that I am a peasant who has planted his field well. Many other lamas and tulkus of the Sakyapa, Gelukpa, Kagyupa, and Nyingmapa traditions of Tibetan Buddhism have undertaken similar work, so that Buddhism now has spread within most countries of the world. Seeds have been planted well.

The real fruit that can be expected from this is that many people achieve the three-year and three-month retreat. However, with rare exceptions, the result did not meet what was expected, because many entered the retreat in a rush, without having sufficiently studied and understood the teachings of the Buddha. Their meditation during the retreat has not been as fruitful as we were expecting, because of this insufficient preparation and understanding. Have they made progress on the path of Awakening? The results are uncertain, and do not meet all the criteria of progress. Therefore, I cannot tell if my projects have truly been accomplished.

For this reason, I have formed a translation committee in charge of The Treasury of Knowledge.411 feel that this is an efficient way to remedy the situation. When this encyclopedia is translated into several languages, people interested in Buddhism will be able to reach a better understanding. Those who have already practiced in Buddhist centers, or who have accomplished the three-year and three-month retreat will be able to deepen their experience and understanding of meditation. They also will be able to immediately harvest the fruits of their practice. At least, this is my hope.

Bodhgaya, 1989

Vasubandhu

The Next to the Last Teaching

The Buddha gave 84,000 teachings for the benefit of all beings that are included in the three approaches, or vehicles of Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. In the present age, it is through these forms that the Dharma spreads throughout the world. This is the case with the Tibetan tradition, in particular, which is based on the collection of these three vehicles. From any one of these approaches, what matters is to overcome schemes fabricated with the samsaric mind, an ego-structured mind that looks after its own interests or profit, and tries to gain richness, fame, and so on, for itself. Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana reject such an attitude. It is important to renounce this egotistical attitude of samsara.

THE THREE VEHICLES

From the Hinayana point of view, it is the strong fixation on oneself that creates ego—the source of the 84,000 disturbing emotions of our mind; pleasure, displeasure, indifference, inferior and superior states of consciousness—all the sufferings of samsara originate with this fixation. Hinayana teaches how to overcome the fixation of ego by meditation on transcendent knowledge of non-ego.

In Mahayana one is not only concerned with one's own liberation from the fixation of ego, but with the liberation of all beings from the suffering of samsara and helping them to attain the perfect joy of Awakening. The practices of Mahayana and Hinayana aim at overcoming the compulsive attitudes of attraction, repulsion, and indifference, linked with ego.

The area of concern in Vajrayana, as in Hinayana and Mahayana, is overcoming the fixation of ego. One must liberate oneself from attachments, repulsions, and indifference. The feeling of existing, the thought, "I am, I have a body" and the experience of what we usually consider to be real—all that we can be attached to, the fixations of dualistic grasping—must be completely overcome. To liberate oneself from these fixations, Vajrayana employs methods such as meditation on a deity and recitation of the deity's mantra.

A DIVIDED LIFE

By previous connections with the Three Jewels and the merit accumulated in past existences, you have obtained a precious human existence. Because of the kindness of the lama, your spiritual friend, you can understand many teachings even if you cannot understand all of the Dharma. This is important because, today, there are many practitioners of Dharma aspiring to Buddhahood but who have not yet overcome the fixations of ego! They continue to cultivate thoughts and desires such as, "I must have happiness, pleasure, success. I have to be known in the world. I have to be wealthy. I have to have this and that, and so on." All these ideas come from fixations and attachments.

I also see many people who practice at times with the mind of Dharma, and then again with the mind of samsara. Sometimes the Dharma viewpoint is dominant and at other times samsara predominates. So goes their life. Sometimes they practice the Dharma, but sometimes they forget. To practice Dharma it is necessary to recognize the essence of mind and practice what is really useful to it. That means practicing that which will diminish the disturbing emotions—desire, aversion, ignorance, pride, jealousy, and avarice. And then, practicing that which will completely liberate us from them. If one acts in this way, one truly practices the Dharma.

CULTURAL CONTEXTS

All practitioners, Westerners and Easterners, are fundamentally in the same situation, sharing the precious human existence and the benefits that come from circumstances that are favorable to the authentic practice of Dharma. However, there are some dissimilarities in their approaches that come from differences engendered by their respective cultures. Easterners have a familiarity with the Dharma that allows them an affinity with it. For them, the teachings are obviously true and they think it is good to practice and meditate on them. They easily and naturally recite mantras, do prostrations, circumambulations and make traditional offerings of butter lamps, and so on. They have, because of their cultural background, a feeling that these practices are positive even if there are few who understand the reason. Some meditate deeply. Even those who do not know how to meditate have a positive relation with the teachings. This enables them to recite billions of mantras such as OM MANI PADME HUNG or to do many times 100,000 recitations of the 100 syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. They also engage in Dharma activities such as the making of tsa-tsa (types of miniature stupas) or other things. All these activities are very positive and useful for practice.

In the West, the introduction of Dharma is recent. With respect to Vajrayana, particularly recent. There is no cultural background. Generally Westerners have good karmic connection with the Dharma. They appreciate it and consider its teachings to be true. They also have confidence that is not connected to a cultural past, and because of this they are mainly attracted by meditation. This is good, although they are reluctant to do other activities such as recitation of mantras. Even when they understand some Dharma, there are few who will recite the manis, the Thirty-Five Buddhas Confession Prayer, or the Prayer of the Activities of Samantabhadra. The Buddha taught that these practices are very positive. This attitude on their part is formed by lack of confidence in the Buddha, and absence of previous habits and cultural background. In fact, these different activities of the Dharma bring great benefits and the Buddha taught them in order to help us. There are benefits from meditation, pujas, prostrations, circumambulations, and all the practices that purify body and speech. It is not a matter of one approach being right and the other wrong. They all bring similar benefits.

INVESTING YOURSELF COMPLETELY

One who receives the teachings and practices them is a human being made up of body, speech, and mind. These human elements at first seem to be radically different, but they fundamentally belong together and are interdependent. Without speech, the body would not know how to express itself, and without body, there would be no speech. The practice of Dharma concerns our whole being; this means our body, speech, and mind. There are positive and negative acts of body, speech, and mind. Likewise, the accumulation of merit and purification practices deal with all aspects of our being. All these practices and teachings of the Buddha are useful in the attainment of Awakening. Whatever time you can commit to the practice of Dharma—be it one year, one month, one week, or one day—the motivation is extremely important. It should be done with bodhicitta, the mind of Awakening. This means telling yourself that you are going to do it for the benefit of all beings. Having this inner attitude as the basis of all practices is very important. While progressing on the path, the most important thing, if one can do it, is to understand, as much as possible, the nature of the mind. Each practice should be done with this understanding as a basis.

ESSENCE OF THE TEACHING

If one can do recitations and physical practices with speech and body while meditating on the nature of mind, these will bring even greater benefit. To truly understand the nature of mind is very delicate. To arrive at this, a lama must give us instructions over a long period of time, and then we ourselves have to meditate a long time on these instructions, examining the mind accordingly. Deep devotion to the lama as well as practices of accumulation and purification are very important. Without the conjunction of these elements, it is difficult to recognize the nature of mind.

For this recognition, it is necessary to have both a realized lama with authentic capabilities, and a disciple qualified by devotion with previous accumulation of merit and purification. When such a meeting occurs, the lama can uncover the superior capabilities of the disciple, and this disciple will be receptive to the lama's teachings. The lama can guide the disciple, directly pointing out the fundamental state of mind to him. The disciple then will meditate within this understanding. Everything is included in this practice; there is no need for anything else. Today it is rare to meet such a qualified lama or disciple. There are few lamas who teach in this way. Therefore, it is important that I talk to you about it. I am old, my body is no longer in good shape. We will not be together much longer. In this brief time, I wish to speak about what can help you. To teach you many things would not be useful.

MIND BEYOND NAMING

What is the nature of our mind? "Mind" is a word. Besides this word, this appellation, there is nothing that one can use as a basis for designation, nothing of which one can say, "This is it." The mind has no form, no color; nothing can identify it. It is called emptiness.

This emptiness of mind is undefinable, like space but not inert and obscure emptiness. It is not lacking awareness, because if this were the case, the mind could not produce anything and would not be of any use.

The nature of this emptiness is luminosity. This means a lucidity tending toward awareness. This emptiness and luminosity are not two different things. They are undifferentiated. Properly speaking, there is the intelligence and the aspects of its awareness. One calls it shepa or rigpa and without doubt, the best term is rigpa. Therefore, the nature of the mind is emptiness-luminosity-awareness, the three cannot be separated. This is what one gives for the name of mind. If we look for our mind, we will not find it. However, one should observe it, otherwise it cannot be known.

In what way should it be observed? By letting it be without either restraint or artifice (dzo chu me pa) in its natural state. This meditation proves to be very delicate because when one leaves the mind in its natural state, if the mind is lacking lucidity, it is useless. It is then simply a state of stupidity that has nothing to do with meditation. However, if one meditates properly, then, through natural progression, one will recognize the nature of mind and understand what it is. But this practice poses a problem.

WHAT METHOD TO CHOOSE?

Since the beginning of our existence in samsara up to now, we have never known how to leave our mind at rest. It is constantly agitated by innumerable thoughts. They are like waves continually appearing on the surface of the ocean of mind. They never cease.

It is necessary to learn how to leave the mind at rest. To do this, there are the practices of *shinay* (shinay literally means to "stay tranquil")- There are many types of shinay that use various means, some are meditations on emptiness; others use supports such as luminous points (tigle), and so on. Whatever type of shinay, one must practice it for a long time—months, years—if not, the mind cannot rest. This practice of shinay must not be mixed with mental opaqueness. If it is, one might spend a whole lifetime without any result. This is another difficulty in the practice!

AVALOKITA PRACTICE

The best practice, gathering the most advantages, is the meditation of Chenrezig.42 A saying that comes from the teaching of Chenrezig is, "The one who meditates on Chenrezig or simply keeps him present in the mind purifies limitless negative actions. Meditating on Chenrezig or simply keeping him present in the mind has the power to purify the most negative actions especially those that have immediate consequences" This was taught by the Great Compassionate One himself.

Meditating on Chenrezig, reciting his mantra, and in this practice, meditating on the nature of mind, purifies negative karma accumulated for innumerable aeons. While doing this purification, one cannot miss recognizing the nature of mind. This takes place naturally. In the meditation of Chenrezig, we begin by simply meditating that "We are Chenrezig" while continually reciting the

mantra (either with a mala that joins movement and speech, or without a mala—both are possible). At the beginning, it might be difficult to meditate that one is Chenrezig with all his attributes. If one cannot see him dearly, it does not matter. It is sufficient to simply meditate, thinking that one is truly Chenrezig. With more familiarity with the practice, one will form an increasingly dear image of him. Meditation like this on oneself as the body of Chenrezig, an empty appearance (Tibetan, nang long) like a rainbow, one leaves the mind at rest without distraction. In this state one recites as many manis as one can. It is when one meditates like this that the practice of shinay develops naturally and progressively. Then, from time to time, one leaves the mind in the presence of Chenrezig, relaxed, lucid, without artifice, simply dwelling in his presence. One remains like that as long as one can. This aspect of the practice is very useful in approaching the practice of mahamudra.

Sometimes, while continually reciting *manis,* one leaves the mind in the simple experience of the mantric sound without thinking, "This is good, this is bad, this is strong, this is slow, this is great, this is small or whatever" This is an excellent means to develop shinay. These different practices are not only means to develop shinay, because if one keeps in mind the form of Chenrezig or the sound of the mantra, at the same time one is practicing shinay, the presence of Chenrezig in the mind has the power to purify aeons of negative karma.

We are beginners and our ability to leave the mind without artifice while simply reciting OM MANI PADME HUNG is perhaps limited. If this is the case, one can also, without reciting manis, simply leave the mind at rest without artifice as long as one can. From time to time, one can also turn with confidence toward Lama Chenrezig and develop compassion for all beings. Then, one addresses the Lama Chenrezig with the prayer requesting that we all realize mahamudra. Praying in this way, again and again, is very important. At the end of the meditation, one dedicates the benefit of the practice to all beings and makes positive wishes. This should be done at the end of every Dharma practice.

PRELIMINARY PRACTICES

Besides the meditation of Chenrezig, one can do the practices that are the preliminary to mahamudra. In the practice of prostrations, one meditates that the space in front of oneself is completely filled with all the aspects of refuge. One develops great trust and devotion toward them. With the body one does prostrations, with the speech recites the words of refuge, and with the mind engenders trust and devotion.

When we do the recitation of the 100 syllable mantra, the Lama Vajrasattva is on the top of our head. We request him to purify all of the negative actions and veils that we have accumulated since time without beginning. Meditating like this, one recites the mantra. Nectar flows from his body, filling the inside of our own body, purifying all the negative actions and veils, and flows out of us in the form of black liquid. At the end of this purification, body, speech,

and mind of the Lama Vajrasattva and our own body, speech, and mind, become undifferentiated.

When we do the offering of mandate, we meditate that in the space in front of us, there truly are the Three Jewels and Three Roots. We offer them all of what is beautiful and agreeable such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. We fill all the universes without limit and meditate that they are completely filled by these offerings.

When we do the practice of guru yoga, (Tibetan, lama naljor), we meditate on our root lama. This means the one who gave us initiations, instructions, transmission, and who, by the connection we have with him, is the most useful for our mind. We imagine him in the aspect of Vajradhara. His appearance is that of Vajradhara, but in essence it is the root lama himself. The Buddha Vajradhara is surrounded by all the lamas of the lineage—all those who have transmitted the teachings since the lineage's origin. We develop trust and devotion toward them and recite the six verses. Their meaning is that of a prayer, requesting that they grant us the realization of mahamudra. At the end, we receive the four initiations, then the mind of the lama and our mind melt together. Well, there is enough teaching. Now, it is appropriate you practice as much as you can!

Sonada, Mardi-April 1989

The Last Public Teaching

COMMUNICATION LIMITS

The totality of space is permeated by beings who experience the six different realms of existence. Some can see all the forms of animate life; others have no power to see beings of another realm. The beings of hell and hungry ghosts are the most miserable. For extremely long periods, the beings of the hell realm suffer from extremes of heat and cold; hungry ghosts experience great hunger and thirst. If we were able to see them, we would feel pity and compassion and think that it is absolutely necessary to do something to help them. We are not able to see these realms, nor are beings in those realms able to see us. Our only source for understanding their condition is the description of these realms that is contained in the Buddha's teachings. Apart from practicing the teachings, there is no way for us to help these beings.

Among the beings we are able to see in this world, there are the various species of animals including birds, cows, dogs, cats, pigs, goats, sheep, frogs, insects, and so on. We are able to perceive the great sufferings they undergo and the inherent limitations in their lives that prevent them from ending their suffering. If we wish to help them by speaking to them about Dharma, it will have no effect as they cannot understand our words and cannot practice. Although reciting the names of Buddhas, mantras, or long mantras called dharanis in the range of their hearing offers some help, we are unable to be of great benefit to them.

Those to whom we are able to communicate the meaning of the Dharma and have an expectation of their understanding, and benefitting from it, are the human beings of this world. Few people can understand the Dharma. Perhaps 99 percent of humanity does not understand. Some of those who know a little Dharma have no interest in it; others have absolutely no faith in the Dharma, no matter what anyone might say. Because most people fall into this category, except for the one out of a hundred who appreciates the import of the Dharma, it is difficult for us to help others through Dharma teachings.

There are a few people who understand the teachings of Buddha, who trust them, and who have entered the path of Buddhist practice. For those who have the good fortune to meet the Dharma, it is most beneficial and important to understand, study, and energetically practice it during this lifetime.

UNDERSTANDING MIND

The mind is the root of understanding for practicing the Dharma. It is the mind that wanders throughout samsara. It is mind that experiences sufferings. It is mind that transcends suffering, that is to say, attains the state of Buddhahood, and then works for the benefit of all beings. Apart from mind there is nothing else whatsoever in samsara or nirvana. It is most important for us to understand mind.

Let us take an example of water mixed with earth. This muddy water is not useful to us, but the same water, when its impurities are eliminated, is dear, pure, and useful for drinking, boiling for tea, and so forth. Our mind in its gross state is like muddy water, and is called the potential of individual consciousness (alayavijnana). The mind in its natural purity is like dear water, the potential of primordial awareness (alayajnana).

If we understand the nature of mind to some extent, we naturally comprehend karma, the workings of action, cause, and effect. As a result, we give up all negative actions and the sufferings they cause, and then act virtuously, thus creating good karma. Let us consider more closely this link between the understanding of mind and the comprehension of karma.

FORCE OF KARMA

To begin with, impure mind is the potential of individualized consciousness (alayavijnana) that is like earth. It has the characteristics of the earth element, solidity and compactness. It is also moist, showing presence of the water element. Its warmth is the fire element; its movement, the wind element; its spacious quality—providing support for lakes, trees, grass, and so on—the element of space. Therefore, potential of individualized consciousness, like earth, contains all five elements. From it appears the "collection of the eight consciousnesses" These are the potential of individualized consciousness itself plus the ego consciousness and the six sense consciousnesses: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousness. The "five aggregates" that make up individuality and other aspects of our experience also appear. Experiences of the ordinary mind develop from these latent potentialities in the potential of individualized consciousness. These experiences are conditioned by and grow from karmic imprints that are also latent in the potential of individualized consciousness; it is the container and source of all karmic factors. Causes and effects of karma are planted in the earth of this potential of individualized consciousness, they grow, and bear fruit. The events of samsara also come from this potential of individualized consciousness.

Karmic causes are created by disturbing emotions. For example, if we have a particular possession, we think, "This is mine" In this way, we develop attachment toward it. If we worry about others possessing it, we become greedy. This feeling of greed is a cause, that, once "dissolved" into or imprinted upon the potential of individualized consciousness, results in poverty, loss, and increased greed. In the same way, positive and negative causes produce corresponding results. The principal teaching of the Buddha is said to be the action, cause, and effect, of karma. The reason for this is that by behaving correctly in terms of action, cause, and effect, harmful actions toward oneself and others diminish, and virtue increases. It is thereby possible for us to gather the accumulations of merit and wisdom, and ultimately to attain Buddhahood.

VEHICLES AND PATHS

The first step on this path to Awakening is to take refuge in the Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Then, one reflects upon karma, action, cause, and effect. The path of accumulation is abandoning negative actions, and acting virtuously according to one's understanding. On this basis, we start to develop compassion, meditation, trust, and the practice of a yidam, and so on. These practices are the first step on the path called "the path of accumulation" This path has three levels: lesser, medium, and highest. These levels depend on the accumulation of merit and primordial awareness. All these positive qualities continue to grow and transcendental knowledge develops. At that point, the path of integration has been reached. It is called the path of integration because it occurs before the next stage, the path of seeing by which one is able to contemplate the nature of mind. Before this stage, the nature of mind has been contemplated intellectually and not directly experienced.

The path of integration also has three levels. If one continues to meditate with energy, one passes these levels. When one really understands the nature of mind, this is the moment of entering the path of seeing.

Development through the lesser, middle, and highest levels of the path of seeing continues until its culmination on the highest level. At that point, the nature of mind—the union of emptiness, clarity, and unobstructed awareness—is seen as we might recognize a dose friend. The paths of accumulation, integration, and seeing, are each made of three levels: lesser, middle, and highest. They are integral to the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana alike. The three yanas are three different vehicles, or means, to travel on the same path. These vehicles are different presentations of the Buddha's teaching that help us travel in the same direction. Each of the three yanas is a source of great spiritual influence and excellent compassion. There is no difference between them in that they are all means to reach the different spiritual levels.

There is, however, a great difference in the length of these paths. Hinayana is a very long path; Mahayana is more direct; the Vajrayana is the shortest path of all. For example, it is explained that for a being of the highest capability, Vajrayana leads to Awakening in this lifetime; for someone of average capability, in the period between death and rebirth in the bardo; and for someone of lesser capability, after three or seven lifetimes of practice. Therefore, from the perspective of Vajrayana practice, the paths of accumulation, integration, and seeing, are short. Because the Vajrayana has skillful means and great compassion that enrich its practice, our present opportunity to practice it is most fortunate.

MULTIPLICATION OF EFFECTS

To illustrate this point, the Buddha said there is nothing more beneficial than the recitation of the mantra OM MANI PADME HUNG. A person wishing to recite one hundred million of these mantras might approach this in a

Hinayana way by reciting the mantras alone. If one is diligent, it would take over three years for the recitation to be completed. In a Mahayana style, one would assemble several people who could recite the mantra. The mantras recited by each member of the group are all added together. This is a much faster way of completing the sum but it would still demand a long time.

From a Vajrayana perspective, however, one would meditate with stability, imagining ten thousand or one hundred thousand emanations of oneself as Chenrezig, and think that they are all actually present, continually reciting the mantras. If this practice is done with faith, the total would be completed in a matter of hours or days. The various vehicles have these kinds of differences in efficacy.

If we have great faith in a particular lama, yidam, or Buddha, and we wish to do one hundred thousand prostrations to him or her, it would take a long time. The practice of taking refuge in one figure alone will remove negative karma and gather some merit. However, in our practice of the four foundations, we might imagine the sky before us filled with lamas, yidams, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, dakinis, protectors, and guardians of the Dharma and meditate that they really manifest before us. If we imagine that we are sending thousands, hundreds of thousands of emanations of our bodies that, together with all beings, prostrate before them, we accumulate limitless merit and also remove countless obscurations. This is practice done according to the Vajrayana path.

Similarly, a wealthy person might have gold or silver, precious stones, silk, or a valuable possession and decides to use it to accomplish merit by offering it to a lama or Buddha in whom he or she has faith. The person might present it to the lama or Buddha saying, "This is precious to me; I'd like you to have it" Making such a pure offering is very wonderful and is a means for accumulating great merit. However, there is a method in the Vajrayana path to make offerings; it is the mandala offering. During this meditation, we continually offer our body, speech, mind, worldly possessions; virtue accumulated in the past, present, or future; the enjoyments of gods and humans—beautiful forms and sounds, delicious tastes and smells, and pleasing sensations—to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. We offer again and again, with an attitude of great faith and thereby accumulate thousands, ten thousands, hundreds of thousands times more merit than the offering described earlier and the purification of negative karma is proportionate to the accumulation of merit.

WEARING SHOES

The path of Vajrayana is endowed with infinite skillful means that make it a very quick path. What is the source of these skillful means of the Vajrayana? They come from mind itself. If we understand that all phenomena arise from mind and its nature is emptiness, clarity, and unimpeded awareness, we will understand that skillful means of Vajrayana arise from it. Once we have understood this, it becomes easy to accumulate merit and primordial awareness. Our practice will bring immediate and true results.

We regard all that we experience—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations—as real, existent in fact. This is a kind of fixation. The experience we have of ourselves and things we perceive is the result of these fixations. We believe these things to be really there, really existing. These fixations are the source of much suffering and trouble in our life. Understanding the nature of mind is overcoming these fixations and the consequent suffering they cause. Let us take an example. It is as if the paths in the Sonada area were filled with small briars or thorns, and we were walking barefoot Small briars and thorns are images of our life. Having to stop and remove each thorn embedded in our feet would make our progress slow and difficult. A first approach to this situation would be to try eliminating the problems one by one, and remove the small briars and thorns from the entire area of Sonada. This would require much effort and time and we would not get very far. It would obviously be easier to wear a pair of strong shoes rather than clear the whole area. With good shoes we can go on all the paths without trouble or hesitation. In the same way, if we really understand the nature of mind, then we understand that all phenomena are empty—simply an illusory interpretation of reality—and that mind itself is empty. If we can realize this illusion and emptiness, we will experience no difficulty in our life, no matter what we do.

THE LAMA IS NOT MATERIAL

Fixations also exist in Dharma practice. When we engage in different practices with faith in relation to the lama, yidam, and the Buddha, the Buddha exists, the lama exists, the yidam exists. Because they exist, we are able to receive all the forms of blessing and accomplishment they bestow, and realize the true nature of mind. However, what we call the Buddha, or the lama, is not material in the same way as crystal, gold, iron, or stone. You should never think of them with this materialistic attitude. The essence of the lama or Buddha is emptiness; their nature, clarity; their appearance, the play of unimpeded awareness. They have no form, shape, or color, at all—like the empty luminosity of space. When we know them to be like that, we can develop faith, merge our minds with theirs, and let our minds rest peacefully. This attitude and this way of practicing are extremely important.

It is such a vital point! Some people may have great faith in the lama or the Buddha but they think, "My lama is real, he or she really exists. I have great faith in this lama. I love my lama so much. I am very attached to the lama, the focus of my attention. I will do whatever I can to serve the lama, and practice with faith" Then, when the lama dies, they think, "How terrible! My lama has passed away!" They are overcome with sorrow and worry, thinking, "I'll never meet my lama again!" Thus, they become deeply depressed and anxious. This is due to attachment and fixation considering the lama to be materially real.

OBSESSION OF THE DISCIPLE

One of my root lamas was the learned and accomplished lama, Kangyur Rinpoche, an extremely wonderful being. He had a French disciple strongly devoted to him, thinking, "Kangyur Rinpoche is my source lama; I have great trust and faith in him" During meditation instructions, he taught her that she should merge her mind with his. She then thought, "From now on, I shall consider my body and his to be inseparable, our voices and our minds are inseparable" She meditated for some time on this. Her faith was strong, as was her meditation. However, her underlying attachment was intense. After a while, it was as if she were carrying the lama everywhere on her back: wherever she went, he went; where she sat, he sat. She could not separate herself from him and remain alone. She was almost deranged. I used to see her often, but I have not seen her for sometime. I don't know the end of the story.... There is considerable danger in such attachment and fixation on the lama.

As it is said, "If we have attachment to the yidam, it is transformed into our greatest fetter. If we have attachment to our accomplishments, they become our greatest obstacles." If we attach ourselves to the yidam, it will keep us a prisoner and we will be bound by it. If we are also attached to the accomplishments of practice, they become immense obstacles. Attachment is a mistake. Many people think, "My lama is getting old, and he lives far away. Because of his old age and the distance, I won't see him again. There is too much distance between us for me to receive his spiritual influence." Another mistake is not knowing that the lama's mind is like the sky and that one's own mind is also like the sky. The impression that the lama is very old or far away, is due to this lack of understanding and wrong view.

ESSENCE OF PRACTICE

In brief, do not think of your body of flesh and blood as truly existent, but consider it as the body of the noble Chenrezig. If you can meditate dearly on the form of Chenrezig, do it. At the very least, simply consider yourself to have that form, an empty appearance. In the same way, you should think of all sound as the union of sound and emptiness, the natural reverberation of the six-syllable mantra of Chenrezig. All mental phenomena and activity should be seen as the mind of Chenrezig, the union of awareness and emptiness—mahamudra. The vastness of space is pervaded by mind and its lucidity.

In whatever we do during the day, recitation of mantra or any other activity, if we know how to keep this awareness of emptiness and space, then attainment of Buddhahood should not present any difficulty.

In this world, every second, someone dies and someone is born. Therefore, this world is constantly changing. In this world, human beings experience many kinds of phenomena, however they all have to undergo birth, old age, illness, and death. Everything is impermanent. Always keep this in mind. It is essential.

March 28,1989

The Method of Processing Emotions in the Hinayana: Rejecting Them

The three teachings that follow give the basic principles that define the three vehicles: the Small Vehicle (Hinayana), the Great Vehicle (Mahayana), and the Diamond Vehicle (Vajrayana). The teachings detail the way of processing conflicting emotions in the framework of each of these approaches, and give practical exercises. To follow what is going to lie taught, it is necessary to first understand the term "emotion"—that is to say "conflicting emotion"—as it is expressed in Buddhism. It is clear here that the word "emotion" is used in a sense different from its usual Western meaning. So, for example, the "emotion" provided by a movie, a poem, or a beautiful landscape is heated on a level other than "conflicting emotions." In addition, some mental factors categorized as "conflicting emotions" like blindness or pride, are indeed not considered "emotions" in conventional speech. There is no exact equivalent in contemporary French or English of the Sanskrit "Idesa" or the Tibetan "nyon mongpa." For these reasons, "conflicting or afflicting emotion" is not a perfect eauivalent, and "passion," covering the Buddhist notion of Idesa almost precisely in the classic theological language, has a very different meaning today. Because we have no better terminology, we use "conflicting emotion" as a generic term for desire-attachment, hatred-aversion, blindness (ignorance), possessiveness, jealousy, and pride with all their nuances. To understand what conflicting emotion means in all these teachings, it is necessary to keep in mind the specific use of this term in Buddhism.

In Buddhism there is a division of three vehicles:

- the Small Vehicle (Hinayana)
- the Great Vehicle (Mahayana)
- the Diamond Vehicle (Vajrayana)

The hierarchy established between these different approaches—also known as lesser, greater, and superior vehicles, respectively—does not refer to economic or social status, but concerns the spiritual capacities of the practitioner, or the greater or lesser breadth of his or her vision.

THE SMALL VEHICLE

First, we will look at the characteristics of the Small Vehicle. The Small Vehicle is based on becoming aware of the fact that all we experience in samsara is marked by suffering. Being aware of this engenders the will to rid ourselves of this suffering, to liberate ourselves on an individual level, and to attain happiness. We are moved by our own interest. Renunciation and perseverance allow us to attain our goal.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

The complete Awakening attained by Shakyamuni Buddha was the result of a long progress unfolding over many lives. At the origin of this path, he took a vow from a Buddha of the past to become Awakened for the benefit of all beings. Then, for numberless kalpas, he practiced the six paramitas, which are the six qualities that allow progress on the path, always keeping in mind the thought of benefiting others. His bodhisattva practice having become infinite, he finally attained full Awakening or Buddhahood. This way of envisaging the spiritual progression of Shakyamuni Buddha corresponds to the vision of the Great Vehicle. For many people, however, it is too vast to be understood. Numerous are the people who perceive it from a Hinayana perspective; it is then shorter and felt in a more personal context. Here, the path of the Buddha is restricted to what is known of his life on Earth, his "historical" existence.

Born the son of a king in Northern India, the future Buddha received an education reserved for princes. He was brilliant in all the disciplines he approached such as the arts, literature, astrology, sciences, and the chivalric arts. He lived surrounded by female companions, as was customary at the time. With the main one, his spouse, Yashodhara, he had a son.

Entirely occupied by the affairs and pleasures of the court until his thirtieth year, he then became deeply conscious of old age, sickness, and death. This led him to renounce his kingdom and all its privileges, to abandon his court, his family, and his child. Secretly, he left the palace, and went to the forest. As a sign of renunciation, he cut his hair and traded his princely clothes for rags.

From then on, he devoted himself to spiritual practice against the wishes of his father. At the time of his birth, an ascetic had predicted that he would become a king governing the whole Earth or a spiritual master who would help countless beings. The father, in his royal pride, ardently wanted the first of these two destinies fulfilled. To avoid the second alternative, the king had had his son confined to the enclosure of the palace. The exits were watched by guardians night and day.

This precaution did not prevent the prince from moving toward his spiritual destiny. When his decision to leave the court was reached, the gods came to help him. They put the guardians to sleep and caused the prince's chariot, led by a coachman, to fly over the walls. The chariot landed at the site of a stupa, and the prince sent the coachman back to the palace. The prince then cut his own hair in order to take up the life of a wandering monk.

For 6 years, he practiced the meditative absorptions referred to as "contaminated absorptions" These are meditative states within samsara, classified on nine levels, and differing from the perfectly pure absorptions, known as "noncontaminated" by samsara. After six years of asceticism, he went to Bodhgaya, and sitting under the bodhi tree, he engaged his mind in a meditation beyond samsaric states attaining nirvana or Buddhahood.

After experiencing this ultimate realization, he remained absorbed in meditation for several weeks. He believed that he could not teach his

discovery, because it was too deep for human beings' understanding. Nevertheless, the great gods of ancient India came and begged him to teach. Brahma presented the Buddha with a gold wheel of a thousand rays and Indra offered a white conch. The Buddha, accepting them, agreed to spread the Dharma.

The first ones to receive his teaching were five monks who had been his companions in asceticism. He met them in the Deer Park at Sarnath, close to Benares, and taught them the "Four Noble Truths":

- the truth of suffering
- the truth of the origin of suffering
- the truth of the cessation of suffering
- the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering

He explained what samsara was, what nirvana was, and the way of passing from one to the other.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The first two Noble Truths analyze samsara. The second, especially, reveals the origin of suffering. The first two Noble Truths state that suffering is not, fundamentally, due to external circumstances, but is caused by a dysfunction of mind that is described in the form of the succession of twelve factors. Forming the chain of the twelve interdependent links are ignorance, mental formations, consciousness, name and form, the six senses, contact, sensation, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, and old age and death.

This process of interdependency describes the production and continuity of samsara as an ocean of suffering. The first Noble Truth reveals the result engendered by the process explained in the second Noble Truth; these are the three types of sufferings explained in detail by the Buddha.

The last two Noble Truths refer to nirvana. They explain its nature and the methods that allow one to reach it. The Buddha describes the different facets of the Hinayana path, under the heading of "Thirty-seven Branches of Awakening"' They are:

- the four complete attentions
- the four right renunciations
- the four foundations of miracles
- the five powers
- the five forces
- the seven factors of Awakening
- the Eight-fold Noble Path

In the course of this cycle of Hinayana teachings, the Buddha did not approach the ideas of specific qualities of the Buddhas, the three bodies of Awakening, or the Lands of pure manifestation, notions envisioned only in Mahayana. In the framework of Hinayana, the Buddha emphasized personal experience of a state free of all suffering. As indicated in the third Noble

Truth, what is sought is the "cessation" of suffering and what produces this suffering. Suffering is then transformed into a state of happiness and peace. This goal is called arhat-hood. Although not having reached complete Awakening, the arhat nevertheless has been liberated from the confines of conflicting emotions and karma. This allows the arhat to dwell in stable inner peacefulness.

HINAYANA AND THE WEST

The Hinayana approach constitutes a tradition of great value and profundity that allows beings to obtain individual liberation. However, this state of liberation is not complete Awakening.

In India, Tibet, Mongolia, China, and in many Eastern countries, the cultural context permits the engagement on this path. In the West, on the other hand, the practice of Hinayana is far more difficult. This practice requires complete rejection of any worldly involvement, dosing the doors of body, speech, and mind, with no interest in ordinary activity, and avoidance of all distraction. I do not know what others may think of this, but, for these reasons, Hinayana practice appears to me little adapted to the West.

In Europe and America, prosperity and abundance of material possessions are such that one almost believes one is living in the worlds of gods. Richness and the variety of what is offered to the senses by shows, games, television, movies, radio, and so on produce an environment of continual excitement and multiplying sources of distraction. Furthermore, children receive an education allowing free choice and action—not one of cultivating habits of discipline, but one of opening the door to dispersion and conflicting emotions.

Therefore, the rigor and attitude of renunciation included in Hinayana practices do not find a favorable field in the West.

DISCIPLINE AND AUSTERITY

When the Buddha taught Hinayana, considered as the exoteric level of his teaching, he preached the ideal of an ascetic life which implies abandoning family life and taking monk or nun vows. All ordinary activity being forsaken, body, speech, and mind were in the exclusive service of practice in the strict framework of a disciplinary code, the Vinaya. The Vinaya covers more than thirteen volumes in the Tibetan canon. In this specific literature, one finds the rules for the body, concerning lodging, food, clothing, and so on.

The monk can reside only in a cave, a tent, a hut, under a tree, or in a cell as simple as possible. He normally does not have the right to build a house, or if necessary, the side of the house cannot exceed eighteen spans. He must not wear sophisticated clothing but only use cotton or coarse clothing that has been discarded and has been patched. In order to eat, he must beg for his food, accepting what is given in one bowl, without making a choice, and without saving anything for the next day. He may not eat anything after the middle of the day.

His way of life must be kept as simple as possible, avoiding all distraction and engagement in worldly activities. Speech is submitted to the same rigor as to not engender and encourage desire or aggressiveness. Any useless conversation, must be avoided and most often, the monk remains silent. If the monk talks, it is from necessity or to recite the sutras. Otherwise, the monk guards his speech in order not to be carried away by distraction.

As for the mind, all thought colored by conflicting emotion must be immediately rejected. Therefore, commitments taken for discipline of the body, speech, and mind are numerous. If one truly observes them, they are beneficial, but if neither the context nor capacities allow it, they become a source of difficulties and problems.

Personal possessions of the monk are very few as defined by the vinaya: his robe, begging bowl, and a filter to rescue insects before drinking water. Nothing else. Simplicity, voluntary deprivation, and absence of superfluous things are for the sake of the sought-after goal and allow one to be entirely devoted to practice.

ORIGIN OF THE COMMUNITIES

Around the Buddha, the number of monks began to increase. The monks had a rule to never reside more than a few days in the same place. However, during the summer monsoon, rains not only made moving difficult but obliged the monks to act against the ethics of abstaining from killing. In this season, insects multiplied and it was impossible to walk without crushing them. To solve this problem, some benefactors had the idea to construct buildings for the summer and offer food to the monks so that they no longer had to move or even beg. The monks gathered in temporary communities, under the direction of an abbot and devoted the monsoon season to study and meditation. This period of summer study1 has continued until our time and still is observed in Tibetan monasteries.

Outside this period of community life, monks had to beg for their food according to the strict and simple Hinayana rules. At the end of morning, they would go to the doors of houses, carrying a bowl and a long stick with bells to signal their presence. They were not allowed to knock at the door and explicitly ask for food. They simply had to shake their bells and wait. If nobody came to offer a meal, they could try a second door, then a third one. If again, their call remained in vain, they had to abandon their quest on this day, and return without having eaten.

REJECTING EMOTIONS

In the Hinayana tradition, the practitioner is encouraged to discard conflicting emotions by recognizing their negative characteristics. Let us suppose, for example, that desire arises in the mind of a monk; he immediately reflects upon its harmful characteristics, reminding himself that desire is the seed that carries on samsaric existence. The monk tries to stop the stream of desire. If he cannot do it, he continues the analysis of the object arousing his desire in order to perceive that this object has no value. If, for example, the monk is

attracted by a woman, he will try to perceive the body of the woman not as an attractive object, but as something whose elements taken separately do not present any real interest. This body is made of skin, flesh, bone, arteries, ligaments, digestive organs, blood, secretions, and so on. Attachment is neutralized by a feeling of disgust. 2

If imagination was not sufficient to reveal the repelling characteristics of the body, the monk was to go visit cemeteries for a direct and raw vision of anatomical reality. In ancient India, there were cemeteries where people simply deposited corpses to be devoured by vultures or other wild animals. The monk could see fresh bodies or decomposing bodies. These bodies were often shredded, showing flesh, bone, and guts. He could get a definite idea of the body—the body of a man or a woman—perceived not only as a heap of thirty-two impure components but also a support for suffering. From that, the thought that the body deserves no particular attention could take place. Instead, absence of attachment to everything concerning the body could arise: food, clothing, and lodging were reduced to strict necessity. The minimum for existence was envisioned, but nothing more.

Anger and other conflicting emotions are handled by equivalent techniques, for the purpose of rejecting them.

THE FOUR ATTENTIONS

To rid oneself of attachment and all concern for the body, the practitioner of the Small Vehicle retires to a solitary place to devote himself or herself to meditation. First, meditation is founded on the "complete four attentions'7:

- complete attention to the body
- complete attention to sensations
- complete attention to the mind
- complete attention to phenomena

By the practice of these four attentions, the mind stabilizes itself. These attentions constitute what is called "mental calming" (Sanskrit, *shamatha*; Tibetan, *shinay*). The mind focuses on one object, without being carried away by grasping any thought, whatever it might be, or by any conflicting emotion. The mind remains perfectly at rest.

The first of the four complete attentions is attention dealing with the body. It is based on the fact that we identify ourselves with our body. In this method, the mind focuses on this simple feeling to be the body, without adding such judgments or appreciations as "This body is a good thing or it is a bad thing; it is pleasant or it is painful; it is healthy or not healthy; it exists or it does not exist, and so on." We are open only to the feeling of having a body, without distraction. This approach includes many methods. The one we just read is only one of them.

Through the body, different sensations are felt: cold or heat, softness or roughness, and so on. Whatever sensation we perceive, again without judgment, the mind remains concentrated on it, without distraction. This is the complete second attention.

The third attention focuses on the experiences of the mind, joy or displeasure, happiness or suffering, or any type of mental response. We are simply open to these responses, without developing any thought whatever or without following them, either. We just observe them in a neutral manner.

Finally, attention to phenomena is done in the same way, concentrating on forms, sounds, smells, and so on. For example, when a form is perceived by the eyes, we try not to divert our attention; we neither judge it nor make a comment, such as "This is beautiful, this is not; I like it or do not like it..." We maintain a mind focused on the perceived object, without distraction, just simply present. We do the same practice for a sound, smell, or any other object of sense.

In this type of meditation, it is necessary to understand that the notion of mind applies to the present. All that has already happened in the mind is no longer there. What will take place is not yet here. Past and future are not real. The mind, in the present, is not marked by time. The mind has no material reality, no color, no form, no size, and so on. In this way, mind is emptiness, and we try to dwell constantly in this emptiness.

THE FOUR RIGHT RENOUNCEMENTS

After having performed these complete four attentions, the practitioner approaches the "four rightrenouncements," which are on a moral level. Becoming aware of negative actions already committed, in order to reject them as unwholesome, the practitioner undertakes not to act this way in the future. Furthermore, the practitioner tries to emphasize positive tendencies that have already arisen and to engender those that have not yet arisen.3

BECOMING FIRE

Another element of the Hinayana approach is "the four miraculous foundations" This means that reaching certain capacities of concentration leads to the attainment of extraordinary powers. Those having reached these capacities meditate on the element fire with such strength that their bodies are effectively perceived as ablaze. If they meditate on the water element, their bodies will be perceived as an expanse of water. This same kind of wonder happens by concentrating on the wind or the earth element. This is why, in the history of arhats and solitary Buddhas of the past, we encounter many examples of beings who have transformed into a sphere of fire, into a mass of water, or into beams of light at the moment of dying.

THE ARHAT STAGE

The goal of Hinayana is to reach the stage of an arhat, in which no thought or conflicting emotion arises. The mind resides in an united and pacified manner, without activity, during a period traditionally determined to be 84,000 kalpas. No suffering is experienced, nor is any particular feeling. It is a kind of absolute calm. From the viewpoint of Mahayana, this stage is not considered as definitive. It is an individual liberation up to the end of 84,000 kalpas, when

the experience is magnified by the intervention of a Buddha focusing a beam of light on the arhat. By the effect of this light, the arhat's consciousness becomes dearer. The vision of immense suffering of beings arises, as well as the wish to liberate and establish them in peace and happiness. Compassion is born. The arhat then engages on the path of Mahayana and quickly reaches the bodhisattva stage. Practicing the six paramtias, he or she goes through the ten levels of the bodhisattva and finally obtains Buddhahood.

The stage of arhat has great value, since it allows one to reside in a state where there is no suffering and to remain in perfect peace and happiness for an extremely long period of time. However, it has one defect, that of not taking account of others' suffering. The mind is absorbed in its own peace, without remembrance of the general condition of all beings.

In actual practice, the Hinayana tradition emphasizes withdrawing from the world and rejecting all the pleasures of the senses, preparing oneself for an austere and simple life, restraining as much as possible the activity of body and speech. Solitude and contentment are the two main virtues. The meditation of the Hinayana tradition encompasses mental calming (Sanskrit, shamatha; Tibetan, shinay) and superior vision (Sanskrit, vipasyana; Tibetan, Ihakthong), although the latter is envisaged with an appreciably different manner in the Mahayana. In the Hinayana, mental calming uses several methods, with or without support, and is not different from the methods taught in the Mahayana tradition.

A LIVING TRADITION

The monastic tradition in the Hinayana appeared at the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. It continued for centuries with little modification and is very much alive in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand. Monks have kept to a austere lifestyle, contented to eat and dress in what is offered them. They do not engage in worldly activity. They go out in the morning with their begging bowls, and seem to live exactly as the monks of ancient India. During my own travels in these countries, I have seen monks representing such a wonderful tradition.

In Southeast Asia, monks and nuns live in an environment respectful of their rules and in a social structure that completely supports them. It is agreed by all people, for example, that a monk must not have physical contact with a person of the other sex, and that he cannot even shake hands with this person. Monks, as well as women, perfectly respect this rule. Nevertheless, supposing that for one reason or another, a monk is obliged to touch a woman, he will first cover his hand with fabric; by doing so he will not forget his monkhood. The general population gives a lot of strength to monastic values. In Burma and Thailand, many monks live in the forest, isolated in hermitages that they never leave. They never visit a village, and have no contact with anyone. Their living is ensured by lay benefactors who deposit necessities in front of the monks' hut or cave.

Isolation is sometimes the chosen solution to social or family conflicts. Instead of residing in an environment producing tension, this person chooses

to become separate and is no longer in a position of hearing or talking about conflicts. Cutting off the world, the person chooses to live in a hermitage and practice meditation. In the West, people most often prefer to confront the situation in order to try to solve conflicts. In the East, they sometimes prefer total disengagement.

PRACTICE OF THE FOUR ATTENTIONS

To acquire an idea of the approach of the meditation in the Hinayana, it is best that we practice together the four complete attentions previously mentioned.

First, let us practice "the attention to the body" We become conscious of thinking, "I am the body" isolating the body from the context of attachment and desire that is usually associated with it. We remain without any other thought, and if a thought does appear, we immediately cut its stream. We pay attention to the body without adding anything else and without distraction. (meditation)

Let us now consider "the attention to sensations" It can be a sensation of cold or warmth, a cramp, a pain in a certain part of our body, or an itchiness. It can be unpleasant or pleasant. Whatever sensation is perceived, the mind stays fixed on it, without following any other thought. We are not obliged to limit ourselves to a single sensation. If one disappears and another arises, we pass from one to the other. We do not try to select a sensation over another, but concentrate on the strongest one. For example, we can feel more particularly the warmth, then an itchiness. We discard the first sensation for the second one. (meditation)

The third type of complete attention is "the attention to the mind" In this case, we do not refer to an external object, but to what happens inwardly, to all expressions of the mind, thoughts, emotions, memories, and so on. The meditation consists in simply being aware of these mental productions

without engaging ourselves in their content. If the mind dwells in a state of rest and at peace, we remain aware of this state without doing anything. When thoughts arise, we do not encourage them, particularly if they are good, as those generated by devotion or compassion, no more than we try to chase them away if they are negative, such as those provoked by irritation, anger, desire, and so on. We are aware only of what happens, without intervening to maintain a thought or stop it. (meditation)

Finally, the fourth mode of attention is directed toward external phenomena as those perceived by our different senses. In reality, the totality of what manifests—such as the perceiving mind, the bodily senses, and the external objects—constitutes phenomena. In this type of meditation, we direct attention toward the perceived objects, without adding any judgment. During this present meditation exercise, we may hear, for example, the noise of cars in the street. We can make it the object of our attention. We do not think that it is a unpleasant or pleasant noise, or whether it is disturbing or not. We are just present to the noise. (meditation)

We now have seen completely the totality of these four attentions to the body, sensations, mind, and phenomena.

In these exercises, the most important factor is the mind itself. Once again, let us remember that we do not refer to something limited by form, color, size, or place. We cannot say, "My mind has a great or small size" Those are not characteristics that can be applied to the mind. The mind is what knows, feels, and produces thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. In meditation, we are not concerned with thoughts that have already been produced in the past or by those produced in the future, but only by what is immediately present to the mind. The mind has no side, front or back, limit, color, and so on. Mind is empty. It is not a definable reality. Let us meditate now, by simply dwelling in this indefinable mind.

(meditation)

These meditations lead us to change the perception we have of ourselves. We see our body as a bubble on the surface of water, our speech like an echo without its own reality, and thoughts as a mirage. As for the external world, it appears to us as a totality of conditions harmful to our practice.

Adopting the view, meditation, and manner of acting of the Hinayana is to engage on a sure path that infallibly leads to liberation. This path releases us from suffering in this very existence and leads to the state of arhat. Therefore, it has great value.

Vancouver, June 1982

The Method of Processing Emotions in the Mahayana: Transforming Them

The Mahayana tradition is based on the principle that one is not preoccupied with oneself alone, but considers others more important than oneself. A particular emphasis is placed on love and compassion. In the beginning of any practice, we think that we will engage in the practice to become able to free all beings from suffering and establish them all in a definitive state of happiness. At the end of a practice, we dedicate the positive force stemming from it to benefit all beings, so that they become free from suffering, karma, and conflicting emotions. We wish that they will ultimately obtain Buddhahood.

EXTENT OF THE MAHAYANA

The totality of the Buddhist tradition is made of two streams, that of the sutras and that of the tantras. The sutra approach is divided into three levels: lesser, middle, and superior. The lesser level relates to the "listeners" (shravakas) and the middle to "solitary Buddhas," (pratyeka Buddhas). These two levels belong to the Hinayana tradition. The superior level refers to the bodhisattva practicing the Mahayana.

The "listeners" look at the individual as lacking "me"; this "me" is empty because it can never be found by analysis. The external world however is considered to be endowed with material, impure reality, and to be a source of suffering.

"Solitary Buddhas" consider that the individual is inherently empty of existence, but that the external world is also partially empty because it is only, in last analysis, an aggregate of atoms.

In the Vehicle of the bodhisattva, the individual and the external world are seen as entirely lacking of existence in themselves. They are empty.4 This vision, being greater than the two preceding ones of the Small Vehicle, justifies the designation of "Great Vehicle"

Mahayana is also greater than Hinayana in its manner of conceiving action. The Hinayana practitioner tries to avoid all acts that could be harmful to self or to others. Ethics is observed and protects the Hinayana practitioner from all negative action. The Mahayana practitioner adds to this ethics of avoiding harmful actions the ethics that seeks to benefit others. Whatever paramita one envisages, the vision of Mahayana is always greater than that of Hinayana. We just saw how it is for the paramita of ethics. It is also true for the paramita of generosity. In the Hinayana tradition, giving is limited to its material aspect. In Mahayana, one envisions giving as providing security and as applying to spiritual life; it is called "giving of the Dharma." Giving is based on love and compassion. The paramita of patience is seen as a personal virtue in Hinayana, while in Mahayana it is, once again, an expression of love

and compassion. Diligence, an important paramita in the Hinayana, includes in the Mahayana not only individual development but the benefit of all beings. As for the perfection of wisdom, it reaches fullness in the Mahayana by developing a complete vision of the empty nature of all manifestation.

The Great Vehicle is divided in two aspects, "dialectic Mahayana" and Vajrayana.5 Of these two aspects, the second, the Vajrayana, is richer in methods and more profound. Dialectic Mahayana, taught in the sutras, considers practice as a cause with a result, while Vajrayana, stemming from the tantras, rather envisions result as immediately already present. Most often, when one speaks of Mahayana, and is not precise, one refers to the first of these two approaches and not Vajrayana. Dialectic Mahayana will be addressed in the present teaching.

BODHICITTA

We find the foundation of the Mahayana in the two kinds of *bodhicitta.*

- relative bodhicitta
- absolute bodhicitta

Relative bodhicitta consists in first recognizing that all beings have been our fathers or mothers in the past, and then, observing our own situation, understanding that it is common to all beings. We are happy for pleasant events, and miserable if we are suffering. Understanding that all beings function this same way, we develop love and compassion.

Absolute bodhicitta is developing the understanding of the ultimately empty nature of all phenomena through right knowledge. We can, without limiting ourselves to intellectual grasping, approach the general notion of emptiness by discursive meditation based on reasoning. However, this approach runs the risk of remaining on the surface of things. It is preferable to begin by understanding the nature of our own mind. Mind exists primordially from time without beginning. It has no material existence, no form, color, size, and so on. Not being perceived as a dung, it is therefore empty. On the basis of this understanding, we attain a certainty beyond all concepts, given only by the experience of meditation. When we reach the certainty of emptiness of mind, we develop the perception that all phenomena, our body, and external world proceed, in fact, from the mind. As the mind itself is empty by nature, these productions are also empty. We arrive at the conclusion that all things are empty by nature.

THE THREE BODIES OF SAMSARA

Although this assertion of the emptiness of all things could appear odd, the example of dreaming will make it more easily understandable. When we dream, we perceive a world made of visible forms, sounds, and tangible objects that seem real. However, they exist nowhere. They are only a production of the mind. During the course of the dream, they seem to possess the same reality as the world that we perceive now. This is why they can provoke pain or pleasure. But when we are awake, all that seemed to

exist during the dream—our body, the environment, houses, and so on—disappears. It was only the mind manifesting through a dream body called "body of latent conditioning" What is true for the dream is also true for our present experience, manifesting through what is called the "body of karmic ripening"

When we leave this world, at the moment of death, our senses cease to function with the result that the body and external world are no longer perceived. The mind alone remains. Although the mind is empty, it again produces some illusory appearances including seeing, hearing, touching, and so on, just as it does now. Joy, pain, and fear are also experienced, through a "mental body," as if the appearing environment was all real.

The mind remains for some time in the bardo. Then, under the influence of karma, it resumes birth under one form or another. When this happens, all phenomena manifested during the bardo disappear. They exist nowhere. It is again the "body of karmic ripening" that picks up the relay process, as the support of existence in one of the six classes of beings.

The totality of our samsaric experience unfolds through the means of these three bodies: the body of karmic ripening in the wakened state, the body of latent conditioning in the dream; and the mental body in the bardo.

EMPTINESS AND COMPASSION

All phenomena are in reality a manifestation of our mind empty in itself and lacking material characteristics. Knowing this as a foundation, we engage the path of the different levels of meditation—mental calming and superior vision—that leads to realization of this emptiness. This is called absolute bodhicitta.

Taking as a reference point this emptiness of all things, we become conscious that beings do not realize emptiness, but consider the world to be real. Doing so, they are prisoners of the chain of desire, aversion, and blindness. They are tossed about by unceasing waves of the cycle of rebirths, going from suffering to suffering. This vision of the painful condition of beings deriving from the ignorance of emptiness produces a mind of love and compassion. This is relative bodhicitta.

This relative bodhicitta is extremely powerful. It allows us to purify latent conditioning and negative karma, as well as accumulating merit and wisdom. This purification and accumulation constitute a great opportunity for deepening the experience of emptiness. It is said that they allow all qualities to increase in the same way as rains of the monsoon fill up the rivers.

Guided by emptiness and compassion, practicing the six paramitas of giving, ethics, patience, diligence, concentration, and wisdom, we walk on the Mahayana path, from the first to the tenth bodhisattva level leading to Buddhahood.

TRANSFORMING EMOTIONS

The way of processing conflicting emotions in the Hinayana tradition is to reject them. In the Mahayana, one tries to transform them in a positive manner.

Generally, one counts six main emotions, distributed in two groups of three emotions. Desire-attachment, hatred-aversion, and blindness form the basis upon which the other three are grafted. From desire-attachment, possessiveness appears; from hatred-aversion, jealousy; and from blindness, pride.

These six conflicting emotions are related to rebirth in the different realms, according to their predominance:

- hatred-aversion leads to rebirth in the hell realm
- possessiveness, in the hungry ghost realm
- blindness, in the animal realm
- desire-attachment, in the human world
- jealousy, in the realm of demi-gods
- pride, in the god realm

As causes of rebirth in various conditions of existence, the conflicting emotions are modified by positive and negative acts. Positive activity produces joy and happiness in the three superior realms (human, demi-god, and god). Negative activity engenders suffering in the three inferior realms (animal, hungry ghost, and hell being).

DEGREES OF EMOTIONS

We can classify conflicting emotions according to the resultant quantity of suffering. From this viewpoint, hatred-aversion carries the heaviest consequences, since it engenders the extreme pains of hell. Possessiveness engenders rebirth in the realm of hungry ghosts, followed by blindness, stupidity, and inability to understand, which open the door to the animal realm. Then comes jealousy, the cause of rebirth as demi-gods who suffer quarrels, continual conflicts, and permanent insecurity arising from their desire to grasp what others possess, especially the gods.

Desire-attachment and pride are the two dominant conflicting emotions leading to rebirth in the relatively happy realms of human beings and gods. To produce this result, the intervention of other factors is necessary.

Let us take the example of the gods. Their pride, isolated from any context, leads them to think: "I am strong, I am intelligent, I am someone important" This pride, strongly dominant in comparison to desire, anger, jealousy, and so on, was necessary for rebirth in the god realm. However, if gods enjoy all the pleasures of the senses and a long life, it is because this pride is attached to a strong potential of positive karma. The life of a god is going to be a blend of pride and pleasure of the senses in which other emotions interfere very little.

In the same way, human life is engendered by a predominance of desire-attachment. Nevertheless, it will be affected by other factors. A past positive karma will allow a happy and long life, while past negative karma will produce sickness, poverty, and many difficulties.

Desire-attachment is not in itself a defect. It is also not the direct cause of many negative acts. Its disadvantage is that it can be followed by anger, jealousy, and so on, which are very harmful.

We have six fundamental conflicting emotions, but they do not describe the complexity of the situation. This is why one envisions numerous ramifications that make up the number of 84,000 conflicting emotions. The play of these emotions leads us to continuous wandering in samsara.

The Buddha gave different methods for processing these emotions, leading to different states of realization: - rejection, used in the Small Vehicle (Hinayana), for reaching the state of an arhat

- transformation, envisaged by the Great Vehicle (Mahayana), leading to the bodhisattva stage

- simple recognition taught by the Diamond Vehicle (Vajrayana), leading to Buddhahood in this very life

The methods of transforming emotions are different according to whether one uses the dialectic Mahayana or Vajrayana method. We will consider here the methods of the dialectic Mahayana and will join theory to meditation.

REFUGE AND BODHICITTA

Situating ourselves in the context of the Mahayana, we begin by reminding ourselves that not only ourselves but all beings are prisoners of samsara. We wish to attain for ourselves liberation and the happiness that derives from it, as well as attaining the capability to help others and lead them to the same happiness. Only the Three Jewels can guide us on this4 path. We take refuge in them from the depth of our hearts. We engender the mind of Awakening or bodhicitta by thinking, "For the benefit of all beings, I will transform the emotions according to the teaching of Mahayana."

When we recite the refuge prayer, we think that, in the sky before us, all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and the texts representing the Dharma appear. In their presence, we think of ourselves and all beings, with confidence and respect, prostrating and requesting the Three Jewels to protect us from the suffering of samsara. (recitation)

At the end of the recitation of refuge prayer, we think that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas emit an immense amount of light that touches all beings and purifies them of their faults and lifts their veils. Then, we think that we have fully received the grace of the Three Jewels, and we let the mind rest for a moment.

Manjushri

(brief meditation)

Now, we remind ourselves that all beings of the three spheres and six realms have been our father and our mother in our past lives. All have accomplished many negative acts, causes of suffering, and now experience their results. We think that we must pull all beings out of the ocean of suffering of samsara and establish them in Buddhahood. To do so, we practice the Mahayana meditation. With this thought, we recite the prayer to develop the mind of Awakening.

(recitation)

TRANSFORMING BLINDNESS

Let us take now the posture of meditation, our back straight, and our mind at rest. Within the mind at rest, desire-attachment, hatred-aversion, possessiveness, jealousy, and pride are inactive. However, we observe the presence of blindness, as the basis of the other emotions. This blindness means that we do not understand the implications of our acts and our situation. It also means that, when a thought or an emotion happens, we do not see anything other than the simple feeling of the thought or emotion. We do not recognize the nature and the origin of this thought. First, we meditate taking this blindness for basis of our meditation.

Blindness stems from fundamental ignorance (Sanskrit, avidya). Although they are almost similar, one can tell that ignorance is, for the mind, the fact of perceiving nothing, while blindness is the fact of understanding nothing. One can compare these two notions to darkness, a darkness without moon, without stars, without candles, or without electricity.

We must transform this blindness and this ignorance, this "un-consciousness" into awareness. To do so, we simply dwell in emptiness of the mind, as the mind inherently possesses the capability of awareness. When a thought or an emotion arises, we continue to dwell in this capability of perceiving it and being aware of it. We dwell in the awareness of our inner state.

This meditation is very easy. If the mind dwells in emptiness, we simply remain aware of this emptiness. When a thought arises, we have nothing else to do beside recognizing it, without wanting to stop or follow it. When another thought is produced, we again remain in simple recognition of its presence. It is extremely simple. (meditation)

Blindness is nonknowing. By this process, we transform it into knowledge, into the awareness of what happens. It is very easy. The mind simply stays lucid, aware of the absence or presence of thoughts. There is nothing to reject, nothing to produce. Nonconsciousness transforms itself in awareness. (meditation)

This meditation can be practiced regularly, and is similar to the light that chases away the darkness (mentioned earlier). It is a means for developing the *paramita* of wisdom.

TRANSFORMING DESIRE

Second, let us deal with desire. How can we transform desire into the experience of happiness? Let us imagine sexual desire. It arises with a glimpse of a beautiful woman or a handsome man and generates a pleasant sensation, both physical and mental. With this sensation is added an element that makes it complicated, a craving to possess the object of our desire. This craving is a product of blindness, which does not see that the first pleasant sensation is sufficient. Craving makes us believe that we need to possess this object.

Suppose that a man sees a pretty woman. Desire makes him immediately experience a pleasant mental and physical sensation. At the same time, due

to blindness, a desire for possession is produced, for he expects that the experience of possession will consolidate the experience of happiness. In the framework of meditatipn that aims for transforming emotions, one stops at the sensation of happiness produced by desire, without considering it as unwholesome, and without wanting to reject it. One remains dearly aware of this happiness. One tastes it without being carried away by the craving that wants to grasp the object.

In this way, joy deriving from desire creates no problem. When we think of someone we love, an inner joy and physical well-being spontaneously arise. We simply stay nondistracted within this sensation of joy, without being carried away by complications due to possessive craving. We dwell within this sensation. It grows and leads us to a state of natural happiness. Meditating like this is extremely beneficial.

We now meditate, thinking of someone or an object particularly attractive to us. We stay within the pleasant sensation engendered by this thought. *(meditation)*

THE MERCHANT AND THE COURTESAN

A sutra tells a story that illustrates this manner of approaching desire.

Once there was a wealthy and prudent merchant who hired many traders to work for him. One day, he organized a caravan to trade in a far-away country known for its abundant resources. This country had the reputation of being governed by a wise and just monarch. Moreover, it was the country of an incomparably beautiful courtesan who was making a fortune selling her charms to passing merchants.

When the merchants arrived in the city where she worked, they ceased to talk to each other of her charms, appeal, and fame. They thought only of paying their share and not letting a great opportunity slip away from them. All, except one—their chief, who tried to reason with them.

"We have made a long trip with a precise purpose, trading to make money. However, I have the feeling that you are ready to squander it You desire to possess this courtesan. What will you gain from her? You will lose your money and risk your health. Of course, you will feel a moment of physical pleasure, but it will pass and is not worth the cost you are ready to pay. I do not deny that this woman is attractive and I admit that I also desire her. This desire gives me joy. I keep this joy without losing either money or health. Why would you not do likewise?"

The merchants were hardly convinced by this speech. They wanted to possess the courtesan. So they did and finally lost all their belongings.

The courtesan was bothered by the attitude of their chief. She was humiliated because he disdained her, and was especially mortified because she knew he was extremely wealthy. She asked his companions why he was avoiding her.

"It is not that he ignores you" they replied. "He even knows how beautiful and desirable you are, but he says that the joy arising in his mind by thinking of you is sufficient. He feels no need to go any further"

These explanations upset the courtesan even more. In a certain sense, the merchant chief was stealing from her! He was taking advantage of her. He tasted the joy of thinking of her, but gave no payment. To compensate herself as much as taking revenge on the merchant, she mapped out a strategy. She went to the king to complain. Not being able to accuse a man of simply thinking of her, she declared that a certain chief of merchants had visited her several times but refused to pay her. The king had to provide justice.

The king summoned the merchant to hear his defense. The merchant denied the testimony of the courtesan. He told the king that, yes, to tell the truth, he was sensitive to the charms of the courtesan, but he contented himself to taste the joy that the thought of her engendered. The king was quickly convinced that he was dealing with a honest and virtuous man, and without hesitation accepted the merchant's version of the facts. As for damages asked by the courtesan, they would be granted.

The king let people know that, the next morning, the merchant would have to pay what was due. For this, the courtesan would have to go to the shore of a small lake on the outskirts of the city.

What joy the courtesan felt the next morning, when she saw the caravan of the merchant located at the edge of the lake! She was going to be rich and avenged! Her joy did not last. The king approached her and said: "This merchant did not go to your place to take advantage of your charms, but it is true that he gained some profit by thinking of you. Therefore, it is right that you are compensated for that. Since the merchant is happy with reflecting on your beauty, it is just that you are paid by the reflection of his wealth. It is there on the lake"

Using this method, it does not matter whether life in the world is abandoned and contact with women or men rejected. From desire, one retains only joy, the sensation of happiness. Without further complications or committing negative acts, one approaches Buddhahood. Among the six paramitas, this way of dealing with desire is part of ethics.

TRANSFORMING AVERSION

Hatred-aversion is taken care of by other means in Mahayana because the Mahayana approach insists on love and compassion. Let us simply see how hatred-aversion is approached from the point of view of the meditation.

When a strong feeling of anger manifests, it simultaneously produces a great vivacity in the mind, a great vigor like a flash of lightning with a powerful dynamic effect. However, due to blindness, this vigor is not recognized. We allow ourselves to be entangled by the complications that accompany anger and are focused on the object that has aroused our anger. We think only of harming, hitting, or killing. The essence of this anger, far from being dark, has a great clarity. We must look at this essence, and dwell in this clarity without distraction. This is how to transform the emotion of anger into clarity.

In our meditation exercise, let us think of a person or a situation provoking our anger. Without following the movement of this anger, we stay without distraction in the clarity that accompanies it.

(meditation)

Each time that an anger or aversion movement is produced internally, you can dwell in the dear essence that supports it, without suppressing or following the anger, but by looking steadily into its intensity. In this manner, anger will be transformed into clarity.

TRANSFORMING PRIDE

"I am better than others; I am very intelligent; I am important" These thoughts characterized by a strong attachment to "me," constitute pride. When it occurs, one remains neutral, without rejecting or following it. One simply remains in the mind resting on this feeling without distraction. From now on, this pride, comparable to a mountain, is naturally flattened. "Me" loses its overvaluation.

(meditation)

To the extent that we learn to meditate this way, the numerous opportunities for pride that arise in our mind are very beneficial because they become the support for development of the fifth paramita, that of concentration. At the same time, when pride—which is born from the assimilation to a "me"—is erased by looking at its essence, pride gives way to the perception of the absence of me.

Avalokita (Chenrezig)

TRANSFORMING POSSESSIVENESS

We are all conditioned by the totality of conflicting emotions. Among them, possessiveness, applied to our body, our house, or our belongings, is always present and strong. Whatever particular form it takes, we can neutralize it by generosity practiced at different levels. Giving of material goods constitutes the first degree. Giving of our family is the second one. Giving our blood and flesh is the highest form of generosity. Mahayana offers a great variety of ways to implement generosity in order to overcome possessiveness. In terms of the meditation that we want to practice now, when possessiveness appears, we process it like the preceding emotions. Without following or rejecting it, we simply stay within its basic feeling. In this way, ordinary possessiveness will become a feeling of neutral ease. Its harmful

characteristic will be spontaneously erased. As possessiveness disappears, it is automatically transformed into its opposite, fundamental generosity.

TRANSFORMING JEALOUSY

Jealousy is comparable to a thorn. It not only pricks others, it also turns itself against the one who conceives it, making this person very uneasy and miserable. Each time that jealousy arises, we simply stay poised within it, without following or rejecting it. It will only automatically quiet itself and will no longer be able to "prick." Spontaneously, it will rejoin its essence that is inner peace. Jealousy is transformed into peace. From the point of view of the six paramitas, it is associated with the fourth one, diligence.

We have seen briefly how to approach the six main conflicting emotions through meditation. You should apply yourself to transforming the first three: desire-attachment, hatred-aversion, and blindness. In this way, desire-attachment will be transformed into empty felicity, hatred-aversion into empty clarity, and blindness into knowledge. This shows the effect this beneficial meditation has on the emotions. The three basic emotions are, for us, the most abundant source of negative acts, problems, and suffering, which is the reason we should approach them first. The other three—possessiveness, pride, and jealousy—are only corollaries.

All the conflicting emotions originate from the mind. We will conclude by staying a moment in the emptiness of the mind, then we will dedicate the merit of this teaching and practice for the benefit of all beings.

(meditation)

Vancouver, June 82

The Method of Processing Emotions in the Vajrayana: Simply Recognizing Them

In this teaching we will see, how, in the framework of the Vajrayana, the liberation of conflicting emotions is done by simple recognition through meditating.

The Vajrayana offers instructions on specifically processing thoughts and emotions to allow people to progress rapidly on the path of Awakening. Given that human beings belong to a domain of manifestation called the "sphere of desire" particular attention is accorded to desire-attachment. A relation of the four classes of tantras is (established with the four increasingly complex degrees of satisfaction of sexual desire allowed by the practice of these tantras.

TANTRAS AND SEXUAL DESIRE

In the beginning of this world, desire between men and women was satisfied by simple exchange of looks. Kriya tantra corresponds to this level.

Next, men and women felt a need for smiling to express and satisfy reciprocal feelings of attraction. The Charya tantra applies on this level.

Thirdly, desire of some physical contact occurred, as a desire to touch hands. The Yoga tantra corresponds to this level.

Finally, sexual desire became fulfilled only by physical union. It is at this stage that there appeared the Anuttara Yoga tantra.

SIGNS OF SUCCESS

All these methods imply the search for a certain efficiency. For example, people cultivate fields. They take pains to plow, plant, and manage their fields. This makes sense only if a good crop is obtained and profits come to those who have worked. In this case, cultivation of the fields was successful. If, despite working the fields, one does not have a good harvest, the time and effort were wasted. In the same way, in spiritual traditions, different masters give different instructions. The purpose of these instructions is to be beneficial for the mind, especially to offer remedies for conflicting emotions. If, through the practice and meditation in accordance with these teachings, emotions decrease, it means that this meditation has been effective. To the contrary, when emotions remain stable or even increase, it is a sign that this practice has not been effective. It did not accomplish its purpose.

The Buddha distinguished results derived from studying and those that come from meditating. "One recognizes" he said, "a good scholar when he or she has great faith in the masters and in the Three Jewels, compassion for all beings, and impartiality in the approach of the philosophical positions of different schools" The behavior of a good scholar is compared to a small ball

of wool Calling into the water. The wool neither makes noise nor does it swirl. Similarly a good scholar is a soft and modest person, who has no character of roughness and no tendency for agitation. On the other hand, meditation engenders absence of conflicting emotions.

Vajrasattva

Whether meditation allows us to reject conflicting emotions, transform them, or liberate them in the mind, we recognize the result of meditation when emotions decrease.

FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE OF THE WEST

Americans and Canadians6 certainly possess great merit from their past lives. We deduce this from the fact that the external conditions of their lives are extraordinary and that they have been able to receive teachings, empowerments, and instructions for practicing from eminent persons such as the Dalai-Lama, the Karmapa, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, or Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche.

They are also fortunate that lamas as remarkable as Trungpa Rinpoche and others have established Dharma Centers in these countries. Therefore, North America has great positive potentialities.

The country is beautiful. Houses are very comfortable. Prosperity is obvious in all areas, as seen by the food they eat and the clothes they wear. The abundance and quality of material goods are such that we could believe ourselves to be living in the land of the gods. At first approach, one thinks that people living in such comfort can only be happy. Nevertheless, the mind of North Americans7 does not always seem to agree with their environment. Instead of finding happiness, one encounters many difficulties, dissatisfaction, and suffering. From where do these problems come? They come from conflicting emotions, and more particularly, from the desire-attachment which Westerners do not know how to transform or avoid. It seems to me that if emotions lost their influence, countries would be extraordinary places of joy and peace along with prosperity. A Tibetan saying is:

> "An empty stomach thinks only of stealing,
>
> A full stomach thinks only of desire"

That means that those who have nothing to eat are obsessed by immediate means to obtain food. As for those who are satiated, their minds are tormented by pleasures of the senses. It seems to me that Westerners have their stomachs filled.

This is why the use of ways to dissipate conflicting emotions—and particularly desire—seems to me necessary to lead people toward real peace and happiness.

ORIGIN OF EMOTIONS

We have considered some of the methods from the Mahayana that allow us to transform emotions. In Vajrayana, there are methods of purifying emotions with the result that these emotions become the five wisdoms or the five masculine Buddhas. These methods involve complex visualizations and cannot be taught publicly. Therefore, we cannot discuss them here. Nevertheless, in Vajrayana there is another approach to the emotions, easy to expound, practice, and beneficial, which is that of "simple recognition"

To approach this method, it is first necessary to understand from where the emotions come. It is obvious that emotions are produced neither by body nor by speech. Let us refer to a corpse. A physical envelope remains, but it is lacking a mind. No one has ever heard of a corpse that would feel desire,

anger, jealousy, or pride. We cannot in any way attribute emotions to the body. It has no ability to feel them. Speech does not possess this ability either. It is only an accumulation of sounds, comparable to an echo, lacking in itself the capability of any feeling whatsoever.

Emotions are only from mind itself. This does not mean that body and speech are not implicated in the emotional process, but they are only implicated as executing agents or servants. They are not masters of the situation. If the mind, for example, thinks that it is necessary to open the window, it is the body that is going to open it. If the mind thinks that it is necessary to turn on the light or to go away, it is the body that is going to turn on the switch or move. The body can only intervene in the service of the mind, but it takes no initiative by itself. Similarly, the body is not in charge of conflicting emotions, but offers its service to the mind that produces them.

Tibetans use speech a lot in their spiritual practices, reciting many mantras or prayers. They are convinced that in doing so, profound purification as well as vast accumulation of merit happens. They spend hours reciting. On the contrary, Westerners seem to think that mind alone is what counts and they have doubts on the efficiency of practice done with the speech. By this fact, the recitation of mantras or the prayer of refuge is difficult for them, and they cannot do it for very long. They simply forget that when speech functions, it is in the service of the mind that directs it. Therefore, it is always the mind that is being used.

IS THE MIND SQUARE?

Conflicting emotions come from the mind. What is this mind that generates them? The Buddha described the mind as lacking color, form, shape, size, and any material determination. We probably can admit that, but we will have a stronger conviction if we personally examine our own mind. What is its color? Is it square, round, or triangular? Does it measure two or three kilometers? Does it occupy a large or a small surface? We must examine these different points, directly, by taking our own mind as a reference. We will have to meditate, first of all, by looking at our mind, and then by looking at the conflicting emotions.

BENEFIT OF TAKING REFUGE

Before approaching meditation—in the Vajrayana just as in the Mahayana—we recite the refuge prayer and develop the mind of Awakening. To do this, in the space in front of us we visualize, the Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha, as well as the lamas, yidams, and protectors of the Dharma filling all the sky, and radiating grace and compassion. We think that with all beings we take refuge in all aspects of refuge until attaining Awakening and that we ask them to protect us until we are liberated from the sufferings of samsara. In this perspective, we recite the refuge prayer.

(recitation of the refuge prayer)

At the end of recitation, we think that the Buddhas and all the aspects of refuge emit light rays similar to those of the sun. They touch all beings,

delivering them from all their suffering and impurities, and then give them the blessing of the Awakened body, speech, and mind. Within this thought, we keep the mind at rest for a few moments.

If we recite the refuge prayer seven times every day, we will benefit greatly from.it In this life, we will be protected from suffering. Our mind will turn to the Dharma, and we will be able to progress on a path where obstacles are pushed away. Not only that, but in all our future lives, we will find ourselves in the sphere of the Three Jewels and the Three Roots until we attain Awakening. Do not believe that the daily recitation of the refuge prayer is insignificant; its influence is great The Buddha dearly stated that those who recite this prayer, whatever negative acts they have done, cannot be born in inferior realms after this life. There is no doubt about this.

After the refuge prayer, we generate the mind of Awakening. All beings of the three spheres and the six realms live in suffering. We think that we must liberate them all from this suffering and establish them in die definitive happiness of Buddhahood. With this in mind, we are going to meditate. *(recitation of the prayer generating the mind of Awakening)*

We think of the Buddhas and different aspects of the refuge, made happy by our motivation. They are transformed into light melting into us. We imagine the body, speech, and mind of the Buddhas becoming one with our body, speech, and mind. Now, we keep our mind at rest for a moment.

(meditation)

SEARCHING FOR THE MIND WITH A PIN

We are going to meditate within the emptiness of the mind. We usually think, "I have a mind." We have the tendency to locate this mind in the body. Some people think that it is found in the head/others in the heart These are only opinions and do not correspond to direct examination. We really do not know what this mind is.

Under the power of fundamental ignorance, the mind believes itself to be "me" and thinks, "Myself, I exist, I am this body." This identification with the body covers the totality of our physical organism. We do not limit it to the head or heart. We can experience it very simply with a pin. We prick our head. It is the mind that feels the pain. We prick our hand. It is the mind that feels the pain. We prick our foot. It is the mind that feels the pain. No matter part of our body is struck with the pin, it is always the mind that feels pain. The mind is present throughout our body and does not occupy one portion of the body only.

Participation of the mind is not limited to the body, but reaches the external world by the power of the sense organs. The mind itself is "potential of consciousness" that diversifies into the six-sense consciousnesses—the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustative, tactile, and mental consciousnesses. Linked to the sense organs, these consciousnesses perceive corresponding external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, and so on. The mind is an integral part of the perception of the world.

In a certain manner, the mind is not even limited by physical distance. If we think of China or India, these countries appear in our imagination. Of course, this does not mean that we rapidly go to either one of these far away countries. Indeed, it is sufficient that a person at our side tells us something that attracts our attention, and our auditory consciousness again places us in the present context. This ability of the mind to wander without limitations in imagination is an indication of its omnipresence.

Fundamentally, the mind is the same in all beings. If we take a small insect, the size of the tip of a needle, it has the ability to fed as we feel. It feels fear, hunger, thirst, and all sorts of sensations. An elephant also possesses the same capabilities. Karmic conditioning imposes differences in the intensity and modes of perception, but the mind is the foundation of feeling.

MEDITATION ON THE MIND

The mind that penetrates all things, this mind common to everyone, we must understand what it is.

First, the mind is empty; in this sense it does not exist as an object. It has no color, no form, no weight, and so on. Neither has it a side, border, center, or circumference. Not being material, it is similar to space. We must know this, because emptiness is very different from the experience that we have of our mind as something very small, called "me" something limited to our body, something narrow, and consequently a source of many problems.

Straightening our back, we meditate within this emptiness vast as space, with our mind open.

(meditation)

"I have a mind. It is found in my body. I want to obtain that which pleases me, and avoid that which is unpleasant." This mode of functioning constitutes a heavy burden, causing many problems. On the contrary, if we place ourselves in a state of being open and at ease and we recognize the mind as it truly is—penetrating all things and lacking material limitation—we will naturally feel a sensation of relaxation and lightness, without complexity. *(meditation)*

The emptiness of the mind within which we place ourselves is similar to space, not an obscure space where no sun, moon, or stars shine, but similar to the limpid and vast space illuminated by daylight sun. When we place ourselves within the nature of mind, in its emptiness, we have to do so with this quality of openness and limpidity.

Second, we also meditate on the "clarity" of the mind. Emptiness and clarity are not two aspects that we could separate, one on one side and the other on the other side. In the same way, on a sunny day, the sky and the light are one only, the clarity and emptiness of the mind are inseparably one. *(meditation)*

Emptiness and clarity in themselves are inert. They generate no beneficial or negative activity. They cannot engender thoughts or conflicting emotions.

When we remain in clarity-emptiness, similar to empty space, there is, at the same time, a knowing quality, an intelligence (Sanskrit, vidya; Tibetan, rikpa) aware of darity and emptiness. The emptiness-clarity is as evident as the palm of one's hand, and intelligence is the evident perception that we have of it. In the nature of the mind, nothing divides these three aspects. We meditate becoming particularly conscious of this intelligence.

(meditation)

THE SPACIOUS MIND

The mind is described under three aspects, emptiness, clarity, and intelligence. If we meditate using as a foundation these three aspects, in a vast and plentiful manner, whatever practices we do such as mental calming, superior vision, and phases of development and completion of the Vajrayana deities, we will obtain great joy, great ease, and increase of efficiency. However, if we dwell in our ordinary perception, "This is me; I am in this body" in a narrow manner, as if we were jammed in a narrow and steep-sided gorge from which we do not know how to exit, the same practices will meet with difficulties, therefore, it is very important to know how to meditate.

Even if the lama who gives instructions on mental calming, superior vision, or deity meditation is an excellent teacher, and the disciple approaches these techniques with the mind turned on him or herself, the disciple will never see the qualities develop from these meditations. On the contrary, the disciple strongly risks becoming irritated by the lama and resenting the teacher!

This mind, as the union of emptiness, clarity, and intelligence enters Buddhahood. However, it is also this mind that wanders in samsara! When we meditate, it is this mind that meditates. When conflicting emotions or thoughts arise, it is this mind that feels them. Nothing is experienced outside the mind.

THE FLYING MIND

If we meditate with a good understanding of the threefold nature of emptiness, clarity, and intelligence of the mind, we meditate with the freedom of a bird flying in the sky. Nothing obstructs its path. It can go wherever it wants. Our meditation then will be efficient, but in the opposite case, we are like a creature with many legs cramped in a very small space.

While meditating, some people get headaches, others suffer eye pain, chest pains, or feel discomfort in other parts of their bodies. These pains come from an attitude of a dosed mind.

We can compare our mind with its three aspects to the ocean. Conflicting emotions and thoughts that arise are similar to waves. There are many waves in the ocean, however they are only water, the same water as that of the ocean. Waves form in the ocean and are reabsorbed by the ocean. Similarly, all thoughts and emotions proceed from the mind and are reabsorbed by the mind. It can be useful to meditate on the seashore. From far away, small waves form, then increase in size, becoming huge and

capable of destroying anything in their way. Waves return to the ocean and nothing remains of them. Emotions and thoughts arise in our mind, gain great power, and end by returning to emptiness; there is nothing left of them. Other emotions and thoughts arise, subsiding in their turn to allow for new ones.

You should be skillful in meditating. When a powerful, almost irresistible desire arises in your mind, take the posture of meditation and dwell in a state of great openness. When desire arises, simply watch the mind in which this desire arises, and do not be distracted by anything else. The desire will be liberated by itself in emptiness. Each time it occurs in the mind, look at it in the same way, and watch each time as it dissipates by itself. After repeated meditation like this, desire will liberate itself into primordial awareness. From then on, emotional manifestations will be beneficial and no longer will harm you.

RECOGNIZING THE ESSENCE

Let us experience what we have learned. Taking the correct meditation posture, let the mind rest in emptiness, clarity, and intelligence. Thoughts of desire, anger, or jealousy will no doubt occur. When they manifest, we remain in a state of simple recognition toward them. We do not have to think that they must disappear or that it is necessary to make them cease, but simply recognize their essence. Actually, they liberate themselves by themselves. (meditation)

In this meditation, all conflicting emotions are treated the same way. Even if they arise in great number, it is good. It is not necessary to suppress them. It suffices to recognize their essence and this presents no difficulty. This is why we say that they liberate themselves by themselves. The main emotion that you encounter is probably desire-attachment. If you can learn to process this emotion with this meditation, you will be able to use this approach for other emotions. Gampopa compared meditation to fire. The more one feeds wood to the fire, the more powerful and vivid the fire becomes. It is the same for the practitioner. The more conflicting emotions he or she encounters while meditating, the stronger primordial awareness will shine.

After work, when you feel mentally and physically tired, if you establish your mind in this spacious and opened state, fatigue will immediately disappear. You will feel relaxed and rested. When a strong conflicting emotion arises, if you place your mind in this state similar to space, the emotion will liberate itself by itself. This is extremely beneficial.

It is first necessary to have a good understanding of this type of meditation, then you should apply it. It is easier to talk about it than to understand it, but when one understands and does not practice it, one cannot benefit from it. After having attained Awakening, the Buddha says:

> *I found a Dharma similar to nectar,*
> *Deep, peaceful simple, uncompounded, and radiant.*
> *As no one will understand what I could show,*
> *I will remain silent, deep in the forest.*

Therefore, he remained absorbed in meditation. A few weeks later, the great gods of Vedic India, Brahma and Indra, supplicated him to teach human beings who had no one to guide them. Human beings were like blind people in samsara. Answering this request, the Buddha agreed to instruct them.

Question: This practice in which emotions liberate themselves by themselves, is that sufficient to lead us to Awakening?

Kalu Rinpoche: Yes, it is possible, because it transforms emotions into wisdoms. On the level of Awakening, it is more precisely called the "five wisdoms" On the level of the paths, it is represented by the five "masculine Buddhas."

Question: Rinpoche has explained that emotions arise in the mind and return to the mind. But if I refer to my own experience, I do not understand this very well In this case, what is called mind is only a word, it does not designate anything in particular. I am supposed to have a mind, but I cannot find it.

Kalu Rinpoche: To answer this question, we can quote the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje.

> *The mind: there is no mind, it is empty of mental essence;*
>
> *Being empty, at the same time, it is unbound and manifests in all things;*
>
> *May a perfect examination cut all indecision.*

And again:

> *The mind is not existing. The Victorious Ones 8 themselves do not see it.*
>
> *It is not nonexisting, it is the universal foundation of samsara and nirvana.*
>
> *This is not a contradiction, but the middle way of unity.*
>
> *May I achieve thatness of the mind lacking extremes.*

I have given you methods such as the one whereby each time conflicting emotions, thoughts, or suffering appear, they liberate themselves by themselves. Now, it depends on you whether you practice these methods or not. You have the choice of remaining fettered by conflicting emotions or releasing yourselves from them. As you want, you can either remain captive or place yourselves in a comfortable situation by allowing emotions to liberate themselves by themselves.

Vancouver, June 1982

RIPPLES ON WATER

In the Vajrayana, there are three ways of processing conflicting emotions in connection with the tantras called, respectively, outer, inner, and secret. The outer tantras reject the emotions. The inner tantras apply transformation and the secret tantras use the simple recognition of their essence. The Vajrayana represents the most direct path to escape the grasp of emotions.

Until Marpa the Translator, most practitioners did not place themselves in a situation where they externally protected themselves from emotions, but they processed these emotions internally.9 Marpa himself gave an example to help us understand his experience of desire and anger, and how this experience differed from how others perceived it. For people outside, he said, his emotions seemed to be drawings engraved on rock; for him, they were only ripples on the surface of water.

Methods to liberate oneself from the emotions by rejection, transformation, or recognition of their essence belong to the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha did not, however, give them in a unique framework, but exposed various approaches in accordance with the various abilities of those to whom they were addressed, each time proposing the most useful one.

King Indraboddhi

KING INDRABODDHI EXTENDS AN INVITATION TO THE BUDDHA

At the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, King Indraboddhi governed a powerful and opulent kingdom in the region of Kashmir. The king had a grandiose life style. He surrounded himself with luxuries and pleasure. It is said that he enjoyed the company of 500 queens during the day and 500 different ones at night.

One day, the king and his entourage went onto the terrace of the palace to contemplate the landscape. The king, looking at the sky, saw a strange group of golden birds in the distance. Having never seen birds such as these, he asked, "What kind of birds are these beautiful and majestic birds?" One of the ministers, who knew the Buddha and knew what miracles he could accomplish, answered, "Majesty," he said, "They are not birds, but the Buddha and 500 monks flying in the sky by their own power." The king was amazed. He asked if such a being would positively respond to an invitation. The minister replied that no doubt the Buddha would come and that there was no need to send a messenger. It was sufficient to sincerely pray, to make offerings on the terrace, and to burn incense. It was done, and the Buddha and his retinue descended to the king's palace. Convinced of the greatness of the Buddha, who arrived by only being supplicated, the king offered presents and food, and requested the Buddha to teach him the Dharma. The excellent guest expounded the Four Noble Truths, which are the truth of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path that leads to this cessation. He showed the painful and frustrating characteristics of the cycle of existence, insisting on renunciation and nonengagement in worldly activity. The king was saddened and surprised.

"If I must absolutely adopt such a rule of conduct to attain Awakening, I will never get there. It is impossible in my situation. If there are some other instructions to liberate myself from the world without abandoning conflicting emotions, please have the kindness to impart them to me. If there is no other way, I simply have to renounce Awakening."

The Buddha, having the power to know people's minds, knew that the king was a being with superior spiritual capabilities. The Buddha became invisible to the monks and the king's entourage, and made the monks and entourage invisible to the king. The Buddha himself changed his aspect, appearing before the king under the form of the tantric deity Guyasamaja. He gave Guyasamaja empowerment to die king and at the same time instructions on the true nature of mind and on mahamudra.

After the Buddha left, the king applied without interruption the instructions on the recognition of die mode of being of mind during any kind of external activity. After twelve years, he attained liberation.

This is a specific example of the possibility of attaining Awakening without rejecting ordinary life or outer play of emotions.

It is said that the karmic connection existing between King Indraboddhi and his people was so great that, after having attained Awakening, he conferred initiation and instructions to all his subjects. So many achieved mahamudra

and attained liberation that it was said that this region of Kashmir had been completely depopulated.

Samye Ling March 1983

Common Preliminaries

Tibetan Buddhism teaches the first steps in practice in two groups of preliminaries: "common preliminaries" and "specific preliminaries." We will study the first group, 12 also called the "four reflections which turn the mind away from samsara." These are:

- the precious human existence
- death and impermanence
- the law of karma
- The defects of samsara

These four preliminaries are called "common" because they are used by the Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kagyupa, and Gdukpa lineages in Tibet. Even beyond Tibet/ they make up the foundation shared by all Buddhist schools. Without impregnating ourselves with these four reflections, we cannot truly understand why the Dharma is necessary and what its function is.

THE PRECIOUS HUMAN EXISTENCE

We now possess die precious human existence, characterized by eight freedoms and ten qualifications. We do not have space here to examine these freedoms and acquisitions in detail. One can refer to works such as The Ocean of Certainty, The Torch of Certainty, The Progressive Way of the Three Types of Individuals, or The Jewel Ornament of Liberation.

Drawbacks of the Animal Realm

The possibilities of existence are divided into six classes. Four of them are not perceptible to our senses. They are the realms of hell, hungry ghost, demi-gods, and gods. We only communicate with human beings and animals. Among the latter, some species such as the nagas that live in oceans or underground remain invisible, although they evolve in the same environment as fish, tortoises, or insects. Other animals are more closely related to us, whether they are wild such as tigers, leopards, deer, or domestic, such as dogs, cats, cows, horses, and so on.

Animals share a common ground—they cannot understand what we tell them or express themselves other than on a rudimentary level. Their mind is enveloped by an opacity depriving them of these abilities. They cannot develop faith, devotion, compassion, or transcendent knowledge, qualities that lead toward superior realms and liberation. If you talk about devotion and compassion to an animal, it cannot understand these notions. It is useless also to teach an animal about anger, aggressiveness, or desire. These defects are naturally present in its mind.

The possibilities of spiritual development in animals are almost null because they cannot accumulate merit by physical activity such as prostrations and offering of the mandala, or by verbal activity such as reciting mantras and prayers. Their mind cannot cultivate faith or wisdom. Their existence is

afflicted by limitations far greater than those of human beings. Not only is it difficult to protect themselves from dangers and difficulties, but they have no possibility of accomplishing virtues that would assure them of happiness and well-being in their future lives. Most often, they kill, steal, and accomplish many negative acts that cause them future suffering. For these reasons, animal existence is qualified as inferior.

Compared with their existence, our situation is preferable.

We possess the capability of understanding what is said, are able to express what we want, and discriminate between positive and negative. Endowed with the support of a good existence, we belong to the superior realms.

Three Categories of Human Beings

It is necessary to qualify this general vision of the human condition. Indeed, it is possible to divide human beings into three categories:

- The first group consists of human beings who follow no spiritual path and who always commit negative acts. It is a disastrous human existence because it will necessarily lead to birth into worlds of great suffering.
- The second one concerns those who neither practice in a spiritual way nor accomplish much negative or positive activity. Their existence is mediocre because it will lead them to be born in a mediocre situation, neither very happy nor very painful.
- The third category applies to those who know the Dharma, have met masters, and who follow their teachings. In this case, human existence is called "precious."

Some substances, like gold or diamonds, are considered precious because their trade value and their accumulation earn all that one wants. Human life dedicated to beneficial and spiritual practice is precious, not because it earns material goods, but because it leads one to receive greater wealth consisting of happiness and liberation.

To the value of this existence is added its rarity. Traditionally, it is said that ordinary human beings are as numerous as stars shining in the night sky, while those possessing the precious human existence add up to stars visible in the sky during the day.13 Even without this comparison, it is just as easy to look around us and see how few people are committed to a spiritual path. Simply thinking of the city where we live, we will quickly realize that the people who follow a spiritual path are rare.

Not Wasting Our Life

Precious human existence is not something that happens by chance. It is the result of practicing positive acts in our previous lives and of having a connection already established with the Dharma. We now possess this extraordinary condition of life. We should be fully conscious of its value in order to make it meaningful. This is why we should reflect on the freedoms and qualifications that characterize it, reflecting also on the condition of other

beings such as hell beings, hungry ghosts, demi-gods, and gods to better understand, by comparison, the exceptional characteristics of our situation. We will waste our precious existence if we do not use it to practice the Dharma.

IMPERMANENCE

Although precious, our existence is not eternal; it is subject to impermanence.

An unceasing flow

Impermanence characterizes all phenomena, the universe as well as the beings who inhabit it. The succession of seasons is a good example. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter show the unceasing play of change. The shorter the duration that we observe, the less obvious is impermanence. It is, nevertheless, present from instant to instant The year cannot exist without the twelve months composing it Months do not exist without days. Days do not exist without hours. Hours do not exist without minutes. Minutes do not exist without seconds, and so on. In this uninterrupted succession, our life unfolds and exhausts itself.

At the end, whatever we have had of precious human existence, if it has not been put to good use, will simply disappear. Nothing will remain. If we do not apply ourselves now to the practice of the Dharma, it will soon be too late. The opportunity will have been forever lost.

The end of a dream

From a certain point of view, temporal preoccupations are not totally vain. We need to eat, dress, and to find shelter. However, we should not grant too great an importance to the affairs of this world. Accumulating material goods in this lifetime cannot assure us that we will be able to take anything with us. We have to leave everything behind us. Our lives will be beautiful dreams ending. Nothing will go with us. Milarepa said, Tearing death and impermanence, I flew into the mountains. I meditated there and reached the level that transcends death and impermanence."

Impermanence does not proceed by jumps but is inscribed in the succession of instants. Let us take the example of a seventy-year-old person. This person is old, but it does not mean that old age has happened at a precise moment. The process of aging is uninterrupted and was unfolded during the life of this person.

Never forget impermanence

When we are taken in by the many activities of this world, and fall under its influence, it is essential to never forget impermanence and to remind ourselves that death will not fail to come. We should take advantage of the time remaining to us. Again the example of Milarepa is instructive. He had

suffered in some periods of his life from extreme cold, severe lack of food, and having threats made on his life. He never became discouraged. He thought, "Whether I am cold, hungry, or dying, all this is secondary. What is important to me now, before impermanence takes me away, is that I practice meditation."

Jikme Lingpa Does Not Repair the Steps

The story of Jikme Lingpa perfectly illustrates the concern for the essential. He lived secluded in a cave that could be accessed by stairs. However, the stairs, after many years, had considerably decayed and Jikme Lingpa sometimes thought of repairing them. When he was in his cave and this thought arose, instead of following it, he told himself. "If I undertake these repairs now and death comes, I would have wasted my time. It is better that I meditate" When he was outside the cave and the same concern arose again in his mind, he thought, "Death may be near, better that I return to meditate" Recalling impermanence instilled so much diligence to him that he was able to obtain realization.

We should be convinced of the possibility that death is nearby. Then, surely, we will escape distractions that the outer world puts on us, and we will pour a lot of energy into our practice. We know that old age, sickness, and death exist, but we think that they will not happen to us soon. But we cannot help ourselves by granting a certain permanence to the world and ourselves. While engaging on the path of Dharma, we learn, on the contrary, to recognize everything is impermanent.

THE LAW OF KARMA

Etymology

Having understood the exceptional opportunity given to us by this precious human existence, and becoming conscious of its transitory nature, we should know the rules governing its use and study the infallible law of karma. The Tibetan expression for karma is composed of three words (lay-gyu-dray), and comprehends its principle:

- *lay* means "act"—including our personality, what we do with our body, speech, and mind are acts
- *gyu* means "cause"—all our acts, positive or negative, leave an imprint in our mind as the cause of a future event
- *dray* means "result"—proceeding from negative or positive causes, acts produce corresponding results in the form of painful or happy situations

The law of karma means that our acts, according to their nature, are causes engendering defined results.

Negative and Positive

Acts are called negative when they result in suffering in the future for the one who initiates them. Their nature is described in detail in several texts, but they can be summarized in ten categories:

- three negative acts of the body:
  - taking life
  - taking what is not given
  - incorrect sexual conduct
- four negative acts of speech:
  - lying
  - harmful words
  - words creating discord
  - trivial words
- three negative acts of the mind:
  - covetousness
  - malevolence
  - erroneous views

Acts are called positive when they bring happiness to the one who initiated them. They are the opposite, of the ten negative acts, protecting life instead of killing, cultivating benevolence instead of malevolence, and so on.

Generally, negative acts lead to rebirth in inferior realms such as hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. Positive acts produce rebirth in the superior realms such as human, demi-gods, and gods.

The Present As Result of the Past

If present acts condition our future lives, past acts have conditioned our present life. That we possess human existence is the result of past positive acts. If we are, in this lifetime, often sick or if we die at a young age, we can be sure that we have killed or wounded other beings.

The variety of human destinies is extremely great. Some people have a short life, others a long life. Some enjoy a good health and others suffer from illness. Some people are wealthy, others are poor. Most people have no explanation for this diversity. "It is so/ they simply think. In reality, there is no chance happening. The disparity of destinies is due to the disparity of karmas. Many stories illustrate this fact. The Kind Shade

Along time ago, there were two men whose ways of thinking were completely opposite. They lived in the same country. The first man was always tormented by compulsive thoughts of killing, stealing, and swindling others. His dream was to loll the king of the country and ascend to the throne. The second man thought only of benefiting others and sometimes had the dream, "If I were to govern, I would do everything for the happiness of the people."

One day, as the first man walked on the side of a road, he slipped and fell. At this precise moment a chariot passed and one of the wheels rolled over his neck and cut off his head.

The other man had fallen asleep in the shade of a tree. At this very moment, the people of a certain country were seeking someone to govern them. They needed a man with great positive karma. When they approached the sleeping man, hours had flowed by and the shade of the trees had shifted all except for the tree sheltering the sleeping man. The visitors understood that this miracle could only be the sign of excellent karma. They promoted the man chief of their country, and thanks to his government, the people lived in prosperity.

Golden Rice Ears

At the time of the Buddha, an old couple who worked hard all their lives lived in India. The man and the woman had great faith in the Buddha and deep confidence in the Dharma, but they lacked time to practice. They were getting old and confided to each other. "We have hardly devoted ourselves to the Dharma. Before dying, we must do some act that will allow us to accumulate merit." As they were not well off, they had not much to offer. After thinking about what they could do, they decided to invite Shariputra for a meal, and as one of the Buddha's greatest disciples, make offerings to him.

So they did. This simple act provoked great change in their lives. They possessed a small field and suddenly, their rice was now producing ears of gold!

News of this miracle spread rapidly and was not long in reaching the king. Somewhat doubtful, he requested verification. Yes, the field was producing gold. Dazzled by such a treasure, the king could not resist appropriating it for himself. He deeded his own fields to the old couple for the field producing gold ears of rice. The king's decree was enforced. Unfortunately, the field belonged to him but the merit remained with the old couple. As soon as the trade was made, the small field started to produce ordinary grain while the newly acquired property of the couple was turning out gold. Disappointed, the king decided to reverse the trade. Gold production resumed on the old couple's property. Seven times in a row, the king reversed the traded property, and seven time in a row the gold went to the old people. The king, finally, had to admit that he could not take possession of the gold.

Only the positive karma of the two old people could produce gold grain, and lacking this one could only harvest rice.

The Buddha delivered 84,000 types of teachings. Their foundation is the law of karma. It is absolutely necessary to understand this, to validate its truth, and to do everything possible to abandon negative acts and practice positive acts.

THE DEFECTS OF SAMSARA

Understanding karma well and using this understanding to turn away from samsara implies that we perceive how karma engenders the suffering of the six classes of beings. The fourth preliminary reflection leads us to become conscious of this suffering, and to be touched deeply with the idea that samsara is defective by nature, because it never escapes the play of suffering.

Suffering of the Inferior Realms

Hell realms are the most painful of all existing worlds. There are the traditional eighteen kinds of hells, eight great burning hells, eight great freezing hells, peripheral hells, and an occasional hell distinguished by the variety and intensity of torments. Karmically, hells are for the most part caused by hatred and anger as well as by murder. There are other causes that can also engender them.

In the hungry ghosts realm, the second of the six realms, beings are afflicted by a great amount of suffering. The chief affliction is to be continually tormented by hunger and unquenchable thirst. Stealing and possessiveness are causes leading beings to this rebirth.

Animals are classified as visible and invisible animals, such as the nagas. Rebirth in the animal realm is induced by blindness, more particularly by the lack of spiritual perspective and by refusing to acknowledge the validity of the law of karma.

Hells, hungry ghosts, and animals are the three inferior realms.

Sufferings of the Superior Realms

The human realm forms the first of the three superior realms. Suffering, although less intense, is present nevertheless. The four main sufferings are recognized as birth, old age, sickness, and death. However, these sufferings are accompanied by many others, such as suffering of not obtaining what one wants, to be dispossessed of what one possesses, to be separated from loved ones, and to be associated with beings that one does not like. The texts list and describe in detail all kinds of difficulties met by humans, but our own experience is enough to present a precise and vivid idea of them.

As for demi-gods and gods, the former suffer from quarrels and continual conflicts, and the latter suffer from falling from their state and from the transmigration to lower realms.

If we do not take advantage of our precious human existence, we will not make progress to superior realms and to liberation. We will remain inescapably imprisoned by samsara. We become conscious of samsara by knowing the suffering of the different classes of beings, and even more by observing our own situation and that of people around us. Seeing that in samsara nobody escapes suffering, we will energetically engage in the Dharma.

The Mouse and the Turquoise

Langri Tangpa, a great lama of Tibet, continually reflected on the suffering of the beings held prisoners of samsara— nobody had seen him laugh or even smile. He had earned the nickname of "Langri Tangpa Long Face" During a ritual, he proceeded to offer the mandate.1* He had placed in front of him the basis with a large turquoise placed in the middle of the rice. A mouse passed by and, rather than choosing the rice, wanted the turquoise. But the turquoise was large and the mouse was too small to accomplish its goal. After many

attempts, it let out a small piercing squall. Immediately, another small mouse came to help. The first mouse began to push and the second pulled. Finally, they succeeded in stealing the blue stone.

Langri Tangpa was so amused by this spectacle that he burst out laughing. A disciple who was nearby could scarcely believe his ears. His master was laughing, he who had never been heard laughing throughout his entire life! What provoked so extraordinary an event? He could not restrain himself from asking Langri Tangpa. "Two small mice have teamed up to take a large turquoise" he replied. "It was hilarious!"

Three errors

As ordinary beings, we commit three fundamental errors in viewing the world:

- we take as permanent what is impermanent
- we take as happiness what is suffering
- we take as real what is unreal. All phenomena are only a projection of the mind, lacking any reality in themselves

These three errors prevent us from turning away from samsara. Letting the four reflections that we just saw penetrate into ourselves, allows us on the contrary, to understand the meaningless characteristic of samsara and to turn toward liberation.

A Necessary Implanting

Sometimes, we think that it is sufficient just to know these four ideas, to hear the lamas talk about them, or to read about them in books. But it is necessary to go further. We must meditate on them, reflect upon diem, and let them penetrate into our lives. By the example of the precious humanexistence, we should understand the factors characterizing it, how these factors apply to us, and how to escape unfavorable conditions of existence in the future. We must apply personal reflection to the four ideas.

By implanting the four common preliminaries in ourselves, we build the foundation that provides a solid basis for our practice. This will prevent us from being carried away by laziness and indifference.

Vajradhara Ling, September 1984

Links Between Body and Mind

All beings, whoever they are, are endowed with body, speech, and mind. Of the three, mind is most important because it possesses the ability to manifest all phenomena, those of samsara as well as nirvana. Because of this ability of manifestation, we have experienced an incalculable number of births, since time without beginning. In all these existences, we have accomplished an infinity of acts and accumulated an immense karmic potential.

ALL EXISTENCES PROCEED FROM MIND.

Negative acts, like killing, lead to rebirth in a hell. There are eighteen hells, eight great cold hells, eight great hot hells, peripheral hells, and other occasional hells. However, these hells are nothing other than manifestations of the mind itself.

Different negative acts entail other results. Strong greed, great attachment, and overwhelming desire lead to rebirth in the realm of hungry ghosts. There are many kinds of hungry ghosts, "beings having external obstacles" "beings with inner obstacles" and "beings with obstacles related to food and drink...." All suffer great hunger, thirst, and extreme destitution. They never find what they need. Again, the realm of hungry ghosts is Nothing other than a manifestation of the mind.

Not able to discriminate between negative and positive activity comes from mental obscurity leading to rebirth in the animal realm: It is said that the animal realm is the most populous realm of all, and its inhabitants, like the nagas, cannot communicate with humans. The nagas live underground and in water, and are divided into eight classes. The animals with which we do communicate, such as dogs, cats, cows, and so on are less numerous. All animals suffer because of their mental limitations. The animal world, in reality, is only a manifestation of the mind.

When one practices shinay (mental calming) or Ihakthong (superior vision) and one is not truly motivated by liberation, this leads to rebirth in worlds confined in samsara at some subtle levels. Those who have practiced the meditation of Ihakthong and that of "the immortal mind" while residing in a samsaric context will be reborn in one of the various gods realms of the formless sphere. Those who have practiced giving and altruism without orienting their mind toward liberation are reborn in one of the categories of the realm of the gods in the sphere of desire and form. Beings in the realm of the gods enjoy extreme pleasures and joys and undergo almost no suffering for a very long time. Again, these realms of the gods are nothing other than manifestations of the mind.

Other beings have practiced virtues such as giving, ethics, and patience. They have meditated, but in an impure manner* They have also fallen under the influence of jealousy or desire for domination. They are reborn in the realm of the demi-gods, where they live a long time, enjoy great power and happiness, but because of their tendency to jealousy and megalomania, they

simultaneously engage in many quarrels and conflicts. This realm of the demi-gods is nothing other than a manifestation of the mind.

KARMA SHAPES EXISTENCE

All beings are affected by conflicting emotions, attachment, anger, jealousy, avarice, and so on. Among human beings, deske and attachment are dominant. The human condition is the karmic result of past lives of positive and negative acts mixed together, with, nevertheless, more positive than negative acts. In Buddhist cosmology, our universe is described as formed by an axial mountain surrounded by four great continents. Human beings live on these four continents. People of the Earth live on the Southern continent called Jambudvipa (Tibetan, Dzambuling). The other continents are also inhabited by human beings, who may be slightly different from us. On the Eastern continent, Purva-videha (Tibetan, Lupapo) human beings are taller, enjoy a longer life, and have relatively greater happiness than ours. But fundamentally they are human like us. Rebirth in any of these continents is related to karma. Differences, which we can observe on Earth, come from the respective karma of each individual. We see beings having long or short lives, pleasant or unpleasant appearances, happy or unhappy natures, wealth or poverty, and good or bad health. Nothing of that happens at random. Hot hells are described as a burning surface. Wherever the right foot is placed, it burns, and the left foot is also burned wherever it is placed. The Buddha said that this fire in the hells is our own creation, the result of karma, and product of our own mind. No one created it. No external being is responsible for it The Buddha also said that the karmic diversity of beings is traced to the diversity of actions accomplished by different beings, thereby creating all the diversity and multiplicity of conditions of existence.

THE MIND AS CREATOR OF WORLDS

Who accomplishes these various unwholesome or wholesome acts which have such karmic results? Our body, speech, and mind. But most important, the one that manages everything is the mind. This is/the origin of negative and positive acts. If, in the mind, the desire to harm or to kill arises, the body will attempt to harm or kill. If the mind has the desire to express unpleasant things, speech will follow and utter harmful words. On the other hand, if the mind plans to help someone, the body will act to bring this about, and if the mind wishes to utter pleasant words, speech does so. It is the mind which is the foundation of all positive or negative acts.

How can the mind produce different classes of beings and worlds so complex and diversified? Let us refer to dreaming. When we dream, landscapes or countries appear. In these countries, we perceive houses, people, and all kinds of objects and situations. Their totality is produced by mind. Likewise, the six classes of beings arise from our own mind.

A potential appearance to the mind can be perceived in extremely varied ways according to karma. Whatever appears to us in the form of water that quenches our thirst manifests as molten metal or lava for a being reborn in

hell realms. For a hungry ghost, this same potentiality of the mind appears as blood, mucus, or some other repulsive substance. A demi-god perceives the water as a weapon. A god perceives it as nectar. Finally, for a being who has reached total liberation, the element water is realized as the feminine Buddha Mamaki.4 And for a fish, the water is a habitat.

The environment reflects the karma that conditions the perception of all beings. We live on the surface of the earth, while a fish would not know how to survive out of water. For other beings, their world is our own body. Indeed, it is said that in the body of each individual, there are 84,000 microorganisms for which our body provides a place and means of subsistence. An illness called yama is traced to one of these microorganisms, which can move in a fraction of second from the sole of the feet to the tip of the hair.

THE BODY IS NOT REAL

As for us, it is likely that in our past lives, positive acts have surpassed negative acts, and that we already have good connections with a Buddha, the Dharma, or the Sangha. It is why we now enjoy an existence qualified as "precious human existence" What is the reality of this precious existence? According to the Buddha, phenomena are neither true nor false. These words cannot describe phenomena, because phenomena are like the moon's reflection on the water. When we look at the moon's reflection, we cannot say that we see a real object because the moon is not actually in the water. But neither can we say that the appearance is completely unreal since we do see the moon on the water. Our body does not escape this ambiguity. On one side, it has no more reality than a body that we assume in a dream. On the other hand, we feel all kinds of pleasant or unpleasant sensations through it, and it permits us to move or to remain still. From this pragmatic viewpoint, it is real.

It is useful to understand that our body is not fundamentally real, that it is of the same nature as the dream body, an illusory appearance produced by the mind, impermanent, and changing. If we are convinced of this, our attachments will decrease, the tendency for anger and for the grasping of the ego will diminish. Generally, we tend to believe that we are permanent and not subject to change. We believe that our body is a real object. From this belief, conflicting emotions are produced such as attachment and anger as well as sicknesses, pains, and anguish.

THE BENEFICIAL UNDERSTANDING OF ILLUSION

All appearances are simply a product of the mind. They have neither reality nor permanence, and are transitory and ever-changing. Let us consider a man and a woman who fall in love and happily live together. They marry and everything goes well. After a while, a misunderstanding occurs and happiness changes into suffering. They no longer find it pleasant to be together, they disagree mentally, verbally, and physically on all levels. Even looking at each other becomes an occasion for argument and anger. Simply hearing someone talking about the other is unbearable. Attachment, love,

and desire have been transformed into anger and hatred. It is an indication of the nonreality of phenomena. Love was not "real" since it was easily transformed into hatred.15 Being aware of the fact that what is now happening is only an illusory play of the changes of the mind is beneficial. Even if we cannot rid ourselves of conflicting emotions, we can at least understand that, if it is difficult to live in harmony, it is not necessary to become bitter enemies when the joy of being together has disappeared. Getting along or misunderstanding each other are only relatively superficial changes of the mind.

HALF GRASS, HALF WATER

Sometimes we meet men and women who are deeply in love with someone who does not share their feelings. The people whose feelings are not returned are greatly tormented. This does not really belong to the Dharma but to the stream of worldly phenomena. Nevertheless, there is a Tibetan saying:

> *On earth, there is half grass and half water.*
>
> *Among human beings, there are half men and half women.*

This means that if an animal cannot find grass for browsing somewhere, it can always go elsewhere. If the person we love does not share our feelings, we can always look for someone else. Some people are so possessed by their loving passion that they commit suicide. It is the result of great stupidity leading to the thought, "There is only this woman on Earth. Since she does not want me, it is better that I die." What blindness!

CHANNELS, WINDS, AND TIGLES

Whatever our situation, we are benefited at this time with a human body to which we accord a strong sense of reality. This body is somewhat like a house, a building, or a park. It is covered with channels (Sanskrit, *nadi*; Tibetan, *tsa*) comparable to pathways upon which subtle winds (Sanskrit, *prana*; Tibetan, *lung*) circulate. It is compared to horses—today one will say vehicles—in Tibet and *tigles* (Sanskrit, *bindu*), concentrations of subtle energy corresponding to wealth that one enjoys. Considering the mind as a person, one will say that the body is the region where the mind resides. The subtle channels form the roads on which the mind moves. The winds constitute the means of moving and the tigles represent all the goods that the mind possesses.

One of these subtle channels rises to the summit of the head, in the axis of the trunk. In Dharma language, it is called the "central channel" In medical language, it is the "main channel" It is flanked by two parallel channels on the right and left sides.16 These two channels play a great role in the functioning of our mind in its illusory mode. One of them makes us apprehend the external world as an external object, while the other has us conceive the grasping of a subject, an "I" perceiving this external world. In our body, these two channels are the subtle basis for the functioning of duality.

From these three main channels many ramifications (72,000 in total) are created. They extend throughout the whole body. In some places, they form kinds of plexuses, called *chakras*.

THE SUPPORT OF INNER STATES

In the channels, subtle winds and tigles circulate. Under the influence of the tigles, we feel various states of mind. Their circulation conditions our inner states, happiness and unhappiness, joy and suffering, exaltation or depression. In reality, all happiness and pleasant experience have as their basis the radiation of tigles. As we do not fully understand that happiness and joy felt by the mind fundamentally arise from these concentrations of subtle energy, we think that happiness and joy come from external objects. This engenders sexual desire and all kinds of attachments.

Channels, subtle winds, and tigles do not come from physical elements of the father and mother gathered during procreation. They are the product of karmic process. In last analysis, they are only a product of our mind. It is one of the ways the mind manifests. In the Vajrayana, one envisions the pure aspect of these three elements. It is said that subtle channels are the body of Awakening, subtle winds are the speech of Awakening, and the tigles, the Awakened mind. From the point of view of Buddhahood, the channels are the Body of emanation, the winds are the Body of perfect experience, and the tigles are the absolute Body.

TIGLES AND SEXUALITY

Furthermore, the tigles are intimately mixed with the sexual substances, the man's sperm ("white *tigle*") or the woman's ovum ("red *tigle*"). In the Vajrayana, it is said that if one can preserve these red and white tigles (that is to say, to remain chaste) then an increasingly strong sense of happiness and joy arises in the mind. According to this vehicle, one should not "damage" the tigles, that is to say, lose sexual substances.

If one knows the corresponding techniques of meditation, one is able to engender a state of great bliss. The fact of not damaging these white and red tigles produces positive physical effects. Any contact with the skin of a rugged or soft object produces a pleasant sensation.

When one is unable to apply adequate techniques, the energy of the tigles gives birth to sexual desire that in turn damages the tigles. At the moment of union, one feels a brief instant of happiness but, the more one loses his or her tigles, the more physical and mental feelings of joy and happiness decrease. When we damage them very frequently, we will feel inner suffering and anguish. We will not feel well and our health will be poor, without any apparent cause for these problems.

EMOTIONS, SUBTLE ENERGIES, AND HUMORS

We saw that in a totally pure manifestation, channels, winds, and tigles are the three bodies of the Buddha. In an impure manifestation, they give way to

what is called the three humors in Tibetan medicine: wind, phlegm, and bile.17 To understand this principle, it is necessary to envisage a broad functioning on three levels:

- conflicting emotions such as desire, hatred, and mental obscurity produced in the mind itself and intervening as a fundamental cause

- subtle channels, winds, and tigles, intermediates between the mind and the body, and having the role of an acting cause

- the three humors, results of the two preceding levels Although we cannot identify wind as a substance in the body, this wind has its seat in the pelvis and in the area of the pelvic belt. The bile has its seat in the liver and blood, in the intermediate part of the trunk. As for the phlegm, its seat is in the brain, the uppermost part of the body.

Traditional Buddhist medicine lists 404 kinds of illnesses, provoked by a disturbance of one or another of these humors, according to three cases: excess, insufficiency, and disruption. For example, an excess of wind gives way to a certain type of sickness, an insufficiency to another type. If the wind tends not to remain in its place, another type of sickness appears. Some pathologies are also due to a kind of aberrant association of two or even three of these humors, giving way to a "united sickness"

From the three fundamental dysfunctions—excess, insufficiency, and disruption (to which are added aberrant associations), all problems affecting the sense organs, inner organs, skin, bone, nerves, or other parts of the organism are produced.

MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL TREATMENTS

The main remedy for these 404 types of sicknesses consists of practicing the Dharma. By practicing the Dharma with our body, speech, and mind, we purify many negative karmic potentials within us and by doing so we uproot the illnesses they would have produced. When one is confronted with illnesses provoked by the collection of the eight great classes of harmful spirits, each one having subsections, one will find the best remedy to be rituals of the Dharma.

Aside from this spiritual approach to healing and to the extent we actually attribute a material reality to our body, we also have material treatments like medicines, acupuncture, and surgery. But again, their beneficial effects cannot be considered outside a spiritual context, since they reflect our merit associated with the compassion of the Buddhas.

Tibetan medicine, the traditional Buddhist medicine, is not the only method for easing the sufferings of illness. In a certain sense, one can consider all medicine as a manifestation of Awakening. Buddhist medicine goes back to the time of Shakyamuni Buddha who, once taking the form of the Buddha Sangye Menla, expounded the eight branches of the medical art in the Four Tantras of medicine. Even if other medical traditions do not offer the aspect of having been revealed, they, nevertheless, are the expression of Awakening.

Our actual mind is the conjunction of two aspects. One aspect is pure, comparable to dear water, called the "potential of primordial awareness" (Sanskrit, alayajnana). This is the source of all positive manifestations of the mind. The other aspect is impure, as a muddied water, forming the "potential of individualized consciousness" (Sanskrit, alayavijnana). This is the source of all negative activities producing the suffering of samsara. Pure primordial awareness and ordinary individualized consciousness dwell together within our mind. Beneficial and useful substances taken from plants, animals, or minerals, can be used as remedies and the art of using them are the reflection of .primordial awareness. Harmful substances and their utilization are the reflection of ordinary consciousness. In this sense, all medicines, whether Tibetan or Western, are an expression of the purity of the mind. It is my personal conviction that all medical arts are the activity of Awakening, a conviction that can be shared by everyone.

FUNCTIONING OF THE SENSES

The body is the support of functioning for eight types of dualistic consciousnesses. These eight consciousnesses are mind only, but they have varied functions, just as the fingers are part of a unique hand. The five sense organs correspond to five consciousnesses (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile consciousness), to which are added mental consciousness, disturbed consciousness, and potential of individualized consciousness.

The sense organs through which the consciousnesses function are themselves activated by their internal parts, as described in the following metaphor:

- a daisy for the eye
- a piece of tree bark for the ear
- a needle of copper for the nose
- a moon for the tongue
- the down of a bird for tactile sense
- a sphere of crystal for the mind

When an illness affects any one of these organs, the organ does not feel suffering or sickness, but the corresponding consciousness does. In cases of serious illness, communication with the object of the perception may be interrupted. This is what happens in the case of troubles producing blindness or deafness, for example.

At the time of death, the body becomes a house abandoned by its inhabitant. As the functioning of the senses is a manifestation of the mind, when the mind leaves the body, sense organs can no longer function. However, these organs themselves are only a product of the mind, and the mind can create them anew in other circumstances of existence. We have proof of this each night when we dream. At that time, we no longer perceive the external world, but we see with our eyes of dream, we hear sounds with our ears of dream, and so on. This is only the product of our mind.

All phenomena are neither real nor unreal, and this also applies to the sense organs. On one hand, we cannot say that the sense organs are unreal because they can be afflicted by pain and illness which make us feel these organs as truly existent. On the other hand, we cannot assert that they are totally real since they are only a creation of the mind as we know by the experience of dream.

The practice of the Dharma leads to developing more powerful sensory abilities than those we now have. It allows us to obtain, for example, what is called "the divine eye" and "the divine ear." With the divine eye one can see objects in the distance without difficulty, objects that we cannot usually see. With the divine ear, one hears sounds that normally cannot be perceived, and so on.

Now perhaps, the best way to continue this teaching would be a short period of questions and answers.

Question: What relationship is there between the tigles visualized during the practice of "special shinay"18 and the tigles of the body? Kalu Rinpoche: There is definitely a relationship since the subtle channels, winds, and the tigles of the body are a product of the mind, and tigles of the meditation are also a product of the mind.

Question: Can we consider the tigles as reserves of energy? Can we compare them, for example, to preserved food? If we damage them, does it mean that we may use this food; and finally, when this food is exhausted, does death occur?

Kalu Rinpoche: Damaging the *tigles* does not mean that we lose all the *tigles* themselves. We are not going to die from this. The *tigle* is not limited to sexual substance. It is a little like milk. In milk a certain substance will give us butter, if it is churned. But not all milk is transformed into butter. What we lose is the essence of the milk, or the essence of the *tigle*. This part is what would become butter. Not everything disappears.

How are the *tigles* produced on the physical level? We absorb food and this food passes into the blood. It is said that the essence of the blood passes into the flesh, the essence of the flesh into adipose tissues, the tissue essence into the bones, and the essence of the bone into the marrow. The essence of the marrow produces the red and white tigles. The essence of these tigles—and it is this that can be damaged—gives, from a physical point of view the radiance of the body, and from a mental point of view inner well-being, joy, and psychic balance. The process of metabolizing begins with the intake of food and ends in the tigles that give body brilliance and mental happiness, if one does not damage them. It is also said that these metabolic processes produce the inert substances of our body such as nails, hair, and hairs.

Question: Are the subtle channels equivalent to the meridians in acupuncture?

Kalu Rinpoche: I have no great knowledge of this subject. I only know that there are points where one places acupuncture needles to heal certain areas of the body, but I know nothing more.

Question: In the biography of Shakyamuni Buddha, there are few miraculous cases of healing. I do not know Buddhist literature very well but it seems to me that the biography of the mahasiddhas and the great Tibetan yogis contains many miracles, but few healings. By comparison, in the life of the Christ and Christian saints, frequent cases of miraculous healings are reported. Is there a reason, due to the spiritual laws of Buddhism, which makes it so that the great physician who was the Buddha has not made or has not given many examples of miraculous healing?

Kalu Rinpoche: It seems that there are no fundamental differences between Buddhism and Christianity on this point. However, it is necessary to understand that a highly spiritual being cannot act in a precise way toward another if there is no specific karmic link with this being in the past. Without this link, it is not possible to dissipate suffering. There are many times when the Buddha and mahasiddhas dissipated suffering of innumerable beings with whom they had a link. It is similar for Christ and the Christian saints.

THE RECOVERY OF GELONGMA PALMO

Among the many examples of miraculous healing related in the Buddhist tradition, Gelongma Palmo's case is perhaps the most famous. Gelongma Palmo was a Buddhist princess of ancient India. At a very young age, she contracted leprosy. Her whole body was in pain and, to avoid infecting others, she isolated herself in a small hut that no one could approach. She had great faith in Avalokita (Tibetan, Chenrezig) to whom she prayed continuously. One night, after many years of prayer and meditation, she dreamt of a white being who appeared and poured a nectar of light on her body with a bumpa.19 The following day, she awoke, and she was healed. She thought that this white being was Avalokita and her faith increased even more. Not only did she recover but she also attained realization. Her body no longer had any trace of leprosy, and her mind had become pure and dear. Gelongma Palmo is the origin of the nyungnay practice linking fasting to the practice of the meditation on Avalokita.

THE REMEDY TAKEN IN A DREAM

I have recently met the lineage holder of the Taklung school who just came from Tibet. There is a story not related directly to him, but to his previous incarnation. One day he became very sick, and although taking all the prescribed medicines, nothing could make him better. However, at night he prayed as much as possible for healing. One night when he was praying, Matro Rinpoche, his source lama, appeared as if physically present. Asking him to open his mouth, Matro Rinpoche placed a substance on his tongue which the sick lama swallowed. After that, Matro Rinpoche disappeared and the sick lama was completely healed. It is a kind of miraculous recovery.

A MIRACULOUS HAMMER KNOCK

The previous Situ Rinpoche and I resided in the same region. In the city of Derge a skillful blacksmith had a certain illness, most certainly tuberculosis. He could not be cured despite many prescribed medicines. The blacksmith had made several objects for Situ Rinpoche. Once, because of his illness, the object was not very well made. When he handed it to Situ Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche became quite angry and with a hammer hit the blacksmith. After this blow, the blacksmith completely recovered.

Question: You told us that it is good to associate meditation with sexual abstinence. Does it concern techniques of special meditation or simple retreats such as those ofAvalokita or Vajrasattva (Tibetan, Dorje Sempa)?

Kalu Rinpoche: All practices have an impact on the channels, winds, and tigles, but the practice that specifically acts on them is the practice of tumo found in the six dharmas of Naropa. The practice superior to all others is mahamudra. If one is really able to practice mahamudra, the essence of the tigle is never damaged.

Question: Grass and water have no karma, no children, they do not reach Awakening, there is no male nor female. What is their relationship with human beings?

Kalu Rinpoche: When I said, "On earth, there is half grass half water" it was an image. This means that if one does not find water in one place, there is no need to suffer. It is sufficient to drink somewhere else.

Question: What is the role of fasting in relation to humors in the organism?

Kalu Rinpoche: All depends on the perspective in which one fasts. During a nyungnay, one undertakes the meditation of Avalokita, simultaneously. It is the activity of Avalokita that benefits all beings. This practice belongs to Kriya tantra, and is a purification practice because one purifies the mind by meditation. Remaining without eating, one also purifies the body. Illness is set aside. During a nyungnay, aside from the making of tormas, one undertakes no activity. One is completely devoted to practice. It is said that this pleases the deity and great benefits result.

Fasting only for the sake of fasting brings no particular spiritual benefits. If we meditate with the motivation to reach Awakening and if we consider that attachment to food or drink is constraining us in our actual condition, then fasting is, even for a short period, beneficial. When we do a nyungnay, we do not absorb any food or beverage for 24 hours. At dawn the next day when one breaks the fast, one takes a special soup so that the 84,000 microorganisms living in our body do not suffer from hunger and thirst.

Question: Is smoking harmful at the level of the winds and subtle channels?

Kalu Rinpoche: It is said that smoke is able to enter into the subtle channels and obstruct them. Smoking is harmful.

Question: Rinpoche spoke about the practice of tumo as the specific practice to do in order to conserve the tigles. I have often heard people say that the practice of prostration was useful for purifying the channels. Could Rinpoche explain how and why?

Kalu Rinpoche: It is probable that prostration helps to purify the channels because, when one prostrates, it is, above all, an act of trust, devotion, and fervor toward the Three Jewels, whose grace one then receives. It is certain that this grace helps purify oneself, the channels, winds, and the tigles. Prostration especially fortifies faith and trust.

Question: I do not practice at all. I have too much mental confusion to remain in mahamudra, and I do not even know what it is. Nevertheless how can I prevent damage to my tigles?

Kalu Rinpoche: If one does not allow him or herself be carried away by desire, one will not damage the tigles.

Question: What is the cause of homosexuality and what is its consequence on the winds and tigles?

Kalu Rinpoche: Homosexual or heterosexual, if one damages the tigles, the result is about the same. In our relationships with men or women, if we have a moderated attachment and do not frequently damage our tigles, this is beneficial. This is general advice that everyone must apply in examining his or her own body. Most of you are not monks or nuns. You can analyze the situation and if you see that you damage your tigles a lot, perhaps you will become conscious that your mind is not happy or dear and that, physically, you are not well. In this case, it is certainly an indication that you should reduce the frequency of damaging your tigles.

Question: Can the tigles be regenerated?

Kalu Rinpoche: Of course, tigles can be restored. We saw earlier that there was a six-fold process of refining food, and that the tigles were the outcome of this process. However, if they are damaged too much, they have no time to be restored. All of this, the question of the tigles and their damage is not, properly speaking, the Dharma. It is nevertheless useful to know this. However, it is more beneficial to avoid excessive attachment. If we cannot gain the love of one person, we will meet another.

Question: Can we recognize illness created by negative spirits? And what are the practices allowing us to avoid them?

Kalu Rinpoche: One can know it by taking the pulse and the examination of urine. Various rituals allow the person to be cured. They have to be adapted to the type of spirit and to its gender. Generally, all rituals that one undertakes with faith in the Three Jewels have a positive result of ridding oneself from such illnesses. The ritual of chod especially appears efficient in these cases.

Question: Is an orgasm without special sexual contact as harmful as normal sexual intercourse?

Kalu Rinpoche: It can happen that one loses his or her tigles without any apparent cause. It is a problem with the channels for which there are some medicine. Three causes can provoke the loss of the tigles outside sexual desire, in case of excessive production, under the effect of a negative spirit, and under the influence of illness.

Generally, we think in terms of "I," "me," "my" body, "my" word, or "my" mind. We are extremely attached to this idea of "me." From this ego-grasping arise the conflicting emotions, the grasping of negative spirits, and illness. The best remedy consists of visualizing ourselves in the form of the deity during the meditation of Ayalokita. We think of our body as the body of Avalokita. The great difference is that with this body we do not imagine it as a substantial and material body, but as an appearance both empty and manifested, as a rainbow. In this meditation, instead of thinking "my" speech, we always think simply that the sound we emit in the mantra OM MAM PADME HUNG, is an empty sound, like an echo having no reality in itself. Similarly, instead of thinking "my" mind, we think that all that happens internally is Avalokita's mind, and that therfc is no reality in itself of mental phenomena, but simply the union of the knowledge faculty and emptiness, the mahamudra.

Latent conditioning always drives us to identify ourselves with our body, speech, and mind. We think that they really exist and that we are confined by them. Meditating on Avalokita, we develop another tendency and conditioning. We accustom ourselves to think of our body, speech, and mind as those of Avalokita and that they are empty manifestations. Moreover, visualization of Avalokita's body and recitation of the mantra are charged with a strong blessing and compassion. They have a power of their own. Our new tendency added to the action of visualization and meditation, has extremely powerful effects in this life and in lives to come.

Our conflicting emotions are like a great river. It is almost impossible to stop these emotions. From a certain point of view, when one truly knows how it works, it is not a problem. Conflicting emotions derive from the mind. The mind being empty, they cannot have an existence in and by themselves.

If one knows and applies the methods that allow us to recognize this empty nature of the emotions, they no longer create a problem.

Karma Migyur Ling, December 1984

Mind, Elements, and Aggregates

Kalu Rinpoche often taught a particular practice of shinay and lhakthong relying on visualizations of colored geometrical forms representing elements and aggregates. These meditations, belonging to the Vajrayana, were taught only to people who had at least taken refuge. This is why, to respect the transmission, it is impossible to publish the description of the implied visualizations. The teaching transcribed here is in some ways incomplete. However, it seems helpful to publish the general data which frame these practices, especially explanations concerning elements and aggregates.

Today, we will approach a practice of shinay, called "special practice." To understand its purpose, it is necessary to know how the mind functions.

Human existence is characterized by the capacity for comprehension and intelligence giving superiority over other forms of beings. However, if we do not understand what the mind is, many erroneous conceptions appear. For example, we might think that the mind would not exist in absence of the body, or that past and future lives do not exist. However, since time without beginning, our mind has incarnated into millions of existences under multiple forms, and it will continue to wander in samsara until we have reached Buddhahood.

We will see, today, how the five elements, earth, water, fire, air, and space are components not only of our body and the external world, but also make up the nature of the mind.

ELEMENTS IN THE BODY AND IN THE UNIVERSE

In our body, the five elements are easy to identify:

- flesh, bone, and other solid constituents form the earth element
- blood, lymph, and different liquids, the water element
- heat of the body, fire element
- breathing, air element
- the different orifices, pores of the skin, cavities, and so on, space element

The natural radiance of these five elements manifests in external world:

- the "earth" element corresponding to the solid state of matter
- the water to the liquid state
- the fire to the fire state21
- the air to the gaseous state
- the space to emptiness in which all these states take place

ELEMENTS IN THE MIND

In the mind, the five elements correspond to its different characteristics:

- The mind is empty. It cannot be defined in terms of form, color, or size. Being without limit, it is similar to the space element. One of the signs of its

emptiness is that it can contain the thought of all things large or small, in the distance or nearby.

- The mind is clarity. As the light of the sun makes the external world visible, the mind, by its clarity, has the capacity of knowing all things. Also, it has the dynamic power by which, for example, if we think of America, India, or any other country, we can effectively form a mental image of these countries. This clarity is similar to the element of fire, which gives out light.

- The mind can be compared to a vast ocean or a great river, because in it there is no discontinuity. The mind has always existed and will continue onward. The absence of discontinuity of the clarity and emptiness of the mind corresponds to the water element.

- Perhaps at this moment our mind is happy, but it is possible that the mind, in an instant, could become miserable.

Sometimes the mind is peaceful, sometimes it is agitated. The changes manifesting in the clarity and emptiness of the mind correspond to the element of air and to the versatility of the wind.

- By the play of the four elements, space, fire, water, and air, a great variety of emotions and thoughts are manifested.

The mind is like a basis, allowing all unpleasant or pleasant manifestations. It is similar to the earth element, a solid foundation on which vegetation grows and animals and human beings live.

THE MIND IS NOT LIMITED BY THE BODY

Three fundamental characteristics define the mind: emptiness, clarity, and intelligence without obstruction. When the mind is pure, it is then called "potential of primordial awareness" When it is hindered by the four veils, it becomes "potential of individualized consciousness." This makes way for the emergence of seven other consciousnesses functioning in a dualistic mode. These are the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, mental, and disturbed consciousnesses.

Some people believe that the eight consciousnesses cannot function outside the body. However, having the same nature as the mind, they function as long as there is the mind. We can understand this with the example of the dream. The eight consciousnesses allow us then to see, hear, and so on 22 in a context other than the one of the body and physical organs. This functioning also intervenes when we are in the bardo, after having left our body at the moment of death. All kinds of appearances, often frightening, manifest then; and we perceive forms, sounds, and colors, although we no longer possess a physical form.

A CASTLE OF SAND

How can we be sure that the mind is as we described it? When we hear this description from a lama or spiritual instructor, we can think, "Yes, it is like that without doubt" This is not sufficient. We have to take another step and verify it ourselves, through meditating.

To do this, we seek a quiet place by ourselves and sit, placing the body in a straight position. We simply allow the mind to rest by itself and look at itself without distraction. We then ask, "Is the mind really empty? Is it clear? Is it composed of five elements or not?" We try to find answers by ourselves. If, meditating like this, we discover that the mind is not empty, not dear, impeded, and not composed of five elements, we will be able to conclude that the teachings concerned with mind are erroneous. If, on the other hand, we observe that the mind is effectively dear, empty, unimpeded, and of the nature of the five elements, we will be convinced that the description is true.

By this vision and understanding of the mind, all worldly activities and knowledges will be perceived as a castle of sand built by a child, with which the child is entertained by imagining endless adventures.

THE MOVEMENT OF WAVES

Applying ourselves to perfect conduct, abstaining from killing, and showing an altruistic mind, we will obtain in our future lives a human existence identical with the one we now enjoy. Living this way will assure us of all the ordinary satisfactions. We will have adequate housing, a good job, we will have a healthy body, a long life, and so on. Or we will be reborn into states of divine existence where happiness is even greater. This will be the result of our present acts. With positive acts, we will obtain positive results. This is the law of karma.

Our karma is imprinted within our mind and functions in the mode of the potential of individualized consciousness. Not having recognized the true nature of the mind, we accumulate karma by the acts we accomplish. Negative or positive acts are similar to the waves of the ocean. Their downward movement corresponds to acts that are buried then in the potential of individualized consciousness. Their rising movement corresponds to consequences of this potential.

THE TWO FRUITS OF THE DHARMA

When we practice meditation and virtue with application on the spiritual path, the veils of ignorance, latent conditioning, conflicting emotions, and karma become thinner and thinner until they completely dissipate. Simultaneously, qualities of the mind included within the potential of primordial awareness blossom. Obtaining Buddhahood implies omniscience. This is why the Dharma taught by the Buddha is so extraordinary.

The real fruit of the Dharma practice is the attainment of Buddhahood. This state also includes excellent secondary results, such as rebirth into a pleasant human existence, or into superior worlds.

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

The most important thing in any practices is the mind. This is why it is necessary to meditate, first of all by practicing shinay (mental calming), then lhakthong (superior vision), and finally mahamudra or maha-ati. Vajrayana is

a particularly swift path for Awakening. Its efficiency is due to the utilization of special techniques of shinay and lhakthong, and to the practice of the phases of creation and completion.

In Vajrayana, some instructions are only transmitted directly by the lama. This is the case with the special techniques of shinay, lhakthong, and mahamudra that we are studying now.

In general, Westerners are intelligent and educated. They understand Buddhism easily and hope to reach Buddhahood quickly. However, living in a world of intense activity, work, and distraction, they have difficulty in devoting themselves exclusively to practice. One way to shake the water out of the ear is to rinse the ear, allowing the water to flow by itself outward. In the same way, meditation on the five elements is used to purify the five elements, meditation on the five aggregates to purify the aggregates, and meditation on conflicting emotions to purify emotions.

Because we have five elements in our body and mind, it is easy to use them for supports in shinay. Similarly, the five aggregates are constituents of our psychophysical existence. For this reason, they constitute some convenient supports for lhakthong. Finally, because they are concerned with the conflicting emotions, if we can use the five aggregates as a support for mahamudra meditation, it will be easy to liberate ourselves from them. It is with the hope that this type of meditation will be suitable for Westerners that I have already given the special instruction on meditations of shinay and lhakthong during my previous travels. I have not yet given the meditation of mahamudra, which relies on the tigles relating to emotions.

DISSOLUTION OF THE ELEMENTS

To approach shinay meditation linked with the elements, it is important to understand what these elements actually are in the mind, body, and external world. We have just heard their description. Let us now examine how they act in the process of death and birth.

At the time of death, the five elements of the body are reabsorbed into each other, giving way to various types of mental experience:

- when the earth element is reabsorbed in the water element, the dying person has the feeling of being crushed by a boulder or a mountain

- when the water element is reabsorbed in the fire element, the dying person believes to be swept away by a river or drowning in the ocean

- when the fire element is reabsorbed in the air element, the place where the dying person lives and the whole universe seem to be ablaze - finally, when the air element is reabsorbed in the space element, the dying person has the sensation of being blown away by the wind

Under the influence of these various phenomena, the mind experiences tremendous fear. At the end of the process, the dying person falls into a state of complete unconsciousness lasting three and half days. This is an indication that the seven consciousnesses have been reabsorbed into the potential of individualized consciousness.

Following this period of unconsciousness, the five elements are activated again and projected under the form of five colored lights perceived as externally existing. Changing from instant to instant, they organize themselves in luminous spheres, in brilliant geometrical figures, lightning, a rainbow, or in the form of deities of the bardo. Detailed explanations of these phenomena are recorded in the Bardo Thodrol and others

texts. 23 If we develop the ability to meditate on these luminous manifestations, we will be able, at the moment of death, to recognize that these are only projections of the mind. Ultimately, we will be able to realize the empty nature of the five elements and understand that they are the five feminine aspects of the Buddhas:

- earth, being Buddhalocana
- water, Mamaki
- fire, Pandaravasini
- air, Samayatara
- space, Vajradhatvesvari

Most beings, however, miss this opportunity for liberation, and perceive the luminous expressions of the elements as having an independent external existence. They react with fear and seek to escape.

THE ELEMENTS AS SUPPORTS OF CONCEPTION

After several weeks in the bardo, during which there are many sufferings and mental experiences, the appearance of a future birth begins to manifest and in the conception, we again find the five elements. These elements compose both the body and the external world as previously described. Communication from one to the other is established during the absorption of food. The essence of this food, formed of the five elements, passes first into the blood, and by a succession of transformations into the flesh, adipose tissues, and marrow. The essence of the marrow produces the red and white tigles, that is, the female and male sexual principles, which in their turn produce physical radiance and mental well-being. Therefore, there is a seven-fold process of refining the elements. At the time of conception, the mind-wind of the bardo unites with the physical supports of the father and mother produced by this process. When the embryo develops, its growth is also assured by the five elements, transmitted by the body of the mother. Finally, when it takes birth, it perceives the five elements of the external world as being real.

THE FIVE AGGREGATES

Ignorance is related not only to the five elements as components of the person but also to the five aggregates. The term, aggregate, means a gathering of several units in the same category. A handful of rice, for example, constitutes an aggregate of rice grains.

The first aggregate is that of forms. It concerns all the material aspects of the external world such as earth, boulders, trees, and so on, as well as our body. Indeed, our body is a collection of a multitude of cells and physical particles

making up a unity. When we look at a person in the distance, we can see that he or she has blond, brown, or gray hair. However, coming closer we observe that this clump of hair in fact is a great number of hairs existing individually. Our body, seemingly an apparent whole, is in fact only a collection.

The second aggregate is a group of physical and mental sensations. When the weather is cold, we have the sensation of coldness. During the warm season, we have the sensation of heat. We can feel different physical sensations. Mentally, we can feel happy or miserable, we judge situations as pleasant or unpleasant. The collection of these sensations is the aggregate of sensations.

A metaphor will help us understand the succession of the aggregates. Our mind, covered by ignorance and not recognizing its own nature, is the potential of individualized consciousness comparable to an ocean without waves. The appearance of the first movement of an ascending wave corresponds to the aggregate of sensations. A wave of greater magnitude represents the aggregate of perceptions, the third aggregate. The wave forms itself more dearly, becomes more precise, as the complexity of the mind continues to develop. It is the fourth aggregate, the aggregate of volitions. Finally, the fully formed waves succeeding each other are similar to the aggregate of consciousnesses.

Another example, let us compare the potential of individualized consciousness to a state of ignorance lacking any mental functioning. In this state, we enter a house. First, we have a simple consciousness of the place, a first movement of consciousness of what is appearing. This is the aggregate of sensations. Then, we see that there is color, white, blue, and so on. The functioning of our mental faculties elaborates, this is the aggregate of perceptions. Finally, we recognize the totality of the things and we utter judgments. "It is big; it is small; it is beautiful; this is not beautiful" This is the aggregate of volitions. Then, the aggregate of consciousnesses assures the integral functioning of the totality.

These five aggregates—forms, sensations, perceptions, volitions, and consciousnesses—exist within us, now. However, they function on the basis on the five elements from which they proceed. The five elements correspond to the five feminine Buddhas, the five "Mothers" that give birth, and the five aggregates correspond to the five masculine Buddhas.

A REMEDY TO MOTION SICKNESS

Without abandoning the impure level of the five elements and five aggregates and taking up their pure level, it is not possible to pass from an ordinary being into Buddhahood. The Vajrayana uses specific means that will make this transformation in an instant. These means are the deity meditations, the union of manifestation and emptiness, like a rainbow. These meditations, the recitation of mantras, and phases of completion, with or without imaginative support, such as the mahamudra, are extremely profound methods. However, for the beginner it is difficult to practice these methods and there is

the risk they will not be effective. When one is traveling far away, it is pleasant to go by plane, train, or car. Unfortunately, some people become ill using rapid transportation, and they must take medicine to make the trip. This medicine is comparable to progressive approaches constituting special techniques of shinay and lhakthong.

FIVE AGGREGATES, FIVE BUDDHAS

If we resume the description of the five aggregates, they are located at the level of impure functioning of the mind. From a perfectly pure level, they are replaced by the five Father Buddhas. As for meditation, the aggregates are represented in the form of tigles of light. It is an intermediate stage between pure and impure levels. They are like steps allowing access to the perfectly pure level, the five Father Buddhas:

- the aggregate of forms is Vairocana Buddha
- the aggregate of sensations, Ratnasambhava Buddha
- the aggregate of perceptions, Amitabha Buddha
- the aggregate of volitions, Amoghasiddhi Buddha
- the aggregate of consciousnesses, Akshobya Buddha

GRATITUDE TOWARD OUR PARENTS

To practice meditation using the tigles of the elements and aggregates, ideally, one should have received a Vajrayana initiation. Having taken the vows of refuge, however, can be sufficient.

In all Dharma practices, it is fundamental, at the beginning of a meditation, to put ourselves in the context of the refuge and bodhicitta. At the end, we dedicate merit and make prayers of aspiration. These are powerful ways to avoid wandering on erroneous paths.

Engendering bodhicitta is particularly important. To do so, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the goodness of our parents. From childhood to the age when independence is

reached, they continually cared for us. They provided us with the means to study, obtain a good job, to be in good health, and so on. We have been a permanent source of worry and hard work for our parents. We must be conscious of this immense goodness, and feel great gratitude toward them.

It is said that all the beings of samsara have been our fathers and mothers, not one, two, or three times, but an incalculable number of times. All have had concern for us. Therefore, we should feel the same gratitude for them as for our parents.

MAUDGALAYAYANA SEEKS HIS MOTHER

When we say "our father" and "our mother" of past lives, that does not imply the person will be living dose to us in this life. The place can be extremely distant.

Maudgalayayana, one of the great disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, who had reached the state of arhat, wished to know where his deceased mother had resumed birth. As an arhat, he had supranormal powers allowing him to search everywhere in the six realms. However, he searched and searched but he did not find her. Pondering this, he went to see; the Buddha.

"Could you tell me where my mother has resumed birth?" he asked the Buddha.

"She is in a world called 'Northern Radiance" replied the Buddha.

"How can you know it when I myself was unable to discover it?"

"Because you are only an arhat while I am a Buddha. This implies a certain difference."

"Is there anything that I could do to help my mother now in her present existence?"

"To help her, it is necessary to go there. If you want, we will use your powers to go there."

The disciple accepted. Because of the Buddha's powers, the Buddha and Maudgalayayana covered the distance in the seven steps which separated them from Northern Radiance. With each step, they crossed a galaxy. Arriving at their destination, they found Maudgalayayana's mother who was reborn as a woman in this distant world. Mother and son recognized each other and embraced. It was a wonderful moment. The Buddha gave the mother some teachings that were beneficial.

At the time of parting, the Buddha told Maudgalayayana.

"To come from the Earth, we have used your powers. On returning to Earth, do we use your powers or mine?"

"Yours," replied Maudgalayayana.

The immense space was then covered in a single instant, without taking seven steps.

POWER OF INSTANTANEOUSNESS :

To be reborn, near or far, as a father or mother, or in any other situation or relationship with those who were dose to us in our past lives depends entirely on karma. As for the power of instantaneousness of the mind, this power possessed by the Buddha to transverse incalculable distances in one instant, we also share it in our mind. We are, however, hindered by ignorance and do not have control of our own mind.

We can observe, at this very moment, the inner presence of the capability of instantaneousness. France now possesses an extremely rapid passenger train, the TGV, which covers great distances in record time. Our mind is fester. We imagine America, and its landscapes suddenly appear in our imagination. We are there in an instant. However, our strong identification with the body prevents our body from following the mind.

All beings, as previously stated, have been our fathers and mothers in the past. All, without exception, wish to obtain happiness and not to be hampered

by suffering. However, they do not know which path leads to happiness, and which path culminates in suffering.

Innumerable beings commit negative acts causing suffering, contrary to what they wish. We must show them love and compassion and try to implement many ways to lead them onto the path of happiness. At this moment, we do not have the capacity to guide them, because we lack freedom of the mind. In order to obtain this freedom, we practice several types of meditation.

Vajradhaling, 1984

Mahamudra

Vajradharaling, 1984

Today, we must talk about mahamudra. Mahamudra implies the absence of an object to which meditation is directed. Because of this absence of an object, this type of meditation can be considered very easy or very difficult.

To approach the Dharma, it is essential to understand the nature of the mind, what is meant by ordinary being and by Buddha, and what are the paths and levels of realization. In particular, without having perceived what is the nature of the mind, it is practically impossible to understand and practice mahamudra.

WHAT IS MIND?

All beings have a mind. How do we comprehend this mind? We conceive it in terms of "me," or "it is me." Beyond this powerful identification, we do not know what is the nature of the mind.

What does this word "mind" mean?

Mind means that which has the ability to think, know, experience, and feel.

Because the mind does not recognize itself, it does not recognize its real nature, and we think, "I have a mind" and we conceive mind as a limited object that exists as a thing. We also believe that the world is permanent while it is transitory, that it is real while it is illusory, and that it is happiness while it is the support of suffering. We believe the world to be permanent, real, and happy.

PROGRESSIVE APPROACH

The meditation that introduces us to the real nature of mind is traditionally practiced under the supervision of a lama. It is the lama who, first of all, asks the disciple to examine what is this mind. What is called mind, that is, that which thinks and knows, experiences happiness and suffering, is it external to the body, internal, or somewhere between the two? Does the mind have form and what is this form? A color— and what color? A volume—and what volume? Questioned by the lama, the disciple is sent to meditate for several days or even many months. After that, the disciple returns and submits answers based on personal experience to the master. The master will then verify if the discoveries are right.

Today, masters have to travel a lot and disciples are distracted by many activities. It has become almost impossible to engage in the process where the lama poses questions and the disciple takes the necessary time to meditate before returning to reveal his or her answers.

We have neither available time nor an opportunity to proceed like this, so I am left to describe what is the true nature of mind.

RISKS ENGENDERED BY THE MASTER'S TEACHING

This can be a good thing that the master explains what is the nature of the mind, but it is not without risk. Indeed, there are several possibilities. The disciple can, first, grasp the truth of everything expounded and deeply believe in it In this case the explanation perfectly reaches its goal. Without arriving at this understanding, the disciple can also simply think, 'It is without doubt as the lama says/ and feel confidence. This is again sufficient and poses no danger.

But another reaction may occur after the lama's explanations. Some people may indeed not only doubt die validity, but adopt a position of complete rejection, saying, "This conception is without foundation. It is completely false." This reaction is very unfortunate, both for the disciple who commits a serious fault, and for the master guilty of the error called "divulging teachings which must not be divulged."

You have the good fortune to appreciate the Dharma. If what will be explained simply evokes the thought, "That is certainly like this because the lama says it even if I cannot truly understand it" your attitude will be consistent with the framework of the teaching. All is well. You will not risk the problems engendered by a critical position.30

Let us examine what is the mind.

EMPTINESS

In the first place, the essence of mind has no form, no color, no volume, and is like an empty space or comparable to the sky. Emptiness is the first characteristic of the mind.

CLARITY

Emptiness in the sense of space in this room, for example, has no possibility of knowing or feeling unpleasant or pleasant sensations. But, the mind can know and feel. The mind has what is called "darity." An example will help us to understand this darity. In the empty space surrounding us, die sun outdoors or electricity utilized inside a house illuminates us. Their light allows us to see, know, and distinguish the grounds, flowers, objects in the room, and so on. Clarity of the mind is what makes this knowledge possible.

It is necessary however to note the difference between what is really the mind and the preceding example. In the example, an external cause is necessary to produce light, either by the sun or by electrical power. Without their presence, it is dark. Clarity of the mind is independent of any external cause. It belongs to the nature of the mind. If one puts the mind in a state lacking all thought, the mind dwells in a state of empty clarity. Present in emptiness, clarity is also an active force allowing thoughts to take form, as, for example, an image of India or America appears in the mind when we think of one of those countries. Clarity provides the possibility of knowing, and at the same time is the creative ability of the mind.

NONOBSTRUCTION

If the mind were only clarity and emptiness, it would be like the space surrounding us, empty and dear, but without consciousness. To be able to say, "This is a pillar, this is a wall, this is a man" and so on, requires a third aspect called "intelligent capability" or "nonobstruction," which effectively knows everything.

Such is the mind. Its essence is emptiness. The nature of this emptiness is clarity and this clarity-emptiness is associated with dynamic knowing.

NEITHER CENTER NOR LIMIT

This is the explanation that I give you concerning mind. It is now necessary that you meditate and verify it. Establish yourself in a state of not trying to mentally create or produce anything, of not turning outwardly, and of not diving inwardly either. The mind simply dwells in itself. See if the mind is or is not empty, dear, and endowed with the capability of knowing. Understanding what is empty, dear, and a knowing mind is an experience infinitely open and vast. From this experience, it is said that such a mind is without a center and that it has no limit, like space. One has to dwell in this state.

We should not constrain this emptiness-clarity-knowledge within narrow limits, confining it inside our chest, for example. The mind cannot be located in a defined place. This emptiness-clarity-knowledge is the mode of being of the mind.

It is not something manufactured.

(meditation)

Let us reside in a state where our mind, on the one hand, pervades all the heights of space, as if it was going further than the moon and sun, with nothing stopping it and where, on the other hand, it descends more deeply than all the depths of the earth or the ocean.

We stay in this state with no distraction.

(meditation)

WITHOUT BEGINNING OR END

The mind—emptiness in essence, clarity by nature, and knowledge as aspect—exists since time without beginning. Since time without beginning also, it has been covered by illusion, functioned in an erroneous manner, and has been prisoner of samsara. It did not appear out of the blue as if it never existed previously. If we recognize the authentic nature of the mind in the future and become a Buddha, it does not mean that the mind will cease to exist.

Space is empty. As far as one can reach into the past, there is no moment marked as its beginning. As far as one can reach into the future, a thousand years, ten thousand years, or whatever length of years, space will never cease to exist. Being empty, space is without beginning or end and is permanent. Our mind, empty as space, is also without beginning or end.

THE FOUR VEILS

Our empty, dear, and knowing mind is also called the "potential of primordial awareness" This potential of primordial awareness is comparable to pure water. If we mix earth in this pure water, it becomes muddy. Similarly, because of fundamental ignorance, the potential of primordial awareness is reduced to a potential of "individualized consciousness." This intervention of ignorance is the "veil of innate ignorance." The mind does not recognize its own nature.

Consequently, the notion of "me" and "other" forms. It is the veil of duality also called "determined ignorance" or "veil of latent conditioning." The mind, not recognizing its own nature as empty, asserts instead of this emptiness an "I," the "subject," with which it identifies itself. Not recognizing the manifestation as its own clarity, the mind conceives it as "other," as "object."

Between the two extreme poles of this duality of I and other, conflicting emotions appear, first attraction and repulsion, automatically followed by blindness, which does not recognize their own empty nature. From these three basic conflicting emotions, many ramifications develop, totaling 84,000, and constitute the "veil of emotions." Under their influence, we accomplish varied and numerous negative acts4 forming the "veil of karma."

ORIGIN OF THE CLASSES OF EXISTENCE

The conjunction of conflicting emotions and the resultant acts leads to the six types of rebirth in samsara:

- Motivated by hatred or anger, one engages in killing. The result is rebirth into one of the hells.

- Attachment creates possessiveness, the cause of existence as an hungry ghost.

- Blindness prevents discrimination between positive and negative acts, and induces rebirth in the animal realm.

- If one has protected life, practiced giving, and accomplished many positive acts, but at the same time has felt desire and attachment, this blend of positive and negative activity leads to birth as a human being.

- When one has accomplished many virtuous acts mixed with jealousy, one is reborn into the realm of the demi-gods.

- Virtuous acts mixed with pride lead to the worlds of the gods.

Because we have previously accomplished many positive acts and had established a connection with the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha, we have now obtained the precious human existence.

NEITHER REAL NOR UNREAL

An ordinary being under the influence of dualistic consciousness is similar to a person having absorbed too much alcohol. Drunkenness creates hallucinations that this person believes is real. Similarly, the dualistic

functioning of the potential of consciousness produces many illusory manifestations which are the six classes of beings.

We cannot say that these six classes of beings really exist, since they are nothing other than projections of the mind. They are empty in essence. Neither can we say that they do not exist at all, because as long as we are in one of them—although it is only a production of the mind—we are sure of its reality. Born as human beings, we have the idea that both ourselves and our surroundings are real. It is the same for the remaining classes of beings.

It is said that the six classes of beings are neither true nor false. They are comparable to the moon reflecting itself on the surface of the water. This moon is not completely unreal since one can see it. It is not real either, since it is nowhere. The dream is another illustration of this play of unreality and reality. As long as the dream lasts, we are persuaded of the reality of its people, landscapes and all that appears in it We experience different feelings including fear, suffering, fright, and so on, but once we wake up, this has all disappeared and exists nowhere. Phenomena of the dream are neither existent nor nonexistent.

TAKING OFF

Being under the influence of ignorance and prisoner of the dualistic functioning of the potential of consciousness is what is called samsara, the basis of the experiences of suffering and happiness. When ignorance is totally dissipated, the knowledge inherent in the mind, Buddhahood, appears.

If we are not familiar with the teachings of Awakening, it is impossible to liberate ourselves from samsara. If we walk on foot, ride a bike, go by train, drive a car, take a boat, or ride a horse, it is impossible for us to leave the surface of the earth. The only way to do this is to take an airplane. We all have access to this airplane. It is our connection with the Dharma. We have the ability to fly and perhaps are already in an intermediate state between samsara and liberation. It is characteristic of our precious human existence.

Those who are not on a path of Awakening have to be content with the surface of the earth. They cannot take off: Possessing precious human existence and being connected to a teaching that leads to Awakening, it is still necessary to practice this teaching. Lacking practice, we obtain nothing.

NEGATIVE ACTS AND VEILS

Two obstacles prevent us from obtaining Awakening, our veils and our negative acts.

Veils, that is to say, the veil of ignorance and the veil of latent conditioning, are comparable to clouds in the sky. They do not allow us to see reality. As for the negative acts, they are equivalent to painfully beating ourselves. By accomplishing negative acts, we sow the seed of our own suffering. Given that we have committed negative acts and harvested their results for a infinite number of existences, during this period we have beaten ourselves without

ceasing. It is because of their painful consequences that one speaks of "negative" acts.

It is impossible to reach Awakening without suppressing these negative acts and veils. They condemn us to spin in samsara. If, on the other hand, we dissipate them, merit and wisdom increase by themselves.

Let us take the example of night and day. When it is night, complete darkness creates a difficult situation. At daybreak, the sun does not appear yet, but a first gleam of light hits the earth. As the sun continues to rise, light increases, and by this single fact, darkness decreases. Similarly, when negative acts and veils diminish, merit and wisdom spontaneously grow.

For negative acts and veils to disappear completely and for merit and wisdom to fully bloom, it is necessary to realize mahamudra, the ultimate nature of the mind. But that cannot be done without preparation. This is why we first accomplish "preliminary practices'7 including prostrations, recitation of the mantra of one hundred syllables, mandala offering, and gufu yoga. These preparatory phases allow us to accumulate merit and wisdom.

THE THREE-YEAR RETREAT

Any virtuous act of body, speech, or mind reduces faults and veils and brings us closer to Buddhahood. However, because we are engaged in ordinary life, work, and are absorbed by many occupations, we do not have an opportunity to accomplish many positive acts. When one is committed to a three years and three months retreat, this means that during three years and three months, all ordinary activity is abandoned. The body, speech, and mind focus exclusively on the practice of the Dharma, and virtuous and positive activity. Therefore, this retreat is a way to quickly dissipate the veils and faults and make merit and wisdom grow.

Even by applying ourselves with much diligence to positive practice during the traditional retreat, it is not likely that we attain full Awakening, but at least we learn to practice mahamudra and this will gradually lead us to Awakening.

FLATTENING THE HEAP DOWN

The fact that we do not reach Buddhahood quickly is not because the Dharma is not effective/ but it is because we have accumulated negative acts and strengthened our veils since time without beginning. Eliminating negative acts and veils demands some work.

Suppose that the Awakening we want to reach is like a heap of soil in the middle of a plain that we want to flatten. A single person attacking the flanks of the heap with a pickax and spade would certainly start the work, but it is unlikely that the heap would be flattened in three years. Those who engage in ordinary activity and have little time for spiritual practice, are in the situation of the person who has only a pickax and a spade. Doing a three-year retreat is comparable to attacking the solid heap with a mechanical shovel or a bulldozer. The retreat offers us the possibility of applying great

force to practice, and consequently we can dear away a great quantity of faults and veils.

INSTANTANEOUS LIGHT

For those who really know how to meditate according to the mahamudra, there is nothing easier than eliminating faults and veils. Let us suppose that this room is without an opening, in total darkness, and that we want to illuminate it. One method would be using some tools, cutting out openings, and making windows and doors. This would be a great work comparable to the implementation of the virtuous activity of body, speech, and mind. Practicing mahamudra is a different and direct approach, like switching on a light.

TOO CLOSE, TOO PROFOUND, TOO EASY, AND TOO GOOD

Although mahamudra is extraordinarily easy, what prevents us from practicing and immediately understanding it?

It is said that the true nature of our mind, mahamudra, is too near for us to see and understand it, like the face being too dose to the eye for the eye to see it.

It is also said that if we are on the surface of a very deep ocean, we can look and look again; we will see neither fish in the depths nor the boulders on the ocean's floor. Mahamudra, also, is so profound that we can not probe it.

Mahamudra is very easy. We do not need to go elsewhere. There is nothing to do, nothing to recite, no object of meditation per se. The mind discovers its own nature in mahamudra. It is said that it is too easy for us to believe.

Practicing mahamudra develops many infinitely great qualities implied in the realization of die three bodies of Awakening. It is said that these qualities are so great and so good that our mental capacities cannot encompass them.

BUDDHA IN FRONT OF THE TELEVISION

It is unlikely that all of you will do the traditional retreat, but if you have faith and trust, and energetically apply yourselves to purification and accumulation as well as to the mahamudra meditation, you will understand what mahamudra is.

When one truly knows how to practice it, the meditation of mahamudra is extraordinarily simple. In India and Tibet, it was said that one could easily reach Buddhahood while spinning wool, governing a kingdom, or even while being devoted to work in the fields. We have records of many practitioners who have reached liberation by continuing their ordinary activity. Some were farmers, potters, others dressmakers, and so on.

If, during the three-year retreat, you can develop good experience of mahamudra, you will be able, following the retreat—if you want to—to become a businessman working with millions of dollars every hour of the day.

Or, if you prefer, you will be able to do nothing at all but sit like Milarepa, eating nettles and attain Buddhahood in this way.

Mahamudra does not imply meditating on deities or reciting mantras. The mind dwells in itself without distraction, without creating or making anything, in recognition of its essence. If you know how to meditate like this, perhaps we will be able to add another possible circumstance for reaching Buddhahood, becoming a Buddha while watching television!

When one practices mahamudra, there is no need to reject conflicting emotions. They appear and disappear by themselves, naturally. Mahamudra is so powerful that it is said it "tears samsara to pieces"

Now, we will meditate a moment, We place our mind in such a state that we do nothing, we create nothing, and are also not distracted by anything else. *(meditation)*

From time to time, you can use the exercise of "placing" your mind in this manner yourself. Gradually, you will come to understand it by yourselves. What is important, above all, is to have faith in the lama, to pray to him or her, and develop love and compassion toward ordinary beings. By this faith, love and compassion, you will dissipate a great number of faults and veils, drawing closer to mahamudra.

As long as we have not realized mahamudra, we must avoid all negative acts and practice all positive acts. Indeed, as we continue to function in the framework of the potential of individualized consciousness, we remain subject to karma.

Those who have acquired the ability to effectively practice mahamudra are outside the framework of conventions, as seen in the example of great masters of ancient India. Saraha obtained realization by sleeping for twelve years; Virupa by being drunk day and night; and King Indraboddhi, enjoying the company of 500 queens during the day and 500 queens at night attained realization in 12 years.

In the future, perhaps we will be able to follow these examples. For now, we must aspire to reach realization. This is why we recite in the dedication, "By this virtue, may I quickly achieve mahamudra and establish all beings in this state"

Mahamudra

Samye Ling, March 1983

The techniques of superior vision (Sanskrit, vipasyana; Tibetan, lhakthong) are varied. A beginner will use, for example, methods called "external and internal superior vision" They are concerned with absence of forms, absence of sensations, absence of mind, and absence of phenomena. However, in the Vajrayana, superior vision and mahamudra are the same and only one thing, the recognition of the genuine mode of being of the mind. From this perspective, superior vision or mahamudra is the same thing.

FROM BASIS TO RESULT

The meditation of mahamudra is made of three steps.

- Recognizing the mode of being of our mind is the foundation-mahamudra

- Meditating without interruption in this state of recognition is the path-mahamudra

- Finally, covering what is called the twelve steps of the four paths in the Kagyupa school—that is, the inferior,

mediocre, and superior levels of "concentration" "simplicity,"

"one taste," and "nonmeditation"—one reaches Buddhahood, the result-mahamudra.

If the recognition of the mode of being is not accomplished first, no foundation, no point of beginning will be provided for the path. Without a path to cover, it is also impossible to attain the goal. The first of these three steps is essential.

DISSIPATING THE HAZE

Before approaching mahamudra, it is normally necessary to accomplish the preliminary practices that make meditation easy because they purify the practitioner. When the sky is hazy or cloudy, it is not possible to see the sun, although the sun is present. The more the haze and the clouds dissipate, the more one has a dear view of the sun. In the same way, because of the preliminary practices, the more we purify faults and veils and accumulate merit, the easier mahamudra becomes.

After the preparatory phase, the lama begins to give instructions, first expounding the methods of mental calming (Sanskrit, shamatha; Tibetan, shinay), which allow some mastery of the capability of keeping the mind at rest. When shinay begins to bear fruit, thoughts and conflicting emotions dissipate, and the mind is capable of remaining well-focused. Then, the lama talks with the disciple, bringing the meditator to discover the nature of his or her mind. The lama asks questions such as, "Where does a thought come from? Where does it stay? Where does it disappear?" The lama questions

what is called "origin-location-disappearance." Again the lama asks the disciple, "What is the nature of the mind at rest? What is the nature of the mind in movement? What is the nature of the mind aware of both rest and movement?" Like this, the examination of the "rest-movement-consciousness" is done. The disciple meditates on these questions, and begins to bring answers to the lama, who corrects and leads the disciple to a personal and correct conclusion.

We do not have the time necessary for such a progressive approach now. The Dharma is vast, but human beings are engaged in many activities, much work, many distractions, and much laziness, so there is little time left for the practice. In a certain way, this lack of time could lead you to think that the realization of mahamudra is dosed to you. However, it is said that the more difficult the situation from a spiritual point of view, the more materialistic the era in which we live, then the more powerful is the blessing of so profound a teaching as mahamudra. Therefore, I believe that sincere personal practice can lead you to realization.

A GEM LOST IN THE NIGHT

If one has no idea of the mode of being of the mind, the practice of mahamudra is impossible. Suppose that you have lost a small precious stone, during the night, in a place without light. Your eyes cannot see it and you grope around with your hand to find it. The chances of finding it are slim. If someone provides some light, chances of locating it are greater. Meditating without knowing what mind is, is similar to searching for a small object in the middle of the night with no light.

You must understand that the mind is emptiness, clarity, and nonobstruction, and see how its fundamental purity is altered by the four veils of ignorance, latent conditioning, conflicting emotions, and karma.

(These three characteristics of the mind and the four veils have been examined in detail in preceding chapters. We continue on other topics.)

TRANSFORMING HELL INTO A HEADACHE

Not covered by the four veils, the mind is called the "potential of primordial awareness" Covered by the veils, it is "the potential of individualized consciousness." Among the beings in samsara, the potential of primordial awareness has little power to surface because the veils are thick. From time to time, only as chance combination of circumstances allows, the potential of primordial awareness is expressed under the form of faith, compassion, altruism, and so on. From there proceeds a "white karma" engendering rebirth in superior realms. Because of the rarity of this white karma, few beings reach superior worlds. "Black karma," on the other hand, is usual; and the three inferior realms accommodate more beings.

Fortunately, there are many methods to purify oneself of these veils. In Mahayana, for example, the mind of Awakening is looked upon as a powerful agent for purification. Supposing that our karmic reservoir prepares us, after this life, for a certain rebirth in hell. It is said that a powerful development of

the mind of Awakening will transform that which should have produced the immense suffering of hell into a simple headache in this lifetime.

ACTS CREATE IMPRINTS

We should understand the role of this veil of karma. All acts that we accomplish, whatever their importance and nature, whether they are positive, such as protecting life, giving, and so on, or negative, such as killing or stealing, leave an imprint in the potential of individualized consciousness. Endowed with a dynamic power, this imprint or seed ripens when conditions and related factors are gathered. Finally, this imprint results in a situation we experience.31 The potential of individualized consciousness is the basis of the process of karma. As long as our mind functions in this mode, acts necessarily continue, to engender karmic results for us. The Buddha said that once an act is accomplished, even if one hundred kalpas have to pass, its consequences will necessarily happen when the circumstances allow it.

KARMA AND MEMORY

Some people are hardly convinced of this law of karma, and even reject it outright. They think to themselves, "The Buddha and lamas talk a lot about it, but one has never seen it. It is not certain that this law of karma has an existence other than the words that describe it" It is obvious that karma is invisible. It takes place in the potential of individualized consciousness, which is none other than the mind. The mind is immaterial and invisible. Therefore, karma is immaterial and invisible. The fact that one does not see it is not proof of its nonexistence.

Perhaps you have studied for fifteen years. Can you see where the immense quantity of information was stored during these years? If it was something tangible, a place would be necessary for storing it such as your house, your chest, or some other location. It is clear that this is not so. Not finding a physical location for the memory of your studies cannot lead to a belief that this memory does not exist. When we need data that we have studied, they return to our mind, and we can use them. They did not come from a "place" nevertheless they reappear.

Karma follows a process analogous to that of memory. Acts have been recorded in the potential of individualized consciousness during our past lives. Although this potential does not consist of a reservoir in a physical sense, their effects reappear when the circumstances, that is, the association of many factors, are favorable to them.

STEPS OF PURIFICATION

To purify ourselves of the karma and the four veils requires an extremely long time, hundreds or thousands of existences, until we reach Buddhahood. However, if we become conscious of the problem and make great effort, purification can be accomplished in this present life. According to some texts,

in the best of cases, six months would be enough to reach Awakening, if not, then a year, or one lifetime.

From an immediate point of view, if we seriously take up the preliminary practices, we would first accumulate enough merit and produce a sufficient amount of purification to dissipate the veil of karma significantly. That veil could be entirely eliminated and the first stage of a bodhisattva, called "perfect joy" would be attained.

On the first bodhisattva stage, purification is directed to the veil of conflicting emotions, which is suppressed at the seventh bodhisattva stage. This attainment corresponds to the realization of the first eleven degrees of the mahamudra path. From the eighth to the tenth stage, the three degrees of "concentration" three degrees of "simplicity," three degrees of "one taste," and the inferior and mediocre degrees of "nonmeditation" purify the veil of latent conditioning. In the final superior degree of "nonmeditation," the veil of ignorance is dissipated, this is Buddhahood.

This progress can be made quickly by means of the Vajrayana and mahamudra. With the method of the ordinary Mahayana, it would take an incalculable number of lives to be accomplished. What are the factors leading to the most rapid progression possible? They are a lama with great compassion, deep instructions, and a disciple of superior capabilities. It is said that, in this case, thanks to the instructions of mahamudra, purification of the four veils can be immediate, like a light switched on in the darkness that is dispelled instantly.

QUALITIES OF A BUDDHA

When there are no clouds in the sky, one can be sure that it is not going to rain, snow, or hail. In the same way, when the mind is free of the four veils and when its mode of being is fully actualized, the suffering and difficulties of this world are no longer experienced. One is beyond samsara.

When Buddhahood is reached, the mind has conquered (Tibetan, chom) all the veils and imperfections. It is endowed (Tibetan, den) with all qualities and it is gone beyond (Tibetan, de) samsara. Therefore, a Buddha receives the title bhagavan (Tibetan, chom den de).

In Tibet, the Dharma was an integral part of the civilization, and everyone accepted its propositions with absolute confidence. Because the Dharma teaches that Buddhahood implies unimaginable qualities, it was a fact accepted without discussion. Contrary to this type of faith, Westerners use their critical intelligence. Consequently, they ask questions regarding Buddhahood. "Is it a simple and pure disappearance of mind, a state like the void of space, nothingness? Or could it be a state of total insensitivity, as a stone or the earth on which we walk?"

These doubts are symptoms of misunderstanding. The infinite qualities of Buddhahood are already present in our minds. Buddhahood is not something to be created, or conferred upon us by someone, or that is originating from any external source. The qualities of Buddhahood are primordially existent. Indeed, the mind is empty in essence. This emptiness is, by definition,

unlimited. We cannot say, "Up to this point the mind is empty, after that, it is no longer empty." Emptiness of mind embraces the totality of samsara and nirvana. It is omnipresent. Furthermore, we saw that the clarity and intelligence without obstruction of the mind were inherently empty. Where there is emptiness, there is also clarity. Where there is clarity, there is intelligence without obstruction.

Based on the complete absence of limits of the mind and its abilities, there are the infinite qualities of a Buddha. The first quality is omniscience. A Buddha, that is, a mind that nothing hinders, possesses a complete, dear, and precise knowledge of the past, present and future situation of all beings of the six classes in samsara. Added to this knowledge is love originating from the vision of suffering that imprisons beings because of their ignorance of the pure nature of their minds. From love comes the power to help beings and guide them to liberation. This is why Buddhas continually work for the benefit of all beings until samsara is empty. Omniscience, love, and power are the three fundamental qualities of Buddhahood.

THE BRAHMAN WITH ONLY SEVEN DAYS TO LIVE

In India, a long time ago, a brahman had the vision of a deity that declared, "You have only seven days to live, and your next life looks very bad" The poor man, frightened by the prediction of the date given for his death, did not know which way to turn for a remedy that would cause a delay. He heard people talking about the Buddha, and he told himself that perhaps a person so wise, learned, and clever, could help him. He decided to visit the Buddha.

The Buddha was then lecturing to a crowd of several thousands. Seeing all these people, the brahman despaired. With so many people here, how could he possibly talk to the Buddha and present his case?

To his great astonishment, without having said anything, the Buddha suddenly called him by his name, "Brahman, you have only seven days to live" the Buddha told him, "then you will be reborn seven times as a pig, then another seven times in a form of inferior existence, then again seven times under another form, then seven times as..." The Buddha enumerated thus a long series of painful rebirths in groups of seven. The man turned pale with terror. Who could save him from this dreadful prospect?

Resuming his speech, the Buddha told him, "In the eastern suburbs of the city, there is a stupa that has fallen into ruins. If, animated by great faith, you restore this stupa, you will be able to lengthen the span of your life and rid yourself of the bad karma that assures you a bad existence in the future"

The man had confidence in the Buddha. He repaired the stupa which purified him and granted him a long life, and allowed him to avoid the inferior future rebirths. This is an example of the capabilities that a Buddha possesses naturally.

TEMPLES AND STUPAS

Generally, stupas, temples, and monasteries are the supports of the Buddhas' activity. This is why participating in their construction, maintenance, and restoration engenders great benefits in the domain of purification and accumulation. Many of you are now offering to help in the construction of the temple of Samye Ling.32 The merits stemming from your work with a joyful heart are not limited to the present. According to the Buddha, as long as one stone of a temple or a stupa remains, the merit of those who have built it will continue to increase, minute after minute, second after second.

Remember the life of Milarepa, the most famous of all the Kagyupa lamas. In the records of his life, it is not said that Milarepa accomplished hundreds of thousand of prostrations, or that he offered hundreds of thousand of mandates, or recited hundreds of thousand of mantras of Vajrasattva (Tibetan, Dorje Sempa). To obey Marpa, with great faith he built first a house of triangular shape, then in half moon shape, and then round, destroying it each time to please Marpa, until he finally built a square house of nine floors. Because of that, he was able to perfectly purify all negativity and accumulate enough merit to attain Awakening in a single life time.

Material contribution for the construction of a temple or a stupa is an excellent support of purification and accumulation. However, everything depends on the thought that supports this contribution. If we do it with faith, joy, and admiration for the accomplishment of building, purification and accumulation will be effective. But if we build it out of anger and discontent and frown at the effort, we would be deceiving ourselves to believe that this construction would benefit us.

THE PRACTICE OF MAHAMUDRA

Explanations given by the lama on the nature of the mind, and study by the disciple are necessary, but they remain on the level of intellectual understanding. This understanding is compared to a piece of fabric attached to a doth. It is not integrated into the original garment and ends up becoming unstitched and falling apart. After having purified our faults and veils, we must supplement the understanding with a practice according to received instructions.

(Recitation of the refuge prayer and development of bodhicitta)

We hold our body very straight, and we let our mind rest in itself as it is.

The emptiness of our mind is marked by no limit. We cannot say, "Emptiness reaches that point only" Like infinite space, emptiness embraces the totality of samsara and nirvana. We leave our mind unrestrained, in a state of total openness, and without distraction.

(meditation)

This empty mind, similar to space, is not only emptiness. It also has a limpid and infinitely vast clarity, the radiance of emptiness itself. We now remain in this clarity, without distraction.

(meditation)

There is intelligence without obstruction, which is aware of both emptiness and clarity. We remain in this intelligence, in this present awareness. *(meditation)*

Finally, in the infiniteness and omnipresence of this empty mind, we dwell in the inseparable union of emptiness, clarity, and intelligence.

(meditation)

Instructions received by the disciple from the lama first create an understanding. Then meditation opens into an experience which, if we continue the practice, transforms into realization in a longer or shorter time. We begin with the foundation-mahamudra, pass by the different phases of concentration, simplicity, one taste, and nonmeditation, and arrive at the result-mahamudra, that is, Buddhahood.

THE DISCIPLE'S VIEW

Emptiness, clarity, and intelligence constitute the primordial nature of the mind and form what is called the "inherent primordial awareness" The Buddha emphasized that our efforts would be in vain, searching for other methods than the techniques of purification and accumulation associated with the grace of the master, in order to discover this primordial awareness.

Given that our relationship with the lama plays a very important role, we must, before accepting the lama as such, carefully examine whether the teacher does or does not possess the necessary qualifications. But once we become disciples of a master, whether this teacher is an ordinary being or a Buddha, we must view the lama as a truly present Buddha. Indeed it is said that if we consider the lama as a Buddha, we will receive the grace of a Buddha. If we view the lama as a bodhisattva, we will receive the grace of a bodhisattva. If we view the teacher as a good spiritual director, we will receive the grace of a good spiritual director. If we have no faith in the lama, we will receive no grace.

STYLES OF LIFE OF THE MASTER

We should not have too many preconceived ideas about the behavior of a lama. Each lama possesses some characteristics that make him or her act in a particular, sometimes disconcerting manner.

Geshe Langri Tangpa, for example, appeared as an impassive man, with a frozen face, even sad. One day, one of his disciples asked him, "What makes you so unhappy? You should not stay like that. Why not go for a walk or take a vacation?"

"I always have in mind the suffering of the six classes of beings," replied Langri Tangpa. "How could I be happy?"

The behavior of Padampa Sangye, an Indian master who came to Tibet, could be disconcerting. A praise written in his honor describes him as sometimes sleeping.day and night. This was in fact the sign of his unbroken meditation. Sometimes he acted as a madman. This indicated that his realization was beyond conventions.

THE NUN WHO WANTED A BEAUTIFUL NAME

Drukpa Kunlek adored jokes, jests, and good tricks. It was his way of benefiting beings. One day, a nun asked him why he was so happy in all circumstances, and why he was always laughing and being amused by everything.

"Suffering has entirely disappeared into great felicity," he replied. "For me, there is no more suffering!"

"I have just taken the vows," said the nun. "Would you consider granting me an ordained name?"

"Ah, yes. What kind of name?"

"Oh! A very beautiful name, of course!"

"Let us see. What would you say of White-yellow-red-green Tara?"

"I am afraid that this name does not fit me very well," answered the surprised nun. "I would like a sweeter name."

"I see you need the name of Sugar-honey-molasses Tara."

"Perhaps it is too sweet now. A little more force will be necessary in my name."

"Then, if people were to call you tiger-leopard-poisonous snake Tara?"

"No, it is not good; I need something greater."

"I understand very well, Sky-space Tara."

"It would be better to find something more suitable with who I am"

"Tara-who-has-the-vows-because-she-likes-love-but-is-afraid-to-do-it will perfectly fit you"

"Why not leave out the last part," says the nun. "Tara-who-has-the-vows, this will do very well!"

Behind the series of jokes, Drukpa Kunlek was, in fact, very skillful with the nun. He made her understand the real orientation in her life. She took the vows not to don a new appearance, but because these vows were to serve her as a support to turn away from worldly concerns and progress on the path to liberation. The nun received a teaching in perfect agreement with the Dharma.

It is important not to reject or disparage the Dharma. Supposing that such attitudes suddenly occur in your mind, do not follow them. Think, rather, that they are definitively the result of previous negative karma and dissipate them through serious study. Apply yourself to the four reflections that turn the mind away from samsara, and accomplish the four specific preliminaries.33 Practice the meditations of shinay and lhakthong as much as you can after having received instructions from a lama. You will be able to progress rapidly toward Buddhahood.

Union of Mahamudra and Maha-ati

Padmasambhava

We are here this evening in the Rigpa Center in Paris and I believe most of you are already disciples of Sogyal Rinpoche. Sogyal Rinpoche asked me to lecture on mahamudra and maha-ati. As we have little time, I will discuss them briefly, simply to establish a connection.

UNITY OF LINEAGES

Sogyal Rinpoche has received the teachings of both the old and new traditions in Tibet 34 so, in Sokyal Rinpoche are gathered the eight lineages 35 of Tibet.

These eight lineages, identical in essence, differ only in details and by the use of a specific terminology. For example, here, in the Rigpa Temple, are photographs of Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro and Dudjom Rinpoche.36 Both of them gave me empowerments and I, myself gave empowerments to Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro. We have established a two-way relationship, master to disciple and disciple to master. From an external point of view, Jamyang Khyentse can be considered a Sakyapa lama, and Dudjom Rinpoche a Nyingmapa lama, but in reality, they both incarnate the eight great lineages of Tibet.

In the Gelukpa tradition, the two best known lamas are the Dalai Lama and Panchen Rinpoche. This evening, we have with us Dagyab Rinpoche, one of their main disciples who represents their tradition. Concerning Sogyal Rinpoche, our families have had very close links for many generations. This relationship still exists today and we also have a relationship of master to disciple.

OLD AND NEW TRADITIONS

In Tibet, the Nyingmapa tradition, the old tradition, appeared with King Trisong Detsen, the great master Padmasambhava, and the Khenpo Bodhisattva (Shantarakshita). Going back to those called "the King and the twenty-five disciples" this tradition carries teachings that contain the Words of the Buddha and the termas of Padmasambhava. Later, in the time of the translator Rinchen Zangpo and the great Pandit Palden Atisha, the tradition qualified as "new," in comparison to the old one, made its appearance.

In the Nyingmapa tradition, the ultimate teaching has been called maha-ati (Tibetan, dzogpa chenpo or dzokchen) while in the new tradition it is called mahamudra (Tibetan, chagya chenpo or chagchen). In essence, maha-ati and mahamudra are one only, like two names that can be given for the same person.

MAHAMUDRA

Meaning of the Word

One can define the word mahamudra from its Tibetan

designation, *chagya chenpo*, and examine its different syllables.

- *Cha* refers to wisdom that knows profound emptiness.

- *Gya*, translated as vast, means that nothing exists beyond the emptiness of the mind.

All phenomena manifest from the emptiness of the mind. The only difference between phenomena such as we experience them and phenomena perceived by an Awakened mind comes from the purity or the impurity of our

own mind. However, the mind is not only emptiness, it is also clarity and intelligence and primordial knowledge. All phenomena are contained in this mind, this wisdom or fundamental intelligence, which constitute the Awakened mind. It is expressed as cha and gya.

- *Chenpo* finally, signifies great (Sanskrit, *maha*), with the meaning that no realization is superior.

The expression chagya chenpo is a reference to both emptiness and infinite compassionate wisdom.

Steps of Mahamudra

The path of mahamudra comprises a total of twelve subsections. Among them there are four fundamental steps.

- concentration (Tibetan, *tse chik*)
- simplicity (Tibetan, *trodal*)
- one taste (Tibetan, *ro chik*)
- nonmeditation (Tibetan, *gom me*)

Each of these steps is divided, in its turn, in three degrees. That gives us a total of twelve subsections.

Necessary Calm Water

The first three degrees in the domain of concentration are important elements both in mahamudra and maha-ati. They are concerned with perfect training in the practice of mental calming (shinay). All beings with mediocre or inferior capabilities must go through this training, but, for beings of superior capabilities, it is not necessary. The mind of beings of inferior or mediocre capabilities is comparable to disturbed water upon which the moon cannot be dearly reflected. For the reflection of the moon to become stable, water must calm itself first. For people of superior capabilities, preliminary training is not necessary, because it is as if they had a camera immediately producing a perfectly clear image. It is sufficient "to introduce them to the nature of the mind" for their immediate understanding.

Observing Without Seeing

What is the nature of the mind? It is said that the mind is emptiness, clarity, and infinite knowledge and intelligence.

Once we are introduced to the nature of the mind, we must observe it. Nevertheless, the mind is not an object that the mind itself can observe. Therefore, there is nothing to see. If one does not observe the mind, one cannot see it either. Consequently, one may say, "How wonderful, the mind is something that must be seen and that cannot be seen!" What is the meaning of "Observing without seeing?"

Gampopa said,

The mind without artificial creation is happiness.

Water without pollution is pure.

There is nothing else to observe besides the mind. Observing the mind implies that the mind remains without mental fabrication and at rest in its natural state. The mahasiddha Tilopa said.

> *Letting the mind be without reference, this is mahamudra;*
>
> *Meditating like this without interruption, this is reaching Buddhahood.*

If one allows the mind to be at rest in its own nature, without any mental fabrication, the mind will abide in its own emptiness, in its own clarity. This is mahamudra. Mahamudra is also called "ordinary knowledge" Ordinary, in the sense that the mind has no need to fabricate anything, but simply dwells in its own mode of being by itself.

When one meditates well and remains in this state, what is obtained? Buddhahood is the result. Why? Because the emptiness of the mind is dharmakaya itself, the absolute body of the Buddha. The clarity of the mind is sambhogakaya, the body of perfect experience of the Buddha, and the indivisible union of both is nirmanakaya, the body of manifestation.

Accumulation, Purification, and Devotion

For a person of superior capabilities, the possibility of being truly introduced to the mode of being of the mind is founded on an accumulation of merit and purification already accomplished in the past. People with inferior or mediocre capabilities must, first of all, undergo accumulation of merit and purification. Most of all, great devotion to the lama is needed. The Kagyupa lamas of the past often said that to attain ultimate, inherent, and primordial wisdom, there is no other way than purification and accumulation of merit, and again, devotion to the lama.

Up to Buddhahood

Progressing on the path, one reaches the inferior degree of "simplicity" Then, gradually, one arrives at the intermediate and superior degrees of this phase. Eventually, one attains the realization where nirvana and samsara, all aspects of phenomenal experience, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, thoughts, and states of consciousness are no longer perceived as separate from the mind. This phase is called "one taste"

After the third degree of "one taste," meditation is no longer necessary to preserve this realization. From then on, there is neither meditation nor distraction. Realization is completely established. It is called the state of nonmeditation. This phase consists also of three degrees. On reaching the third degree, one attains Buddhahood.

In the new tradition, particularly in the Kagyupa lineage, it is said that instantaneous knowledge of the present is also "ordinary knowledge" (Tibetan, *tamal gyi shepa).*

"Perfect Joy"

Because of the introduction to the nature of the mind, meditation, and realization, when one arrives on the second step of simplicity, this equals obtaining the first bodhisattva stage also called "perfect joy" (Tibetan, rabtugawa). This name expresses the fact that, as long as one has not recognized the true.nature of the mind, one is not aware of the illusory nature of its projections, and is therefore subject to all kinds of suffering and difficulty. To realize the true nature of the mind which is produced at this first stage is like pouring cold water into boiling water. Instantly, the water ceases to boil. Because of this realization, the mind knows immediately great peace and happiness. This is why it is called "perfect joy."

MAHA-ATI

An Absolute Certainty

In the Nyingmapa tradition, one uses a special expression to describe the introduction of a disciple to the knowledge of the true nature of the mind. It is said: "direct introduction of the face of rticpa37 in itself." By this process, once the true face of the mind has been discovered, one develops an absolute certainty. Even if the Buddha in person were to come and tell someone, "This is not a good way to meditate!" One would reply, "I know this is the good way to do it." In the practice of the maha-ati, this conviction is called the "direct and complete decision in certainty." As soon as this foundation is established, practice of meditation becomes increasingly deeper, so that quickly, from one instant to another, steps are taken on the path toward Buddhahood and one attains Awakening.

In mahamudra, there are the three steps: simplicity, one taste, and nonmeditation. In maha-ati one meets three equivalent phases: the "direct introduction of the face of rikpa in itself," the "direct and complete decision in certainty," and the "direct confidence in liberating arising thoughts."

Taking a Rocket

In the Kagyupa tradition, the foundation is included in mahamudra. In the Nyingmapa tradition of maha-ati, the foundation is called trekcho ("cutting through"). Mahamudra as foundation and trekcho are comparable to a great plane that can rapidly fly through space. One can reach Buddhahood with the speed of a airplane, but a rocket is even speedier. In the Kagyupa tradition, this rocket corresponds to the "six dharmas of Naropa," to the "six dharmas of Niguma," and to the "six dharmas of Sukhasiddhi." In the context of Kalachakra, it corresponds to the "six junctions" (Tibetan, jordruk). In the Nyingmapa tradition and maha-ati, *thogal* ("passing above") corresponds to this extremely sudden path toward Buddhahood. The practice of thogal is made of instructions on physical postures, ways of placing the mind, and working with energies, in accordance with the maturity of the disciple. According to individual capabilities, one can use the light of the sun, the light of the moon, or sometimes total darkness. Because of this practice, one can

visualize rays of light in a rainbow, discs of light, deities, pure lands of the Buddhas, and so on. Thogal passes by four stages.

- "direct vision of dharmata"38 (Tibetan, *chonyi ngonsum)*
- "increase and overflowing of experiences" (Tibetan, *nyam nang gong pet)*
- "full measure of rikpa" (Tibetan, *rigpa tse peb)*
- "exhausting phenomenal reality" (Tibetan, *chonyi zepa)*

Rainbow Body

If one reaches this last stage, by the complete purification of energies and elements of the body, one obtains the "rainbow body." When one leaves his or her body, nothing material is left behind.

Some people may think that the rainbow body can be obtained by practice of maha-ati, but not by the way of mahamudra. This is an error. In the life of Milarepa, it is said that seven of his closest disciples, four women and three men obtained the rainbow body.

LAMA AND DEVOTION

The Lama's Kindness

In the different traditions of mahamudra and maha-ati, there are many masters of extraordinary qualities. Connection with a master depends on karmic links established in the past. When we follow a teacher, we should consider that this teacher shows us a kindness even greater than that of all Buddhas together, because this teacher introduces us directly to the true nature of our mind. Whether the lamas who teach us are Buddhas or ordinary beings has no importance if they give correct and faultless teaching, allowing us to make progress toward realization. We must look upon their qualities as those of the Buddhas, and we must show them the same gratitude we would have for the Buddhas.

No Progress Without Devotion

Even if a great number of Buddhas are in front of us, they would be unable to help us if we have no devotion. It is said, "What will be the green shoot of a seed roasted by fire?" When one puts a seed in the fire and tries to plant it, nothing will grow. If we have neither trust nor devotion, progress will not be possible. The tantras teach us, "If you consider your lama as a Buddha, you will receive the blessing of a Buddha. If you consider your lama as a bodhisattva, you will receive the blessing of a bodhisattva. If you consider your lama simply as a good member of the Sangha, you will receive the blessing of a good member of the Sangha. If you have no faith in the lama, you will receive no blessing."

Practicing

Because of connections established in the past, we now have met with a lama. Some of you have a lama who teaches maha-ati, others a lama who teaches mahamudra. It makes no difference. What is truly important is to practice. Through the instructions you received, you have acquired all that is necessary for the practice. You should not look for anything else. If you have neither faith nor devotion, even if an authentic Buddha uses various ways to explain the Dharma to you, you might think, in the best case, "That makes sense." But as long as you have neither devotion nor faith, efforts of this Buddha will remain in vain.

Practice the instructions that you have received with confidence and devotion. This is mahamudra and this is maha-ati. If you do not practice, you will end up like those Westerners who have passed many exams, obtained a quantity of degrees, but are nevertheless unable to find a job, and therefore live in great poverty.

As the Buddha himself said, "I have shown you the path of liberation, whether or not you follow it depends only on you"

Rigpa, Paris 1987

Amitayus Buddha of Infinite Life

Tantras' context

THE VAJRAYANA IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE THREE VEHICLES

The teaching of the Buddhas

In the kalpa which we live, one thousand Buddhas are said to appear. The first three Buddhas were Krakukandra, Kanaka Muni, and Kashyapa, whose teachings have become blurred. The fourth one is Shakyamuni Buddha, whose tradition today remains alive.

The teachings offered by these Buddhas are fundamentally identical. All have expounded the Vehicle of the "Listeners" and that of the "Solitary Buddhas" within the framework of Hinayana, as well as the bodhisattva vehicle in the Mahayana, just as the future Buddhas of this kalpa will teach. Because of his aspiration, wishes, and the circumstances of his manifestation, Shakyamuni Buddha differs from other Buddhas for he spread the Vajrayana teachings contained in the tantras on a large scale.

As for the disciples, in essence, they present no difference. All beings have a Buddha potential, the tathagatagarbha. However, on a more immediate level, because of their respective karma, they have various spiritual capabilities. This explains the diversity of the vehicles.

The extent of the Mahayana

It would be useless to deny the differences between one vehicle and the other, while the Buddha himself made a strong distinction between Hinayana and Mahayana in a sutra.

> *Mahayana shines like the sun and moon,*
>
> *Hinayana as a spark bursting out of fire;*
>
> *Mahayana is high as Mount Meru,*
>
> *Hinayana no greater than an anthill;*
>
> *Mahayana is vast as the ocean,*
>
> *Hinayana small as a puddle of water.*

Evolution and aspirations

Because of these differences, there is the tendency to think that the Mahayana teaching, because of its superiority, should be the only one to be taught, at the exclusion of any other vehicle. From a practical point of view, rejecting Hinayana teachings would deprive us of an approach of great value. Let us suppose that we dress a child in adult clothes. They would not fit, no more than children's clothes would fit an adult. In the spiritual domain, appropriate teachings correspond to various degrees of evolution.

We also must consider the diversity of individual aspiration and mentality. Let us take the example of a great restaurant. Theoretically, a dish or a single

menu should fulfill its required function, which is to feed those who come there. Nevertheless, a restaurant displaying a single dish would no doubt have few customers. Stomachs would be filled, but various tastes would not be satisfied. This is why restaurants present a list of various dishes. Even within a family, the children do not like the same food. In all areas, everyone has tastes, likings, inclinations, and this includes the spiritual domain. A teaching must take into account the maturity of disciples, and also their individual personalities.

Vajradhara

Approaching refuge

The distinction between Buddhists and non-Buddhists resides in *taking refuge* in the Three Jewels. Buddhists take refuge, non-Buddhists do not.

The Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—are identical in the Hinayana and Mahayana, but the teachings have some differences in the notion of approaching refuge.

In the Hinayana, one takes refuge for oneself, with the purpose of liberating oneself from the suffering of samsara. The vision of Mahayana is larger. In the Mahayana, one takes refuge for the purpose of liberating all beings in samsara, or by thinking of all beings as taking refuge at the same time and

by doing so, eliminating their suffering. In the Hinayana, the practitioner takes refuge until death occurs, while in Mahayana, it is done until attaining Awakening.

Finally, the Vajrayana offers a unique approach. One takes refuge not only in the Three Jewels, but also in the Three Roots.

- the lamas, that is to say, the source lama and the lamas of the lineage, are the root of the grace
- the yidams, the root of accomplishments
- the protectors of the Dharma and the dakinis, the root of activity that removes obstacles on the path

Vajrayana also establishes a distinction among outer, inner, and secret levels of taking refuge.

- the outer level refers to taking refuge in the Three Jewels and the Three Roots as they are usually conceived.
- the inner level means taking refuge in the source lama considered only as the union of all places of refuge. In this case, the lama's body represents the Sangha, the lama's speech, the Dharma, and the lama's mind, the Buddha. Or, the body represents the lamas, speech represents the protectors and dakinis, and the mind represents the yidams.
- the secret level refers to taking refuge in our own mind. This implies that we experience our mind's emptiness as the Absolute body (Sanskrit, dharmakaya), its clarity as the body of perfect experience (Sanskrit, sambhogakaya), and the union of emptiness and clarity as the body of emanation (Sanskrit, *nirmanakaya*).

Motivations

If taking refuge separates Buddhists from non-Buddhists, motivation allows one to distinguish Hinayana from Mahayana. In the Hinayana teaching, one seeks liberation for oneself; in the Mahayana, one seeks liberation of all beings. Vajrayana does not differ from Mahayana in the approach to motivation, although each approaches the notion of the liberation of all beings from a specific point of view. Indeed, Vajrayana considers that all beings are already Awakened, but they do not recognize this Awakening. What, then, is the real object of compassion? Compassion sees that all beings suffer because they ignore what they truly are, and compassion wishes to rid beings of this ignorance.

Various views

The view differs from one vehicle to the other.

The vehicle of the "Listeners" first level of Hinayana, achieves the "nonself of the individual" thanks to mind dwelling in emptiness in the course of the meditation, but it does not perceive "nonself of phenomena"

The vehicle of the "solitary Buddhas" adds to the realization of nonself of the individual, a partial realization of the nonself of phenomena.

The bodhisattva vehicle, in the framework of the Mahayana, professes that all phenomena are only appearances produced by the mind. Phenomena possess no reality in themselves but are similar to dream appearances. A series of twelve traditional comparisons illustrates this vision. Phenomena are similar to an image in a mirror, the reflection of the moon on water, a rainbow, a mirage, a castle in the sky, and so on. In this perspective, the nonself of phenomena is entirely achieved.

Vajrayana fundamentally summarizes the idea that any manifestation is of the same nature as a dream. It is what is expressed, for example, in the Heart Sutra of the Prajnaparamita.

"Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is no other than form. Form is no other than emptiness" This agrees with Vajrayana and Mahayana. Nevertheless, Vajrayana goes further by asserting,

> *Mind innate in itself is Dharmakaya.*
>
> *Appearances are the luminosity of Dharmakaya.*

Vajrayana teaches the union of mind and appearances. Emptiness is achieved in this union.3

Appropriate treatments

Differences that we emphasized between the vehicles do not mean that some vehicles are important, and others negligible. Once again, all have their place, because they answer to a variety of situations, aspirations, and capacities. Although medicines serve to eliminate illness, the same treatment is not given to all the sick people. Similarly, Buddha's teachings are all beneficial, but the context or individual aptitudes make it preferable to present one vehicle rather than another. People who may be *healed* by the Hinayana must *take* Hinayana. Others must *take* Mahayana, while others the Vajrayana.

INTRODUCTION OF TANTRAS IN TIBET

The introduction of Vajrayana in Tibet has been done twice, which resulted in two systems—Nyingma (old) and Sarma (new).

These two systems, similar in essence, include the foundations of Hinayana and Mahayana in the same way but they differ in their classification of tantras and presentation of the teachings.

Padmasambhava

Different classifications

The Sarma school proposes a classification of tantras in four classes.

- *Kriya* tantra
- *Charya* tantra
- *Yoga* tantra
- *Anuttarayoga* tantra

The Nyingma school divides the tantras into six classes. The first three classes correspond to the first three classes of the Sarma school, tantras called inferior, while the last three classes concentrate, as the Anuttarayoga tantra, on the tantras called superior. These six classes are:

- Kriya tantra
- Uppa tantra
- Yoga tantra
- Mahayoga tantra
- Anuyoga tantra
- Atiyoga tantra

In the Nyingma school, the classification is also frequently referred to as the nine vehicles. In this case, there are the Listeners, solitary Buddhas, and bodhisattva vehicles, to which are added the six classes of tantras just enumerated, with each one counted as a vehicle.

Unity beyond denominations

Despite the differences in the use of technical terms, there is a great unity. Not only are the first three classes of tantras identical in each school, but the Anuttarayoga tantra in the Sarma school includes a subsection in three parts that corresponds to the three superior classes of the Nyingma school. They are:

- *Father tantras* emphasizing skillful means
- *Mother tantras* emphasizing wisdom
- *Nondual tantras* which equally insist on skillful means and wisdom

Beginning of Buddhism in Tibet

The terms Nyingma and *Sarma* rely more on chronology and the way their respective teachings spread in Tibet than on any other difference.

The Nyingma School designates the first wave of introducing Buddhism to the Land of Snow (Tibet). Requested by King Trisong Detsen, it was the work of two main masters, Guru Padmasambhava and the abbot Shantarakshita. Padmasambhava taught the tantras and Shantarakshita the sutras. Marked by dose collaboration between Indian scholars and Tibetan translators, the Nyingma school emphasizes—among many other teachings—the maha-ati. It is often presented under three parts that regroup the various instructions. These are the *mind section* (Tibetan, *sem de*), space section (Tibetan, *long de*), and the "instruction section" (Tibetan, *men ngak de)*.

The Nyingma tradition has remained and developed up to the present, gathering numerous disciples and allowing them to attain liberation.

Monks and lay people

During the first centuries of expansion of the Nyingma school, the practitioners' condition of life was not considered a significant element of transmission. Monks or lay people received meditation instruction. Practiced intensely, these instructions ideally led to obtaining the state of a mahasiddha and a rainbow body.

With the passing of many years, some confusion arose. The philosophical foundations of the practice were not always correctly transmitted and assimilated. This gave way to whimsical interpretations. The limits of right conduct ended up becoming blurred, so the line between the correct approach to the dharma and behavior lacking any real meaning was no longer dearly perceived.

The sacrifice of King Jangchub-O

When this confusion began to pose a threat, King Jangchub-O (Light of Awakening) appeared in Tibet and wanted to remedy the situation. He began a vast project by sending intelligent and young Tibetans to India to develop competent translators, and invited Indian scholars and masters to Tibet.

At that time, to go from India to Tibet represented a long and difficult journey. The King's project therefore required considerable financing to pay for the studies of Tibetans in Indian universities and to accommodate the invited masters of the mother land of Buddhism. To take his project to completion, Jangchub-O decided to collect as much gold as he could. He scoured the entire country and also neighboring kingdoms, requesting support from their leaders.

Unfortunately, during his travels the king was captured by the cruel ruler of a country (now Kashmir) who was not at all interested Buddhism. Tibetans sent ambassadors to negotiate the release of their sovereign several times, but without success. The enemy king declared that he would liberate his prisoner only in exchange for his weight in gold. In spite of the difficulty of this task, the subjects of Jangchub-O succeeded in collecting the required amount of gold. By letter, they let their king know the good news. The King's reply was not what they expected. From his prison, he answered, "I thank you for the hardships you have endured, but do not use this gold to pay my ransom. I do not mind spending the rest of my life in a dungeon and dying here. It is more beneficial to use the gold for reviving the Dharma, which is more dear to my heart than my own life."

Thanks to this sacrifice of King Jangchub-O, many Tibetans were sent to India and several Indian scholars arrived in Tibet. Among them, the most eminent was Atisha.

This new vigor was the beginning of the *Sarma* system.

A new model

Atisha and his contemporaries presented Tibet a model for the practitioner of the Dharma that unites in one person three levels of ordination.

- the *outer* level, in other words, monks or lay people's vows also called *vows of individual liberation*, extolled by Hinayana
- the *inner* level, the bodhisattva vows of Mahayana
- the *secret* level, represented by sacred commitments of Vajrayana

Atisha, furthermore, insisted on the notion of refuge in the Three Jewels, with such intensity that he received the nickname of *Pandit of the Refuge*, which everyone called him in Tibet. There were some who even ignored his real name.

Atisha had three main disciples—Ku, Mok, and Drom—who continued the tradition that he had established. This tradition is known as the Kadampa lineage. Chekawa was their main heir and he, in turn, transmitted this teaching to Geshe Drepa, one of Gampopa's masters.

Gampopa's contribution

Gampopa was a holder of the Kagyupa lineage. This lineage, which issued from the Indian masters, Tilopa and Naropa, was held in Tibet by Marpa and Milarepa. Until Gampopa, this lineage had the same point of view as the Nyingma school on the status of the life of practitioners. It mattered very little whether one was a monk or a lay person. It was essential only to receive

direct instructions from a master, then apply them with energy and application for attaining realization.

Before becoming Milarepa's disciple and under his direction attaining a realization as vast as space, Gampopa followed Kadampa teachings. This is why he introduced a certain number of Kadampa contributions to the Kagyupa lineage. Among these contributions, there is the insistence on observing the vows. Gampopa gathered, in the same approach, inner realization and respect for the rules on outer conduct. It is said that Gampopa united, into a single stream, the two Kagyupa and Kadampa rivers.

After Gampopa, the lineage was divided in several branches known as the four great branches. Among them, there are those founded by the First Karmapa, Tusum Khyenpa, and the eight small Kagyupa schools. All have preserved the will to observe the three levels of ordination, and the majority of their holders have been monks.

The Kagyupa lineage in Tibet had a wide influence. At its peak, it occupied 108 main monasteries and 1002 secondary monasteries.

Tsongkhapa

While Gampopa participated in the development of the Kagyupa school, Geshe Drepa and his disciples were continuing Atisha's work within the Kadampa lineage. This lineage expanded at the time of Tsongkhapa, a contemporary of the Fourth Karmapa, Rolpel Dorje. The efforts, activity, and influence of Tsongkhapa were such that, starting with him, one talks about the *new Kadampa tradition*, also called the Gadenpa school, from the name of its main monastery. It is more commonly known today as the Gelukpa school.

Translators and lineages

The efforts of Atisha when he came to Tibet were greatly sustained by translators who rendered Sanskrit texts into Tibetan. In the Kadampa lineage, the most famous translator was Rinchen Zangpo. In the Kagyupa lineage, the most remarkable was Marpa himself, the founder of this lineage in Tibet, who translated many texts brought back from his travels in India. Through these translators, different traditions developed. These translators are known as the *Ten Pillars of Erudition* and the *Eight Great Chariots of Practice.*

To summarize, the Nyingma school refers to the teachings introduced from India at the time of King Trisong Detsen by Padmasambhava and Shantarakshita, while the Sarma school designates traditions later brought to Tibet by Atisha, Rinchen Zangpo, Marpa, and their contemporaries. Among the great lineages today, the Nyingmapas, as their name indicates, are the only direct heirs of the Nyingma system, while the Kagyupas, Sakyapas, and Gelukpas belong to the *Sarma* system.

Tantras in the evolution of humanity

Among the classifications of tantras, we have seen that the Sarma system proposed four classes. The successive appearance of these tantras is related to the evolution of human beings.

Buddhist cosmogony envisions the formation of a universe that began with a long period when elements slowly structured and arranged themselves until they created a favorable environment for beings having a common karma to be born there. In this common context, individual karma leads beings to incarnate under a given form, human or animal, and in certain circumstances.

As for human beings, they are looked upon as descendants of the gods of the sphere of form. These gods, experiencing different states of meditation in samsara, are distributed in seventeen categories. Some of these gods, whose merit had decreased, momentarily wished to visit the Earth when it became hospitable. First, they continued to live in their divine world, but from time to time, descended on Earth. Then, because their merit gradually continued to decrease, eventually they were unable to return to their celestial land and had to remain on Earth. These were the first human beings.

At the time of these first human beings, conflicting emotions were less powerful than they are today. For example, a simple exchange of sight was enough to satisfy sexual desire. This first level of intensity of the emotions corresponds to the first class of tantras, the Kriya tantra.

Soon, following the exchange of looks, a smile was necessary. This stage corresponds to Charya tantra. Later, touching hands was added to the previous sensations, and the Yoga tantra appeared. Finally, when the satisfaction of sexual desire required physical union, Anuttarayoga tantra was manifested.

In the world of human beings who belong to the sphere of desire, the four classes of tantras are correlated with the development of the complication of sexuality.

The Vajrayana, based on the instructions included in the tantras, proposes a quick way to obtain Awakening. At best, Awakening can be reached in a single lifetime; otherwise, it takes place in the bardo or after seven or sixteen lives of practice.

Preeminence of the Dharma

Spiritual instructions constitute the divine Dharma. Studies, researches, and activities that are directed only toward material progress and well-being in the framework of this present existence form the temporal dharma.

The human existence we now have is not a random result. It implies that, in our past lives, we have been able to accomplish more positive acts than negative acts.

The human condition is generally good, according to the use we make of it; however, there are inferior, mediocre, or superior human existences.

Inferior human existence characterizes beings who turn away from the spiritual path and positive activity and commit many negative acts. This

existence is considered inferior to the extent that it will lead to great future suffering.

Mediocre human existence regroups those who accomplish neither great negative acts nor great positive acts.

Consequently, they will encounter mediocre conditions, neither very pleasant nor very painful in their future lives.

Superior or precious human existence, finally, characterizes those who meet with spiritual masters, are interested in their masters' teachings, and put those teachings into practice. Through these acts, they will go to superior worlds and liberation.

Spiritual practice does not imply that it is necessary to abandon this life entirely. We must feed ourselves, dress, find shelter, and so on. Let us remember, however, that the intent of Dharma is for something greater than temporal activities. Everything we do in this life indeed resembles a dream. In the evening, we fall asleep, then at night, we dream. We can dream that we have a beautiful house, or that we stroll around on a magnificent landscape, and everything is beautiful and pleasant. However, when we wake up, the house, landscape, and everything that charmed us have disappeared. Nothing remains. It is the same with our life. When it ends, we will not be able to take anything we have accumulated with us. The only thing that will help us at the moment of death is the inner wealth we have acquired by the practice of the Dharma. This is why the Dharma is so precious. Shantideva emphasized that it would be in vain to hope for a future precious human existence, if we do not make good use of the one we now have.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Empowerments, Vows, and Sacred Commitments

Empowerments constitute one of the fundamental parts of the Vajrayana. Vajrayana relies on the utilization of a spiritual farce—grace, blessing, spiritual influence, or whatever the term is used to translate the Tibetan, jinlap, or the Sanskrit, adhisthana. The master is its depository, and the disdple will gain it by the practice of the yidams and recitation of their mantras. In order for this force and its vector—yidam—to be transmitted from the master to the disciple, a particular ceremony is necessary, the empowerment. The Tibetan tradition offers a great number of yidams, and the empowerments are numerous and varied. This variety does not alter the essential unity of grace. It is a little like pure water that can be given and drunk in various containers. The subject of empowerments has already been introduced in the chapter concerning the principles of the Vajrayana. It is resumed here with more detail and completed with an important statement on commitments derived from empowerments. These commitments themselves are placed in the general context of the vows.

EMPOWERMENTS PART I

A sacred investiture

The notion of empowerment implies the idea of conceding

that there is a power, an authority.4

In the political domain, heads of State, ministers, or other governing persons occupy positions of responsibility that confer certain authority on them. To be able to hold power, it is necessary, first of all, for these people to have been invested with that power. According to their respective cultures, they have been appointed, elected, or enthroned. For example, if it concerns a coronation, the future king will be placed on a throne in the presence of dignitaries. The different emblems of royalty will be given to him and, from then on, he will be the real chief of his kingdom. Only after this investiture will the king have the authority that allows him to direct, give orders, and be obeyed by all. In the same way, an empowerment including subsections such as vase empowerment, secret empowerment, wisdom-knowledge empowerment, and precious word empowerment confers on those who receive it a power in the practice of meditation.

Vase empowerment

The first subsection within the process of empowerment is the *vase empowerment,* 5 conferred on the body. It implies a relationship with different deities, in particular the five masculine Buddhas, the five feminine Buddhas, and various groups of feminine and masculine bodhisattvas. Because of this relation, the vase empowerment bestows the power to meditate on the

impure aspects of the individual and the universe in their pure form, corresponding to deities, and to realize them as such.

The five aggregates—forms, sensations, perceptions, volitions, and consciousnesses—are only the reflection, within the ordinary person, of the five masculine Buddhas in the domain of Awakening. The vase empowerment introduces us to the divine essence of the five aggregates and confers on us the power to realize this essence on the basis of an equivalence between each aggregate and each Buddha.

- forms, Vairocana
- sensations, Ratnasambhava
- perceptions, Amitabha
- volitions, Amoghasiddhi
- consciousnesses, Akshobya

In the same way, an equivalence is established between the five elements and their essence, the five feminine Buddhas, to which the empowerment serves as introduction.

- earth, Buddhalocana
- water, Mamaki
- fire, Pandaravasini
- air, Samayatara
- space, Vajradhatvesvari

Third, the eight consciousnesses—visual/ auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousnesses to which are added disturbed consciousness and the potential of consciousness (Sanskrit, alayavijnana)—are perceived as the eight great masculine Bodhisattvas, and the objects of consciousnesses as the eight great feminine Bodhisattvas.

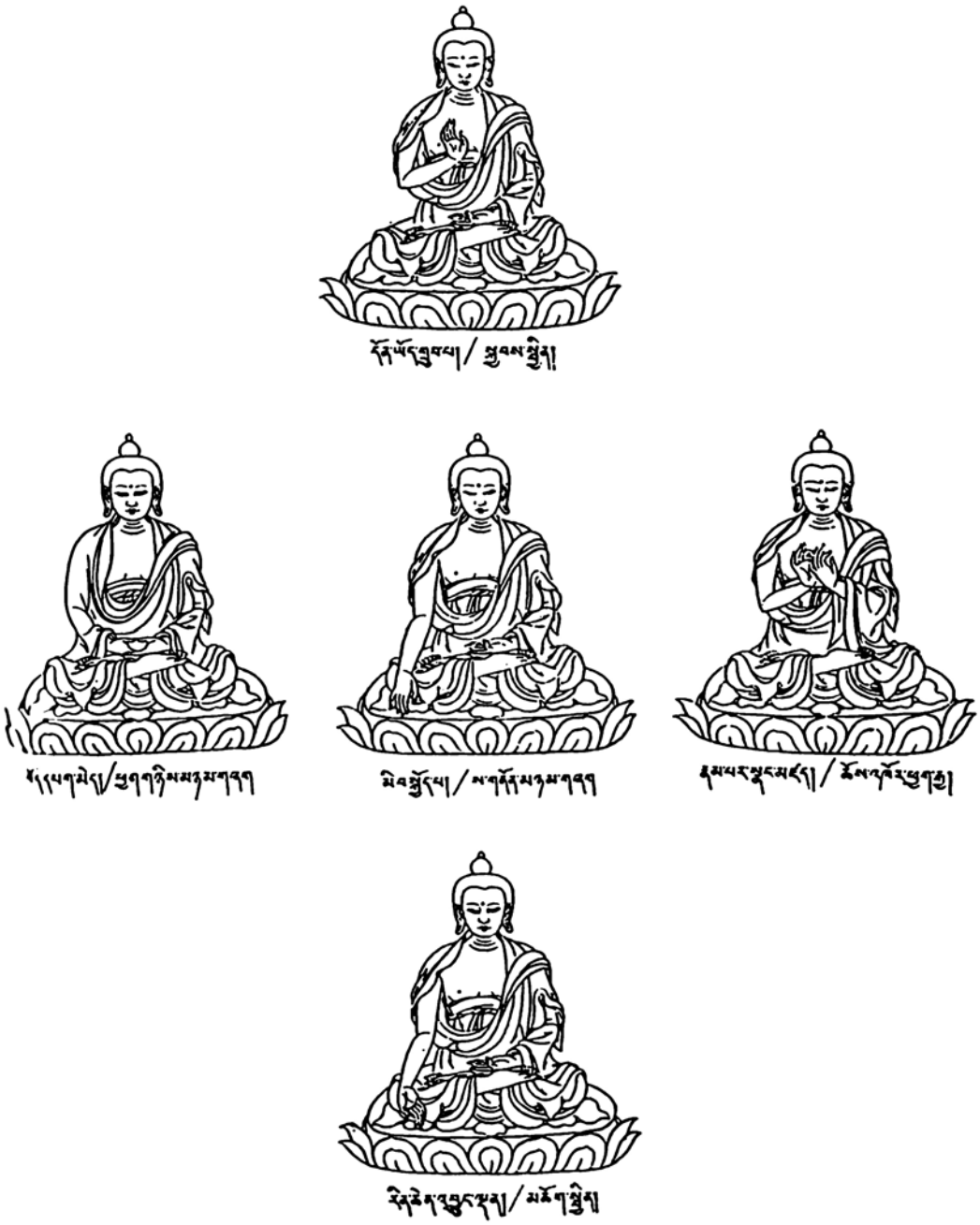
In this way, all psychophysical constituents of the person are consecrated as deities. The disciple receives therefore the power to meditate visualizing himself or herself in the form of the body of the deity's empowerment. This process is the vase empowerment, also called, body empowerment of the deity. It is related to subtle channels (nadis) allowing the disciple to ultimately actualize the body of emanation.

Secret empowerment

In the subtle channels of the body circulates a subtle energy (prana) that is linked with speech and whose totally pure expression corresponds to the body of perfect experience (sambhogakaya). To achieve this purity, the secret empowerment is conferred. It is also called speech empowerment of the deity. Thanks to this empowerment, all impure subtle winds are transformed into pure winds.

To undertake this purification, exercises on winds and recitation of mantras are used. By this secret empowerment, the disciple receives the power to consider all sounds as the deity's mantra. It is necessary to know that the

body is innervated by a system of 72,000 nadis. The three main ones are the central channel and the two lateral channels, which flank the central channel on the right and left sides. The final part of each of these channels presents a configuration associated with the thirty consonants and sixteen vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet and forms the basis for speech to function. When the secret empowerment is conferred, by reason of the relationship between subtle winds, speech, and sambhogakaya, the ability of actualizing the vajra speech of sambhogakaya is given.



Five Masculine Buddhas

Wisdom-knowledge empowerment

Thirdly, the deity's mind or wisdom-knowledge empowerment is conferred on the disciple's mind. This third empowerment is related to the tigles (Sanskrit, bindu) and confers the power of implementing meditation techniques using the tigles.

Consequently, once the vase empowerment, the secret empowerment, and wisdom-knowledge empowerment are received, it is possible to practice the Six Dharmas of Naropa. The Six Dharmas are tumo, illusory body, dream, clear light, transfer of consciousness, and bardo, during which one meditates on channels, winds, and tigles. In some cases, this presents an opportunity to practice, within the framework of the Vajrayana, techniques of retention of the tigles in sexual union.

To summarize, we have now seen the three empowerments that gather the body, speech, and mind of the lama and yidam. We have received the power to effectively meditate on the three vajras. 6

- *nadis* as vajra-body
- *prana* as vajra-speech
- *tigles* as vajra-mind

Empowerment of the precious word or oral empowerment

The fourth empowerment is the empowerment of the precious word. It relies on the principle that nadis, prana, and tigles and the totality of inner and outer phenomena proceed only from the mind. By the fourth empowerment, one is introduced to this nature of the mind, and one receives the power to practice and achieve mahamudra.

Samye-Ling, March 1983

EMPOWERMENTS PART II

The Vajrayana practice is entered through an empowerment. To be efficient, the empowerment requires the realization of the master who confers it, as well as confidence and intelligence of the disciple who receives it. These empowerments take the form of various rituals of greater or lesser complexity. During the empowerments of the great tantric deities, the most common and elaborate versions of the empowerment are characterized by making a mandala of colored sands. A version of medium complexity will use a mandala painted on doth. A simpler version will use a mandala made of small heaps of rice. Finally, in an empowerment reduced to its essential version, the body of the master who gives the empowerment or a simple mental representation is sufficient to symbolize the mandala.

The four stages of an empowerment

An empowerment in its most complete form includes four subsections called the four empowerments.

- vase empowerment
- secret empowerment

- wisdom-knowledge empowerment
- fourth empowerment or empowerment of the precious word

Simplified forms of empowerments are limited to transmission of the body, speech, or mind of the deity, or only to the vase empowerment. However, empowerment, in the full sense of the term, implies the four subsections just mentioned. It is only in those circumstances that the samayas play a complete role and must be scrupulously respected for the transmission of grace to open the door of accomplishments.

Preparatory phases

The lama charged with giving an empowerment must, first of all, conform to the reference tantra stated by the Buddha by preparing the mandate that will serve as support. This mandate can be a sand mandate, a painted mandate, or a mandate composed of small heaps of rice symbolically placed on a base. Officiating alone, the lama executes a part of the ritual in three preparatory phases.

- the *dakye*, where the lama visualizes himself or herself in the form of the deity
- the *dunkye*, where the lama visualizes the deities in space
- the *bumkye*, where the lama consecrates the vase of empowerment, visualizing it as a celestial palace where the deities of the empowerment reside
- Finally, a fourth preparatory phase is added. The lama confers the empowerment on himself or herself (dajuk). Only after this are the disciples admitted in the temple to receive the empowerment.

Vase empowerment

The disciple first receives the vase empowerment, conferred on the body. This introduces the disciple to the pure nature of the different constituents of his or her psychophysical personality. There are the five aggregates, the five elements, or the factors of perception. This empowerment is given with the help of ritual objects, symbolizing the five masculine Buddhas—such as the crown, vajra, bell, and so on. By this process, faults and veils related to the body are dissipated and the constituents of the personality become the corresponding pure aspects: the five masculine Buddhas, five feminine Buddhas, eight great feminine and masculine Bodhisattvas, and so on. This empowerment gives the power to meditate with our own body in the form of the deity's body, and will ultimately lead us to achieve the body of emanation (nirmanakaya).

Secret empowerment

The second empowerment, secret empowerment, conferred on speech, is transmitted by consecrated alcohol that becomes ambrosia (Tibetan, dutsi), contained in a skullcap. The disciple drinks a few drops. This empowerment purifies faults and veils related to speech, bestows the power to recite the

deity's mantra, and allows one to ultimately achieve the body of perfect experience (sambhogakaya).

Wisdom-knowledge empowerment

The third empowerment, wisdom-knowledge empowerment, conferred on mind, is transmitted by a wisdom-knowledge (Tibetan, rikma) that is to say, a young woman, painted, for the sake of the ritual on a small card. This empowerment purifies faults and veils related to mind and bestows the power to meditate on the union of bliss and emptiness, and to ultimately achieve the absolute body (dharmakaya).

Empowerment of the precious word

The fourth empowerment, empowerment of the precious word, does not use ritual objects but consists of an oral introduction to the mode of being of the mind and all phenomena. Its impact is located at the level of simultaneousness-simultaneous purification of faults and veils of body, speech, and mind. It also permit simultaneous meditation of one's body as the deity's body, one's speech as the deity's mantra, and one's mind as the state of absorption. Ultimately, it leads to the realization of the body of essence itself (svabhavakaya), the union of the three other bodies of Awakening.

For an empowerment to have real effect, it is necessary, of course, that certain external conditions be met. It is also necessary that the lama who gives it has received authentic transmission and executes the ceremony with accuracy, without adding or removing anything. Finally, it is necessary that disciples who receive it have full confidence in the lama, some understanding of the process, and conviction in its efficiency.

The sutra approach of Mahayana and the tantra approach of Vajrayana lead to the same goal, but with different time scales. It is said that the practitioner must practice three immeasurable kalpas before reaching Awakening through the sutra path. It is said that a maximum of sixteen lifetimes is necessary for obtaining the same result through the tantra path. As for a minimum, it varies according to texts. Some say six months, others six or twelve years, but in any case Awakening is realized in the framework of this lifetime.

Samye Ling, March 1983

SACRED VOWS AND COMMITMENTS

To understand sacred commitments related to Vajrayana empowerments, it is necessary to place them in the general context of Buddhist vows.

Refuge vows

Those who follow Buddha's teachings begin the path by first taking the refuge vows, placing themselves under the protection of the Three Jewels, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Lay people and monks

It is then possible, if the disciple has personal aspiration, to take the vows of a lay person (Sanskrit, upasaka; Tibetan, genien). There are five vows: not killing, not stealing, not lying, avoid sexual misconduct, and not consuming alcohol. They can be taken at once or partially, for a complete lifetime or a definite duration of months or years.

Taking these vows is not an obligation. In many Buddhist countries, men and women, without taking them formally, try to respect the ethical ideal that they represent by avoiding the ten negative acts and by practicing the ten positive acts. Historically, it was often the case that kings governing these countries were eager to integrate the essentials of this ethic into their legislation.

On a more elaborate level, lay people will practice refraining from sexual misconduct by being chaste. The practitioner is then called brahmacharya (Tibetan, tsangcho *genien*). Then come the monastic vows: minor ordination (Sanskrit, *shramanera*; Tibetan, getsut) and major ordination (Sanskrit, *bhiksu*; Tibetan, *gelong*).

Traditionally, one counts seven different ordinations that allow one to observe perfect ethic: upasaka men and women, shramanera men and women, bhiksu men and women, to which the women students (Tibetan, gelogma) are added, representing a type of vows reserved for women.

Temporary or definitive vows

In Tibet the monastic vows—shramaneras and bhiksus—were taken for life. It was not conceivable that the person who had taken monk's robe could leave it in his lifetime. In Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and in other Buddhist countries, the same vows can be taken for a lifetime, but also for limited periods of weeks or years. These two approaches are not contradictory, as both seem to have been envisaged by the Buddha himself.

In Thailand, the custom of temporary monastic vows has even been institutionalized. It is a duty for young men and women to devote at least few months of their existence to monastic life, by taking vows allowing them to live in a monastery. At the end of this period, those who wish can renew their vows and definitively adopt monastic life. Otherwise, young people return to lay people's life and establish a family. This monastic period is looked at as a proof of the quality of the individual. Boys or girls who would not submit to it would have difficulty in getting married, because there would be a question as to whether they possess the moral qualities and necessary rigor to manage a family.

The different types of vows defined under the expression of individual liberation vows belong to the Hinayana. In the Mahayana, there is another type of vows called bodhisattva vows, that are transmitted by various authentic lineages.

Monks and yogis

In ancient India, two types of people, in a Buddhist context, have been looked upon as examples deserving respect and worthy of the material support of anyone. They were monks and nuns, whatever the degree of ordination; they were perceived as observing perfect ethics and having a lifestyle entirely in agreement with the Buddha's teaching. There were also those whose meditation practice had produced states of realization. It is the state of an arhat in the framework of the Small Vehicle, achieving the nonself of the individual. In the framework of the great vehicle, it is the bodhisattva who realizes the absence of own reality of self and phenomena, and also the Vajrayana practitioner who achieves mahamudra. Reference to the ideal Buddhist was thus twofold: outer monastic commitments and inner realization.

Given that the first teachings of the Buddha focused on the Four Noble Truths and Hinayana in general, the first great historical disciples belong to this vehicle. Shariputra and Maudgalayana, two of the monks closest to the Buddha, the Sixteen Elders, or the group called the Five Hundred Arhats, are all looked upon as models of the small vehicle.

Later, there was a tendency to integrate the foundations of Hinayana and Mahayana in the same person, in other words, the monastic and bodhisattva vows. The most remarkable beings representing this were the Six Ornaments of This World and the Two Sublimes Ones. Following this example, this approach spread throughout India.

In Tibet, all three levels were simultaneously introduced. There are the ordination in accord with the ideal of individual liberation, the bodhisattva vows, and the Vajrayana approach. Beginning with King Ralpachen, two groups, in spite of their differences, began to represent the Buddhist ideal. They are the group of the monks and the group of the lay yogis, characterized by their long hair and white clothes.

Importance of Hinayana vows

Those who take the major ordination must respect 253 rules related to the life of a bhiksu. Those who take the bodhisattva vows must practice the related precepts. As for the Vajrayana commitments, they are associated with and are given with empowerments.

Hinayana vows are, in a way, the basis on which the practice of the Buddha's teachings develops. For this reason, they have a great importance and are sometimes seen as indispensable for approaching other levels. The bodhisattva vows are transmitted through two lineages: the lineage of vast activity and the lineage of deep wisdom. In the framework of the first lineage, the bodhisattva vows cannot be received unless monk or brahmacharya vows have been previously taken. In the context of the Vajrayana, the importance of the Hinayana vows is also emphasized. In the Kalachakra tantra, for example, it is declared that to receive Kalachakra empowerment, the best condition is to be a bhiksu, or at least a shramanera, this state being itself superior than the state of those who have no vow.

Sacred Vajrayana commitments

The Vajrayana, as Hinayana and Mahayana, implies vows, or sacred commitments (Sanskrit, samaya; Tibetan, damtsik) related to the empowerments.

An empowerment carries in itself a great force, a powerful blessing, and an important manifestation of compassion. The benefit of the empowerment obtained by the disciple largely depends, however, on the observance of sacred commitments accompanying it. It is said that if commitments are respected, the disciple will obtain liberation, if they are transgressed, the disciple will fall into inferior realms. To understand how crucial these commitments are in the Vajrayana, it is said that a follower of this path is like a snake trapped in a bamboo stalk. There are only two possibilities, to ascend or descend; exiting on the side is impossible. In the same way, the Vajrayana practitioner, whether respecting or transgressing the samayas from the empowerments he or she has received, can only ascend or descend without choice of a third path.

From a certain point of view, the commitments of the Vajrayana may appear impossible to observe, because there are so many. The major monastic ordination already has a relatively important number of rules, 253 rules for the monks (bhiksu) and 440 for the nun (bhiksuni). Some tantric texts claim that there are no less than 10,100,000 samayas related to the Vajrayana practice! However, when one understands the function of the Vajrayana and even more when one is truly committed to its practice, things appear easier. Indeed, it is said that the identification of our three doors to the three vajras7 of the deity is enough for the observance of the 10,100,000 samayas. This means that all commitments are maintained to the extent that one's body is assimilated to the deity's body, one's speech to the mantra, and one's mind to the meditative absorption (Sanskrit, samadhi).

Drukpa Kunlek avoids an empowerment

Samayas are important and are not to be taken lightly.

On this subject, the following story is told about Drukpa Kunlek.8 While dwelling in the region of Lhassa, the yogi was told by a benefactor that a high-ranking lama was getting ready to bestow an empowerment and was asked if he would go.

"Certainly," replied Drukpa Kunlek, "it is an excellent idea." Then, thinking it over, he added, "There is a detail however. It would be necessary to know if the lama will request the respect of the samayas. If so, it is perhaps better that I abstain."

Someone hurried out with the mission to ask the lama. "Of course, it is necessary to respect the samayasl" said the lama. "In this case," Drukpa Kunlek said when one brought the lama's reply, "I believe that I will not go to this empowerment."

The four main samayas

Ideally, as we have seen, it is necessary to know and respect 10,100,000 samayas. Nevertheless, in practice, one discovers that there are fourteen major samayas that may be broken by fourteen corresponding transgressions. This list gives them in degree of importance. We will consider only the first four essential samayas.

1- always holding a respectful and confident attitude toward the lama from whom one has received an empowerment and never adopting a critical or negative position toward this lama -

2- not placing oneself in contradiction to the teaching of the Buddha

3- not entering into conflict with vajra brothers or sisters

4- not abandoning love and compassion

First samaya

Let us examine the relationship with the master. Generally, it is an extremely important point, even outside the Vajrayana context. It is said that from the moment when one has received a single word of instruction in the Dharma, one must consider the person who has given it with much respect and have no negative view of this person. In case one were to nourish such negative views, one would be exposed to rebirth one hundred times as a dog, and then rebirth in a painful human existence.

In the Vajrayana, commitment of respect toward the lama is even more rigorous. Any critical view of a master from whom one has received an empowerment must be totally disregarded. Even if we were to see a defect in the person of the master, we would have to think that it is in fact our mind that projects its own defects, as if it were our dirty face reflected in the mirror.

Perfect examples of what a disciple must be prepared to accept from the master are found in the way that Naropa underwent hardships with Tilopa, or Milarepa with Marpa. Of course, it would be difficult for ordinary disciples to follow such conduct, but we must, at least, strive to put into practice, with our best efforts, the teachings we have received. The lama who bestows empowerments and teaches does so with the hope that the practitioner will be able to purify all veils, be liberated from samsara, and reach Buddhahood. For us, it is enough to embrace these teachings; we must respect the master's body, speech, and mind.

Second samaya

It can be difficult to not contradicting the teaching of the Buddha because this teaching requires complete rejection of all negative activity and the engagement in positive activity. However, we will not transgress this samaya if, at least, we avoid the most seriously negative acts and accomplish the most important positive ones.

Third samaya

The third transgression consists of having a misunderstanding with our vajra brothers and sisters. Some texts see this notion in a extremely large way. Relying on the fact that we have woven connections with all beings in our past lives, these texts consider that all beings are our vajra brothers and sisters. This makes the observance of the samaya rather difficult. However, one may limit the idea of vajra brothers and sisters to a narrower field reduced to increasingly intimate circles in the following order.

- all those who follow the teaching of the Buddha under some form or another

- those who follow the Vajrayana teaching of any lineage

- those who have the same master as we do. It is said in this case that we have the same father, or those who have received the empowerment of the same deity, the same mother

- those who have received the same deity empowerment from the same master. We are in this case children of the same father and mother.

It is mainly to the last two categories that the third samaya is applied. Respecting this samaya consists of avoiding conflicts, misunderstanding, and resentment with vajra brothers and sisters, and instead maintaining harmonious relationships and helping each other.

Fourth samaya

The fourth samaya requires one to have love and compassion for all beings. This commitment is identical to that of the bodhisattva vows, but Vajrayana envisages it with a stronger emphasis. We must reflect on the fact that all beings have been our fathers or mothers in past lives, and we should aspire that all be liberated from suffering and reach supreme happiness of Awakening.

How Atisha maintained his vows

Atisha, the great Indian master who went to teach to Tibet,

one day explained to his disciples how he kept his vows.

"Since I have taken the monk vows, I have scrupulously respected all rules that they imply without breaking them a single time. As for the bodhisattva vows, I realize that at least once a day I have a thought or accomplish an action violating them. Nevertheless, I never let more than few hours go by before renewing them. As for the Vajrayana commitments, if one considers them in detail, I believe that I almost constantly break them. It is like sand blown onto a plate of polished metal. Although you may try to wipe it away, the sand constantly piles up"

The disciples were surprised by the implications of the last statement. They thought that engaging in Vajrayana practice was more harmful than beneficial, and that there was more chance falling into hell than reaching Awakening.

Atisha said, 'This is not true, because the Vajrayana includes skillful means coming from the Buddha's compassion, allowing us to use the Vajrayana despite unavoidable violations of the samayas. It is said, for example, that if we recite even only twenty-one times a day the one-hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva (Dorje Sempa), this purifies us from these broken vows and preserves the efficiency of the Vajrayana"

Samye Ling, March 1983

The Land of Bliss

The Mahayana developed the notion of pure land, which is not found in the Hinayana tradition. This notion is dose to the concept of paradise, but there are many pure lands. Created by different buddhas, the pure lands conform to their vows benefiting all beings and respond to the particular aspirations of these beings. The Land of Bliss (Sanskrit, Sukhavati; Tibetan, DewachenJ, created by Amitabha Buddha, is the pure land that attracts the most people, not only in Tibet, but also in Japan and China. Pure lands are conceived on different levels. Here, Kalu Rinpoche describes them from the simplest point of view.

A DIFFERENT TIME SCALE

Pure lands are domains of manifestation created by the Buddhas. Thus, the Land of Bliss was created by Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, in conclusion of his wish, formulated before attaining Awakening, for the manifestation of a pure land that is easy to access. The time scale there is different than ours. There, a day is equivalent to a maha-kalpa in an ordinary universe, a maha-kalpa consisting of eighty intermediary kalpasu which include the genesis, maintenance, and destruction of a universe as well as the empty period preceding a new manifestation. Its duration is nearly incalculable in earth years. The Land of Bliss was created ten days ago according to its time scale, that is to say ten maha-kalpas of our own measurement.

It is a pure land where all manifestations of the five elements and all sense perceptions are joy, pleasure, and beauty. The word "suffering" is unknown there. Things and beings have a luminous and immaterial quality and Amitabha's body emits a light brighter than the sun and moon. It is always daytime but allowance is made for distinguishing the succession of days and nights. During daytime, the flowers open, at night, they close.15

BIRTH IN A LOTUS

Gaining rebirth in the Land of Bliss is only possible after certain preparation in this life. One must receive Amitabha or Avalokita initiation (Tibetan, Chenrezig), recite their mantras, or make wishes and prayers. By the orientation given to our mind, once in the bardo, we become conscious that we are dead and we see Amitabha coming to welcome us. We will recognize him, and wish for rebirth in his pure land. This thought is enough to make us go there immediately.

It is the end of the bardo and spontaneous rebirth, without intermediary, in the Land of Bliss. Immediately, one is born in the heart of a lotus bud, endowed with a young adult body, well formed, and dressed in beautiful clothes. The lotus opens, one sees Amitabha and his entourage and one obtains the first level of a bodhisattva. This attainment bars all possibility for rebirth in the six classes of beings under the constraint of karma and entails

an immense increase of the abilities of mind. The bodhisattva on the first level can produce one hundred simultaneous emanations of himself or herself, simultaneously go to one hundred pure lands, receive the teachings of one hundred Buddhas, concentrate his or her mind on one hundred objects, and so on. Thus, the bodhisattva on the first level then possesses twelve hundredfold powers.

Amitabha

CONJUNCTION OF FOUR FACTORS

Generally, for rebirth in the Land of Bliss, it is necessary to collect four factors.16

1- The support—imagining the field of accumulation. One inwardly imagines the Land of Bliss as a beautiful and pleasant place. One sees Amitabha with Avalokita and Vajrapani (Tibetan, Ghana Dorje) at his sides, and, all around him are innumerable arhats and bodhisattvas. One imagines that they are all really present in front of us.

2- The fundamental cause—accumulation and purification. In front of the support that one visualizes as said, one presents, in the imagination, infinite offerings. Homage is given with body, speech, and mind. One confesses

faults committed during innumerable past lives and believes that one is purified.

3- Auxiliary factor—engendering the mind of Awakening (bodhidtta). One develops compassion for all beings, particularly in connection with the Land of Bliss, by formulating wishes, always in the presence of the field of accumulation. May all beings be free of suffering, and have happiness. May they all be reborn in the Land of Bliss. May I, myself, take rebirth in the Land of Bliss and lead all beings to it.

4- Operating condition—perfect wishes. Engendering deep aspiration, one thinks, May I take rebirth in the Land of Bliss.

To go somewhere by car, it is necessary to have a vehicle in good condition, a good driver, and to make the decision to go to a chosen place. Similarly, to go to the Land of Bliss, it is necessary to add the wish to go there to the favorable inner foundation.

NOT LOOKING BEHIND

When these four factors are gathered, it is almost impossible not to take rebirth in the Land of Bliss. However, there is the risk of an obstacle that may prevent us from doing so. Our egocentric grasping is strong and makes us very attached to our relatives, parents, children, husband, wife, or friends.

At death, our consciousness will experience the bardo, but because of the wish for rebirth in the Land of Bliss implanted within us, the aspiration will arise in our mind and we will think, "I am going to the Land of Bliss." This thought by itself gives the necessary impetus, and we will have the impression of flying in space to reach our destination. It is there that attachment to our dose relations risks being a counterbalance. If our attachment is very strong, we will hear the voice of the person to whom we remain attached tell us, "Do not abandon me, do not go to the Land of Bliss." This voice will be very dear and convincing. The power of attachment will lead us then to look at the person who calls. We will turn back, and the wish to go to the Land of Bliss will leave our mind.

There is a method to avoid this danger. Let us consider from now on that our own body, belongings, and all to which we are attached form a mandala17 that we offer to Amitabha. We think, "All this, I offer to you. Henceforth it no longer belongs to me, but to you alone."

The benefit of this offering is twofold, it allows us to accumulate merit and attachment decreases. Especially, when touched by fatal illness, we must think with great force, "I am going to die soon. My body is the support of the illness and sufferings that I now endure, but it no longer belongs to me. I have offered it to Amitabha. All those who are dear to me,parents, children, spouse, brothers, sisters, and friends, I have also offered them to Amitabha. I no longer need to take care of them. It is Amitabha who will care for them. This illness will lead me to death and I am happy, because I am going to leave this world of sufferings to go to the Land of Bliss." In this way, no obstacle will be able to prevent our rebirth there. The power of the mind is

great. Mind has the energy to achieve its goals, all the more if it relies on faith in the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and masters.

THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER

A long time ago, there lived a brave old man, skilled in carpentry, but poor in intelligence, and having no knowledge of the Dharma. His daughter, however, had a great mind, which she applied to businesses in this world as well as to spiritual obligations. The carpenter loved her very much and his confidence in her was so great that he used to do anything she wanted with no questions asked.

As for the daughter, aware that it was time for her father to leave this world, she wanted to teach him at least some rudiments of the Dharma to help him to pass away, but she knew that he would not be able to understand much. How to help him? After deliberating, she discovered a way. One evening, she told her father that she had a great source of contentment that she wanted to share with him. She said, "Do you know, father, whom I met today? A man from a beautiful country, situated where the sun sets, called the Land of Bliss. He was sent by a good lama who lives there. Your fame as a carpenter is so great that it has reached the lama. He wants you to build him a house. Is it not wonderful? I did not hesitate to give your consent; you will be well paid" The date of construction was not yet fixed, but when the time arrives, she would let him know.

The father thought that the lama described by his daughter could only be someone very powerful ruling a great country. And since his daughter gave his promise, he would go from time to time, she spoke again of this distant Land of Bliss, its enchanting parks, its mild weather, graciousness of the inhabitants, and greatness of the lama who governed it. The desire to go there evolved more and more in the mind of the carpenter.

The father soon became ill and his sickness rapidly worsened. "Be without fear" his daughter told him, "you will recover soon. The moment for you to go to the Land of Bliss to build the house approaches. Do not forget that I promised you must go there"

The father believed that he was going to recover. Nevertheless, his health continued to deteriorate. When he was very close to death, his daughter again told him, "Father, today is a great day. Time has come for you to go to the Land of Bliss. You must absolutely go. You will regain your health and go there"

Persuaded that it was true, he died with this thought. After the period of unconsciousness following death, when he woke up in the bardo, this same thought was the first to appear in his mind. "My daughter told me, I must now go to the Land of Bliss."

Amitabha and his entourage appeared then to him and he went where his aspiration guided him. The old man did not know the Dharma, but he had confidence in the daughter he loved and considered everything she told him to be true. He was therefore convinced of the existence of this delicious place called the Land of Bliss where a powerful lama resided. Thinking he would go

to this country gave him great joy, and his aspiration to arrive there was very strong. With the absence of doubts and the determined orientation of his mind he effectively went there.

Kaodwng, March 31,1986

BENEFIT OF THE LAND OF BLISS

Even if we cannot intensely devote ourselves to the accumulation of merit and purification, we can simply develop an aspiration for rebirth in the Land of Bliss. If we pray sincerely for that and recite texts that express this aspiration with great faith, at death, by the conjunction of our own wishes and those of Amitabha, we will be reborn in this field of pure manifestation.

Access to the Land of Bliss implies the automatic attainment of the first level of a bodhisattva. One is totally free of suffering there, since it is said that there is not even a single strand of hair of suffering. One acquires aptitudes greater than those we now have. We will possess the ability to produce one hundred emanations of ourselves, not under the constraint of karma, but freely, for the purpose of helping beings on Earth and other worlds.

FROM ASSUMPTION TO CERTAINTY

The notion of the Land of Bliss is approached in an appreciably different way in the West than in the East. Tibetan, Chinese, or Japanese people are heirs of ancient Buddhist tradition, with the result that they spontaneously accept, without doubting, the reality of the Land of Bliss. Aspiration for rebirth there is a natural continuation of their faith. Westerners are in a different situation. Buddhism is not deeply rooted in their cultural environment and they have developed a strong critical mind during their studies. Even if they envision the possibility of existence of the Land of Bliss, they do it as an assumption rather than a certainty.

However, given their intelligence and powerful capability to study, Westerners can easily understand the teachings of the Buddha, including the one on the Land of Bliss. They grasp the authenticity and beneficial nature of these teachings.

They are able from then on to acquire the same conviction as Easterners.

Question: As for the Land of Bliss, does it have an existence in itself or is it only a projection of the mind?

Kalu Rinpoche: Pure lands are the result of the wishes of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to benefit all beings.

Rebirth in the Land of Bliss does not mean reaching Buddhahood but only the first stage of a bodhisattva. It remains to make progress on the ten stages leading to ultimate Awakening. One must also note that, from the moment one is in this field of manifestation, it is no longer possible to fall back into samsara.

Brussels, October 1984

Avalokita Mantra

OM MANI PADME HUNG

Mantras

The problem of mantras is particularly interesting to discuss because Europeans (or Americans) and Tibetans differ in their approach. In Tibet, the Buddhist tradition is ancient, the result being that everyone acknowledges reciting mantras has beneficial effects. As for Westerners, they often see the mantras only as words, just an activity of speech, and do not understand their effect. They do not dearly see how these words can act on the mind.

POWER OF SPEECH

It is true, in a certain way, that words are only sounds getting lost in space. Nevertheless, they are vectors of great power. This power is obvious even in daily situations. Suppose that the person tells another, "You are truly fantastic. What you do is extraordinary" and so on. The person who receives the compliment is overjoyed, perhaps even feels a certain exaltation. On the contrary, if one criticizes the same person or makes unpleasant remarks, the person becomes angry. Joy and anger are provoked by words. This is a dear indication of how the power of words is widely experienced in many areas where it is easy to observe.

The importance words play in our studies is known; they are an indispensable vehicle. A Tibetan saying well emphasizes the power of speech.

> *Words are neither sharp nor cutting,*
>
> *but they can cut the heart of a human being.*

SUBTLE ANATOMY

Tantras teach that the human body contains a system of 72,000 subtle channels (nadis). It is said that the extremities of these channels are in the form of letters, more particularly the

sixteen vowels and thirty consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet. Winds 18 (prana) that circulate in the channels are influenced by these forms. This explains why human beings have the ability to produce a great variety of sounds whose combination makes up the wealth of a language. The structure of the system of subtle channels is less elaborate in animals. This is why animals have only few sounds to communicate.

A SIXTH ELEMENT

The configuration of the subtle channels is not enough for the possibility of expressing oneself in a complex manner, however. Body and mind are composed of five elements, earth, water, fire, air, and space. Human beings have a sixth element that animals lack, and that is the element of primordial awareness (Sanskrit, jnana). Because of this sixth element, the human body is called the six-fold vajra body. Primordial awareness allows us to express

ourselves with the assistance of a vast vocabulary and to understand the meaning of what is said to us. It also permits reflection, information, and knowledge.

WHO CAN CREATE A MANTRA?

Mantras are aspects of the language that require particular capabilities for their creation. An ordinary being does not have, in any way, the ability to create a mantra. Let us consider someone who has reached a stage superior to common people, the first stage of a bodhisattva. This being possesses twelve hundred-fold powers, such as the ability of knowing events of one hundred past lives and one hundred future lives, to simultaneously visit one hundred pure lands, to simultaneously listen to the teaching of one hundred Buddhas, to dwell at the same time in one hundred meditative states, and so on. Nevertheless, even such a being cannot create a mantra.

As soon as the bodhisattva crosses the next stage, the energy of the twelve powers is multiplied by ten. Arriving at the seventh stage, the bodhisattva is totally free of the veil of conflicting emotions. However, ability to create a mantra is still denied.

On the eighth stage, a new step occurs in the progression of a bodhisattva, conferring upon the mind the ten masteries on life span, states of meditative absorption, and so on, and, especially, mastery over the meaning of words. Once a being in this stage, the composition of mantras is possible.

Finally, at the end of the tenth stage, thanks to the vajra-like meditation, the bodhisattva reaches ultimate realization, Buddhahood. As a Buddha possesses omniscience, by definition, the ability to create all categories of mantras is granted.

It is only in the last three stages of a bodhisattva, the three pure stages, and with Buddhahood that the vision of all elements that compose samsara and nirvana is vast enough for the implications of sounds and words to be perfectly understood. This makes the creation of a mantra possible.

FUNCTION OF MANTRAS

These created mantras carry the power of purifying the mind from faults and veils and making its true nature obvious. Their function is therefore extremely beneficial.

Let us take, for example, the mantra of Avalokita (Chenrezig), called the mantra of six syllables, OM MANI PADME HUNG. To each syllable one attributes the following powers.

- They dose the door of rebirth in the six classes of beings in samsara.
- They eliminate the six basic conflicting emotions, desire-attachment, hatred-aversion, blindness, possess! veness, jealousy, and pride.
- They allow one to achieve the six wisdoms.
- They lead to perfect practice of the six paramitas, and so on.19

These extraordinary qualities of the mantra of six syllables have been described by the Buddha himself and by Guru Padmasambhava.

AVALOKITA, HUSBAND OF THE OGRESS

A long time ago, an ogress lived in India. Her appetite was so great, because of her karmic tendencies, that she was never satisfied with the quantity of food consumed. Trying to diminish her hunger, she killed numerous human beings eating their flesh and drinking their blood. Avalokita, to divert her from this behavior, decided to incarnate on Earth and become her husband. He took the form of an ogre, married the ogress and they live together on good terms.

While his wife was frantically searching for food, Avalokita continually recited the mantra OM MANIPADME HUNG.

In the beginning, the ogress paid no attention, but she finally demanded, "You spend your time mumbling incomprehensible words. What use are they?" "What I recite is useful to me," replied Avalokita, "because of that I am never hungry and I feel well."

The ogress could not see how syllables would pacify her hunger, but she trusted her husband and wanted to believe that this was a solution to her bulimia. She decided to imitate her spouse and, soon, she had rid herself of the appetite that used to torment her. Not only that, but by continuing recitation, she saw unknown feelings appearing in her mind, such as compassion and love. Later, she even achieved the truth of emptiness and could engage on the path of Awakening. All this happened because of the simple recitation of the mantra, without ever having the least idea of its meaning or spiritual extent.

If we do not know how to meditate, even the simple recitation of a mantra would bestow great benefits.

UNTRANSLATABLE MANTRAS

Mantras were uttered by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas with the assistance of words and sounds in Sanskrit. This language is seen as the most ideal language on Earth, superior to any other one. As sound plays an important role in the use of mantras, Tibetans never translated them into their own language, but transcribed them with a system of transliteration, preserving the Sanskrit sounds while using the Tibetan alphabet. Sounds kept the spiritual power inherent in the Sanskrit resonance and in the original stating of the mantra.

EASY AND BENEFICIAL

We are perhaps in a situation where we are physically exhausted by work and other activities. Perhaps we have no leisure to place our body in the service of the practice of the Dharma, as we are in a situation where our mind, thinking of what we must do, does not have time to meditate. At least, we have the opportunity to use speech to recite from time to time the mantra

OM MANI PADME HUNG. We accomplish something of great value, with profound effects for ourselves and others.

It is said, for example, that when someone recites this mantra and an animal hears it, the latter will ultimately obtain Buddhahood. When one recites the mantra and blows on the ashes or bones of a deceased person, the latter will be liberated from the suffering of inferior worlds, and then progress to Awakening. These results require no meditation on the part of the person who is benefited. They are effects of what is called liberation by listening or liberation by seeing. They are produced by the simple fact of hearing or seeing the mantra.

Let us trust the mantra. Let us allow the body to attend to its work and the mind to its reflections leading to result, but, at the same time, let us recite the mantra OM MANI PADME HUNG, without even being attentive. We will purify many karmic veils and finally attain Awakening.

It is also said that when we recite the mantra of Avalokita, the wind in contact with our body is charged with a blessing broadcasted to animals that it touches, sowing in them a seed that ultimately leads them to Awakening.

The effects of mantras are vast and powerful. Here, we can only approach the subject. Those who want to study mantras in detail should refer to texts on their nature and their benefits recording the teachings of the Buddha or of Padmasambhava. Students especially should refer to various tantras that express the benefits of the mantras of the deity from which these mantras come. Briefly, mantras bestow great purification as well as deep accumulation of merit and wisdom.

CHASING OUR RETICENCES

Some Westerners, as previously stated, think that mantras are nothing but sounds without meaning, that reciting them is only wasting time, and that it is much better to meditate. It is true that mantras simply use sounds, but meditation seems serve nothing at all, not even on this subtle level of manifestation which is sound. In a way, meditation should arouse even more doubts than mantras. One does nothing while meditating!

Reticence concerning the recitation of mantras come from two factors.

- ignorance of the function and benefit of the mantras described by the Buddha

- lack of reflection on the precious human existence, death and impermanence, law of karma, and on the unsatisfactory nature of samsara

Even if one has some knowledge of the Dharma, but is lazy, reciting a mantra seems a difficult exercise.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Specific Preliminaries

We saw that the four common preliminaries, are four reflections common to all schools of Buddhism. Their function is to convince people that there is no other solution or necessity than practicing the Dharma. Specific preliminaries assume that the common preliminaries already have been assimilated. The specific preliminaries aim for a profound reorganization of our personality—placing us within jaith, purifying our unconscious karmic obstructions, enriching us with positive potentialities and, finally', opening us to the force of the Awakened mind of the master. To engage the path of Vajrayana, each specific preliminary is performed one hundred thousand times.

- one hundred thousand recitations of the refuge prayer accompanied by one hundred thousand prostrations

- one hundred thousand recitations of the mantra of Vajrasattva

- one hundred thousand offerings of the mandala

- one hundred thousand recitations of the prayer of guru yoga

Therefore, one speaks of the four hundred thousand or the five hundred thousand depending on whether one considers the prayer of refuge separate from prostrations. Although Kalu Rinpoche expounds on these different practices, obviously they cannot be approached without receiving at least direct instructions from a lama or at best an initiation for the practice of Vajrasattva.

Previously, we have examined the four common preliminaries that turn us away from samsara.20 The specific preliminaries progress more deeply in the practice.21

REFUGE AND BODHICITTA

The Three Jewels

Samsara contains an unceasing wave of suffering, difficulty, anguish, and fear. Our outer and inner resources appear entirely insufficient to protect us. 22 Only the places of refuge, the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and the Three Roots (lamas, yidams, and protectors) can provide real protection.

Buddha

Although our mind is fundamentally emptiness, clarity, and intelligence without obstruction, these pure qualities are covered by veils that prevent them from being expressed. The sun constantly shines, but, when there are clouds or fog in the sky, its splendor and light are obscured. In the same way, the fundamental purity of mind, although always present, is obstructed by veils. When the clouds and fog dissipate, the sun, which was always there,"is visible. The process is identical for the mind. When the mind is totally purified (Tibetan, sang), its qualities bloom (Tibetan, gye) by themselves. From then on, it is called Buddha (Tibetan, sangye). Although the qualities of a Buddha

are innumerable, nevertheless, a certain number of qualities especially designate his body, speech, and mind.

- 112 qualities for the body, including 30 major marks and 82 minor signs
- 60 qualities for speech
- 32 qualities for mind

Shakyamuni Buddha, living in India long ago, had all these qualities. His existence on Earth was only for a limited duration, but the impermanence of a Buddha is different from that of an ordinary being. After death, a Buddha ceases to be visible for a certain number of people, but the activity for the benefit of all beings continues in the pure lands and in other worlds.

understand what Kalu Rinpoche explains here, it is necessary to remember that the expression translated by taking refuge traditionally means word by word and more simply to place oneself under protection.

A Buddha, because of infinite compassion, can help all beings, but not without their active response. They must be animated by faith and confidence. The compassion of a Buddha is compared to a hook. In order for the hook to be useful, it must encounter the ring of faith of the disciples.

Dharma

The Dharma is an expression of the compassion of the Buddha, and represents the main implement for helping all beings. The Dharma is the second of the Three Jewels.

Sangha

Those who teach the Dharma, the transmitters of the teaching of the Buddha, make up the Sangha. The Sangha is two-fold, the superior Sangha—members who have reached liberation, and the ordinary Sangha for those remaining. The Three Jewels consist of the Buddha, Dharma, and the Sangha.

The Three Roots

All these who follow the path of the Buddha, of whatever school, take refuge in the Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Nevertheless, the Buddha taught the swift path of Vajrayana for those with a particular karma. This path mainly relies on the practice of the yidams, as emanations of the Buddha. This yidam practice engenders accomplishments. To accomplish yidam meditation, it is necessary to first receive the transmission of the spiritual energy or grace linked to the yidams. This transmission is done by an empowerment, conferred by the lama. The yidams are, on this path, the root of accomplishments and the lamas, the root of grace.

The grace and power of the lamas and yidams are sufficient for the follower of Vajrayana to obtain liberation in a single life time. Obstacles and interferences may prevent or slow down the practitioner's progress/however.

The dakas, dakinis, and protector deities have the function of eliminating these obstacles.

Vajrayana supplements the Three Jewels with three other places of refuge, the Three Roots.

- the lamas, root of grace
- the yidams, root of accomplishments
- the dakas, dakinis, and protectors, root of activity

Confidence and faith are the basis for taking refuge in the Three Jewels and Three Roots. This is why we express taking refuge by performing prostrations or reciting the prayer of refuge. We will see now how the prayer of refuge is done in the framework of the Karma Kagyupa school during the specific preliminaries.

The refuge tree

First, we imagine that we are on a beautiful and vast plain, embellished with flowers and trees. In front of us, there lies a limpid, pure, and fresh lake, and in the middle a magnificent and immense tree grows with a trunk divided in five main branches where the different aspects of the refuge are found.

- on the central branch the lamas
- on the front branch the yidams
- on the right branch the Buddhas
- on the back branch the Dharma represented by texts
- on the left branch the superior sangha

As for the protector deities, they are on a cloud slightly in front of the tree.

Visualization of the lama

In the middle of the central branch, we imagine a throne supported by eight lions and ornamented by brocades. On this throne are an immense lotus flower, a sun disc, and a moon disc on top of each other. On this seat, Vajradhara (Tibetan, Dorje Chang) is seated. His essence is our own source lama. He is surrounded by a multitude of lamas. We more particularly visualize, arranged above his head, our source lama with ordinary form, then the principal lamas of the lineage, Marpa, Naropa, Tilopa, and finally, Vajradhara again, this time representing the origin of the lineage.

We do not think of these lamas in terms of material reality. Their bodies, made apparent by the visualization, are the union of manifestation and emptiness; they are similar to a rainbow. Otherwise the weight of those above would crush those below! One is often given the example of a Tibetan meditator who had a material idea of the lama visualized above his head. As he was bald, he always feared that the lama would slip and fall to the ground. He ended up wearing a hat!

In the sky around the tree, lamas of other lineages, Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Gelukpa as well as of others in the Kagyupa schools are present. Knowing

that we belong to the Karma Kagyupa school, we express our .confidence in all lineages, with no sectarian bias.

On the behalf of all

Being on the shore of the lake, we think that on our right is our father from this life, accompanied by all our fathers in our past lives. On our left is our mother of this life accompanied by all mothers of our past lives. We imagine furthermore that, in front of us, our enemies are present, and behind us are spirits obstructing our practice. We take refuge on behalf of ourselves and everyone at the same time.

The place given to our father and mother in this life is explained by the recognition of the debt we owe them. Let us recall that our mother kept us for nine months in her womb, going through all the difficulties of pregnancy. Then, our parents fed us, washed, dressed, and provided us with necessities until we were able to care for ourselves. Because of the precious human existence obtained through them, we have the possibility of making progress on the path of liberation.

Why do we visualize in front of us our enemies and behind us the creators of obstacles? Those who now seek to harm us have been, in our past lives, many times, our father and our mother. They have taken care of us with as much care as our parents in this life. Their present malevolence toward us is caused by a past karma that links us to them and by the veil of ignorance that covers their minds. In a certain way, the father and mother do not recognize their own child. They especially deserve our love as they accumulate bad karma by their actions, which will lead them to greater suffering.

A complete and constant attitude

Taking refuge, in the preliminary practices, implies the participation of the whole person. The mind engenders faith and devotion by thinking of the qualities of the places of refuge as well as their power of liberating us. The body accomplishes prostrations, and with speech we recite the prayer of refuge including six verses corresponding to the six places of refuge, the Three Jewels and the Three Roots.23

When we prostrate, it is most important to keep in mind the feeling of devotion and respect. From time to time, we also imagine that the Three Jewels and the Three Roots emit very bright lights touching us, purifying us of our faults and veils, and conferring on us their grace that we receive with great joy.

When we are not meditating, when we sit, we think of the places of refuge as above our heads. When we lie down, we think of them on the pillow, above us. When we eat, we imagine them in our throat and we offer them our food. At the moment of falling asleep, the simplest way to recall the places of refuge consists of thinking that all aspects of refuge are united in the lama and that the lama is very luminous and dwelling in our hearts.

Engendering bodhicitta

After prostrating, we sit, join hands, and recite the words by which we take the bodhisattva vows. To do this, we think of the past Buddhas who have generated bodhicitta in the same way, and have put it in practice until Awakening. We now engender bodhicitta and commit ourselves to practice it until Awakening.

After reciting the bodhisattva vows, we think that the places of refuge (Three Jewels and Three Roots) greatly rejoice of our attitude. They melt into light and this light is absorbed into us. Considering that our body, speech, and mind are one with theirs, we dwell as long as we can in this natural state of mind.

Meaning of suffering and happiness From the perspective of the refuge, we must learn to see our suffering and happiness being under the protection of the Three Jewels and the Three Roots. When we suffer or are ill, let us not think that it contradicts the protection granted to us by the objects of refuge. On the contrary, let us think that, through the objects of refuge, we meet these difficulties now. They are indeed the result of past bad karma, and it is best for this karma to mature in this life rather than resulting in far more painful conditions of existence in future lives. This is why we consider suffering as a gift from the grace and compassion of the Three Jewels and the Three Roots.

On the other hand, when we aire happy, and our projects are successful and we obtain what we wish, let us not be proud and vain, simply let us think that it is also because of the grace of the objects of refuge. Let us be thankful, and hope that this situation will last.

The four levels of refuge

The notion of refuge can be envisaged with different levels of depth.

- outer, the Three Jewels
- inner, the Three Roots
- secret, the three bodies of Awakening
- very secret or ultimate, the essence of our mind

End of the session

When one ends a session, after the period of meditative absorption, one dedicates the merit for the benefit of all beings.

Vajrasattva

VAJRASATTVA

The second specific preliminary consists of the purifying practice of Vajrasattva (Tibetan, Dorje Sempa).

The fundamental purity of our mind is hindered by veils and faults. Veils refer here to what prevents us from recognizing the real nature of our mind. Faults designate negative karma we experience with painful consequences, as if we were beating ourselves.

The four veils

The totality of disturbances affecting our mind is described in

the notion of the four veils.

- The simple fact of not recognizing the nature of our mind, not recognizing that it is Buddha, forms the veil of ignorance.

- Onto this lack of recognition, the notion of an "I," which engenders at its conception the notion of "another," is grafted. Our mind is from then on conditioned to function in dualistic mode, and this forms the veil of latent conditioning.

- Between the poles of "I" and "other" there exist 84,000 conflicting emotions. The main ones are desire-attachment, hatred-aversion, blindness, jealousy, and so on. They form the veil of conflicting emotions.

- Finally, under the influence of conflicting emotions, we accomplish negative acts, or faults, which create the veil of karma.

Given that the veil of conflicting emotions and that of karma directly create our suffering, they are sometimes gathered under the unique designation of bad veil.

If it were possible to give a material form to the veils and faults weighing on our mind, the whole universe could not contain them. Buddhahood requires that we totally rid ourselves of them. It is the function of Vajrasattva practice, which, in the Vajrayana, is specifically applied to purification.

Immaterial but effective veils

Some people doubt the reality of the veils covering the mind, because these veils are not obvious; they are immaterial. It is true that veils are formless, just as the mind itself, in which they manifest, is formless but exists. There are others who admit that veils exist but argue that, due to their immateriality, one cannot dissipate them, or do anything to reach them.

In fact, all this relates to the fact that mind is without form, but this does not imply nonexistence or the impossibility of modification.

A person, after studying for a long time, has accumulated much knowledge. Where is this knowledge? In some ways, it is nowhere. If knowledge had form, all of France would not have sufficient space to hold it. Although this knowledge is immaterial, it remains at our disposal and we can use it if needed. Let us take the example of thoughts that pass through the mind of a single person from morning to evening. If it was necessary to materialize them, we would need an immense space to store them. But luckily thoughts are immaterial, otherwise, what a burden it would be to carry them on our shoulders!

Our mind has no form, no more than the thoughts and karma that are inscribed in it. As long as we have not attained ultimate emptiness, thoughts and karma continue to produce beneficial or harmful effects stemming from the mind where they are stored. Let us suppose that a person decides, in the month of September, to go to India the following year in September. This project is only a thought and as such has no material reality. However its invisible force is sufficient for that person to implement steps that will transform the thought into reality. The journey to India in September of the following year will be the physical result of the immaterial thought conceived in September of this year.

Vajrasattva practice

For the purpose of purifying ourselves from faults and veils, when we practice Vajrasattva, we imagine that Vajrasattva is above our heads, sitting on a lotus and a moon disc. His body is white. He holds in his right hand, placed in front of his heart, a gold vajra (Tibetan, dorje) and in his left hand, posed on the groin, a silver bell. He is adorned with silks and jewels characteristic of the body of perfect experience. We think of him as undifferentiated from our source lama. In his heart the white syllable HUNG shines, surrounded by the one-hundred syllable mantra.

To strengthen in our mind the conviction that Vajrasattva is truly present above our heads, we think of his heart emitting a luminous radiance that rises in space to invite the Wisdom-Vajrasattva24 to melt into the Vajrasattva visualized by us. We imagine this fusion occurring and making the presence of the deity real.

In the next phase of the meditation, while we recite the mantra, we visualize that from the heart of Vajrasattva flows a white and luminous nectar that enters us at the summit of the head and fills our body. This nectar has the effect of clearing away our faults, veils, and causes of illnesses. We imagine the nectar going out of our body in the form of a black and thick liquid exiting through all the pores of our skin.

At the end of meditation, we think that we are entirely purified and that our body has the same nature as light. We then recite the mantra, thinking of our body as a crystal envelope filled with milk or as a rainbow.

Factors of the purification

By the grace and compassion of Vajrasattva, the visualization of his body, and the recitation of his mantra, as well as our own devotion and aspiration, the purification is accomplished. All these factors are necessary for purification, just as it takes several elements—water, soap, hands to rub, and will—to wash a dirty cloth.

In this process of purification, it is the mind that works, just as it is the mind that has accumulated faults and veils.

The mantra of Vajrasattva has its own power. Even if we are distracted while reciting it, there will be certain benefits. But this beneficial effect would only be small. If we recite it without distraction, however, the power of meditation will supplement the power of the mantra and the grace of the deity with the result that we will derive maximum benefit. To be able to fully invest ourselves in the meditation, we must be convinced of the reality of grace released by Vajrasattva and his mantra. We must develop confidence and devotion.

End of session

At the end of the session, we think that Vajrasattva is happy with our purification. He smiles at us and says, "Child of noble family, you are from now on purified of all harmful acts, faults, and transgressions" And then, the

body of the deity above us is reabsorbed into a light that melts into our hearts. Thinking of our body, speech, and mind as undifferentiated from the body, speech, and mind of Vajrasattva, we remain for a moment in silent meditation.

We conclude the session with the dedication and auspicious aspiration.

OFFERING OF THE MANDALA

After the practice of Vajrasattva, there is the third specific preliminary, the offering of the mandate.25

The basic visualization will appear easier if we have correctly applied ourselves to the refuge prayer. We again find in the mandala offering, the Three Jewels and Three Roots. The difference is that instead of being placed on the branches of a tree growing in the middle of a lake, they are here, in front of ourselves in the space, within an invaluable palace. This is a residence perfect in its proportions, composed of the most precious materials. In the presence of the Three Jewels and Three Roots and to their intention, the mandala offering will be presented.

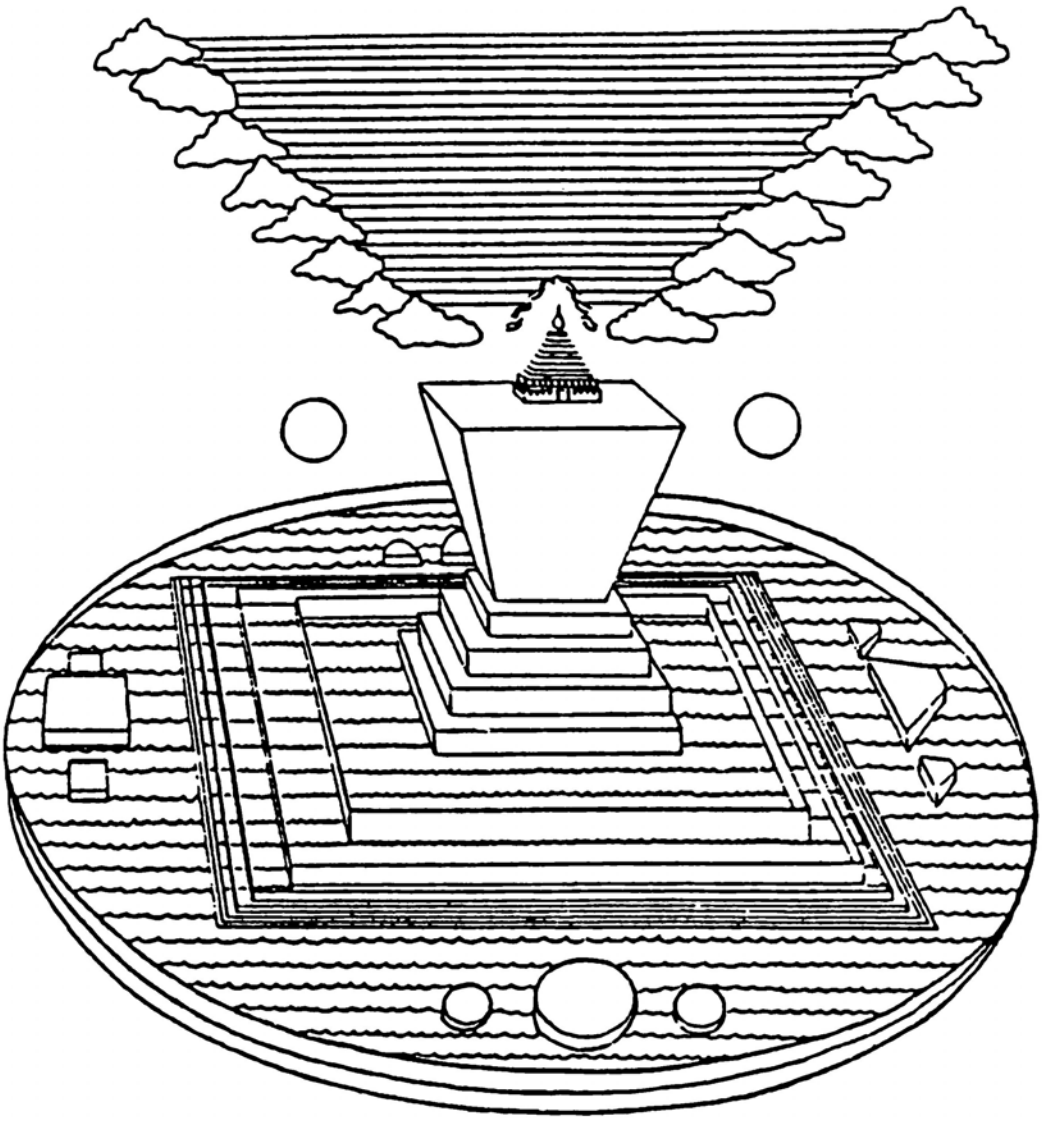
In the practice of Vajrasattva, we rid the mind of all negativity which encumbers and alters it. The mandala offering enriches the mind as it proceeds into the accumulation of merit made possible through the offering.

Indeed, we offer the whole universe, endowed with a precise structure, an axial mountain surrounded by four continents, each of them flanked by two subcontinents.

Structure of the universe

It is not possible to describe the universe in terms that are valid for everyone. The universe is not absolute reality, but a projection of the mind of beings. Its form and perception are conditioned by individual karma. Some beings will see the universe as a square structure, others as round, linear, or some other shapes. It is not possible to say that the vision of some people is right and that of others is false, as explained by the Buddha. Nevertheless, among the infinite number of possible visions of a universe, the most harmonious and most beautiful is that in which the universe is perceived as resting on a foundation of gold. It is also organized around an axial mountain in the form of an inverted pyramid, Mount Meru, surrounded by four continents, each with its own geometrical form, separated by oceans. Everything is delineated by a circle of high mountains.

Our karma is now sufficiently positive to make us able, if not capable of seeing this, to at least imagining the universe under this perfect aspect and mentally offering it. This is why the liturgy of the preliminary practices describes it like this.



Mandala of the Universe

An infinite offering

Our mind is both empty and endowed with dynamics without limitation. This provides us with the ability to imagine the universe in any form, size, and multiplied as many times as we want. In the same way that anger or desire replace thoughts of an infinite variety, our mind can create an infinite number of universes and offer them to the lama and the Three Jewels. We offer them to the Three Jewels and the Three Roots in all their beauty, splendor, and preciousness. We can also think that we offer our body, speech, and mind, as well as possessions, flowers, jewels, and all that we find beautiful. Even outside of practice sessions, each time we see something that touches us with its beauty, a landscape, a building, a monument, a flower, and so on, we also offer it in thought.

Three kinds and four levels of offering

Offerings can be of three kinds.

- material offerings as, for example, bowls of water, lights, and flowers placed on the shrine

- mental offerings, mainly the universe that we imagine

- offerings of what primordially exists, which has not been manufactured by human beings, such as mountains, water streams, ocean, forests, and landscapes

All these offerings are equal from the point of view of the merit they allow us to accumulate.

Differing in what it contains, the mandate offering can also vary according to how it is envisioned: outer mandala, inner mandala, secret mandala, and mandala of suchness.

- Outer mandala is the universe, such as the one we have just described, with the axial mountain, the four continents, and so on.

- Inner mandala refers to the offering of our body. Its different parts symbolically represent the universe. The trunk is the axial mountain. The four limbs are the four continents, the two eyes, the sun and the moon, and so on. This visualization is particularly used in the practice of chod. 26

- Secret mandala can be understood by an example. At night, when no cloud stains the limpidity of the sky, a multitude of stars scintillates in the sky. In the same way, within our mind, the multiple thoughts that arise are sparkling in it. When one recognizes that, and one offers it, it is the secret mandala.

- The mandala of suchness consists in offering one's own realization of the ultimate nature of mind, with no alteration and no restraint.

End of session

When we end a session of mandala offering, we think that, by our practice, the accumulation of merit is realized for ourselves and all beings. We imagine that the lama and the Three Jewels are satisfied. They are reabsorbed into a light that melts into us. Our body, speech, and mind become one with their bodies, speech, and minds. Then we dwell for a moment in meditation without support, and conclude with the dedication.

GURU YOGA

In the practice of *guru yoga*, 27 the fourth preliminary, the source lama is visualized in front of us, in space, or above our heads, in the form of Vajradhara (Tibetan, Dorje Chang) or in his or her real form, surrounded by a multitude of lamas of the lineage. Although the basic visualization is very dose of that of the refuge or mandala offering, the way in which it is undertaken is different. In previous practices, each of the Three Jewels and Three Roots were seen as possessing its own qualities, while in the

perspective of the guru yoga, one considers all the objects of refuge and their qualities to be collected in the lama.

In the presence of the lama, we first recite the Seven Branch Prayer.

- making homage
- presenting offerings
- confessing faults
- rejoicing in the merit of realized and ordinary beings
- requesting Buddhas not to pass into nirvana
- requesting them to teach the dharma
- dedicating the merit

Then, there is the cycle of the four ma mm, the prayer of four verses each beginning with the syllables ma nam, meaning our mothers. We think that all beings, our mothers in our past lives, whose number is infinite, address their prayer to the lama at the same time as we do.

The lama, activity of the Buddhas

After that, we recite many times a short prayer, Karmapa chenno, meaning "Karmapa, think of me." If we have a great devotion for the Karmapa,28 if we have directly received empowerments or meditation instructions from him, we take the prayer with its literal meaning and address him directly. But the prayer can also be seen in its etymological aspect. Karmapa means indeed He who implements the activity (of the Buddhas), and this can be applied to all masters. We find a similar case in the prayers addressed to Padmasambhava under his usual Tibetan name of Guru Rinpoche. The expression means Precious Master and is applicable to Padmasambhava himself or any other master. If one has no particular connection with the Karmapa and has received no empowerments or teachings from him, one considers the prayer to be addressed to one's own source lama. Reciting Karmapa chenno one keeps in mind its first meaning, "(Master), you who are the activity (of the Buddhas), think of me."

The seven main verses

The next section of the practice consists of reciting as many times as possible the main prayer of the guru yoga. It is recited a total of one hundred thousand times, and composed of seven verses.

First of all, we pray, "To you, precious master, I address my prayer. Grant your grace so that my mind may reject the grasping of T (two first verses)"

This "I" is the center of a multitude of needs that seem indispensable for its happiness. For me, good food, beautiful clothes, comfortable house, friends, and so on are necessary. This is why the third verse says, "Grant your grace so the absence of need may appear in the stream of my mind."

During the daytime, our mind is encumbered by an immense crowd of thoughts unrelated to the Dharma. Therefore, we pray, "Grant your grace so mundane thoughts may cease."

The source of all suffering resides in the belief that our mind exists as a real object, while lacking beginning, end, and location. Mind is empty, materially nonexisting. The fifth verse summarizes this nature of mind emphasizing its unborn characteristic, "Grant your grace so my own mind may be realized as unborn."

Because of the disturbances of desire, attachment, hatred, aversion, jealousy, blindness, and so on, we are taken into the play of illusory appearances. These appearances govern our present life. They manifest in dreams and also happen during the bardo. Therefore, we pray, "Grant your grace so all illusions may dissipate by themselves."

The realization of the empty nature of the mind—the mahamudra—is also realization of the absolute body, the dharmakaya. The dharmakaya however is not dissociated from manifestation. When one refers to its relation with forms, one speaks of empty forms. In the same way, one speaks of empty sounds or empty mental activity. This emptiness of all phenomena is fully experienced only with Buddhahood. In the seventh verse, we pray, "Grant your grace so all appearances may be realized as dharmakaya."

The first verse of the prayer is calling the lama; the six others concern our spiritual progress and realization. The realization is only possible though the grace of the Three Jewels and specifically by the lama's blessing. This is why these six verses ask for grace. But we must be receptive and open. We must pray from the bottom of our heart, animated by complete sincerity. There is a Tibetan story illustrating this power of devotion and faith.

The Buddha's tooth

An old Tibetan woman had a son, a merchant, who often went to India selling and buying goods. The old woman had deep faith in the Buddha, so her dearest wish was to acquire one of his relics. During one of his trips to India, the son, in describing the itinerary to his mother, mentioned that he would pass through Bodhgaya. Bodhgaya! The place of Buddha's Awakening!

"Since you are going to such a sacred place" the mother said, "Try to bring me a relic of the Buddha, or at least something that has belonged to him." "I promise!" replied the son.

The merchant went to India, trading in the various cities he had planned on going to, including Bodhgaya, but engrossed in the concerns of purchase and sale, bargaining, calculation of profit, and evaluation of the quality of the items, he completely forgot about any relic of the Buddha.

As soon as he returned to his village, the first question his mother asked, was, "Did you think of my relic?" "Sorry, no." The son forgot everything!

The following year, the son undertook another trip to India. The mother urgently renewed her request, only to see her son return some months later

empty-handed just as he had the previous time. Business was so demanding!

A third business trip was planned, and the mother presented a third request. With devotion to the Buddha and with despair over having such a negligent son, she told him, "If you forget my request this time, when you return, I will kill myself in front of you"

And the son, very impressed, made the promise with even more solemnity.

On the roads of India, he thought of his promise. But the days passed swiftly and the fever of trade possessed him each week even more. He returned to Tibet without giving the least thought to the relic. Being a day away from home, he was eating lunch, when suddenly he thought of the promise made by his mother. He knew that she was capable of killing herself. What to do?

His eyes focused on the corpse of a decomposed dog that was not far away. A thought struck his mind, "Dog tooth, human tooth, the difference is not so great." He would bring his mother a "tooth of the Buddha!"

A sacred object like this could not be presented without packaging suitable for its greatness. Our trader covered it with a precious white brocade, then with a yellow, and a red brocade. The gift was ready.

When he appeared in front of his mother, he waited for her question without concealing his joy. "Did you have a good trip? Did you not forget my request again?" "Mother, how could I have forgotten while your life depended on it? I brought you a tooth of the Buddha. Look!"

With tears in her eyes, the old woman received the precious package and, with infinite respect, unfolded the brocades one by one until this extraordinary, incredible, unheard-of gift was revealed, a tooth of the Buddha!

She hurried to place the tooth in a shrine and had a reliquary chiseled in gold to contain it. Each day, she recited prayers and made offerings in front of the holy object. People from the neighborhood joined her in great numbers to show their devotion.

After some time, the vulgar dog tooth began to produce holy pearls (Tibetan, ringsels). As for the old woman, when she died, her body disappeared in a rainbow with a shower of flowers falling from the sky.

The tooth was only a dog's tooth. The old woman was mistaken, but the power of her devotion was so great that it produced such miracles.

Remembering this example, we must cultivate similar devotion when relying on the practice of guru yoga. We will be able to do it only by avoiding too many external distractions, by not falling into laziness, and by not letting any doubts disturb us. Only in these conditions are we able to open up ourselves to grace.

Final consecration

After reciting the seven-verse prayer, we think that the lamas surrounding Vajradhara, or our lama in his or her real form, dissolve in a light that is absorbed into Vajradhara. Then, we visualize a four-fold process.

- From his forehead, marked by the white syllable OM, is emitted a white light touching our own forehead, purifying us of all faults committed by the body, and conferring on us the possibility of ultimately actualizing the body of emanation (nirmanakaya).

- From his throat, marked by the red syllable AH, is emitted a red light touching our own throat, purifying us of all faults committed by speech, and conferring on us the possibility of ultimately actualizing the body of perfect experience (sambhogakaya).

- From his heart, marked by the blue syllable HUNG, is emitted a blue light touching our own heart, purifying us of all faults committed by the mind, and conferring on us thepossibility of ultimately actualizing the absolute body (dharmakaya).

- From the three syllables, white, red, and blue lights are simultaneously emitted, simultaneously purifying us of faults committed by the body, speech, and mind, and conferring on us the possibility of ultimately actualizing the body of essence itself (svabhavakaya).

End of session

Finally, Vajradhara or the lama melts into light and is absorbed into us. We keep the mind at rest for a moment and are convinced that our body, speech, and mind are united with theirs. We then recite the dedication.

Vajradharaling, September 1984

The Kagyupa Lineage

I myself belong to the Kagyupa school and, because of that, I have studied and practiced all aspects of the Buddha's teaching contained in the sutras and tantras.

The most characteristic approach of the Kagyupa school is definitely the *six dharmas of Naropa* and mahamudra, transmitted uninterruptedly since Buddha Vajradhara.

SHAKYAMUNI AND VAJRADHARA

The sutras—the texts recording the teaching of the Hinayana and Mahayana—have their origin in Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha. Tantras—the texts containing the Vajrayana teachings - have been revealed by the Buddha Vajradhara (Tibetan, Dorje Chang) as an expression of the dharmakaya. One should not think because of this that Shakyamuni and Vajradhara are two different beings. They are two manifestations of a unique essence: one expounding the sutras, the other appearing in the form of multiple tantric deities (Hevajra, Chakrasamvara, and many others) and teaching their respective tantras. The term Kagyu is allusion to this origin of the tantras, since it means lineage (Tibetan, gyu) issued from Speech (Tibetan, ka). The Kagyu lineage is therefore a transmission of the direct revelation of Vajradhara.

KAGYUPA LINEAGES

In Tibet, the Vajrayana instructions are said to lead to the complete Awakening in the present lifetime, or else in the bardo, or within seven consecutive lives. These Vajrayana instructions have rapidly spread through the various lineages whose eight principal ones are known as the Eight Great Chariots of Practice. Given that all these lineages have their origin in the dharmakaya word, in the form of Vajradhara or in another form, all may be referred to as Kagyu. One may speak of the Nyingma Kagyu, Lamdre Kagyu in the Sakyapas, Ganden Kagyu in the Gelukpas, Shangpa Kagyu, Jonang Kagyu, and so on. However, in a more limited way and in current use, when one speaks of the Kagyu lineage, one refers to the school whose founder was Marpa the Translator, in Tibet.

The Kagyu lineage in its strict meaning does not refer to a unique entity but to a great number of subdivisions that have occurred over the course of history. The first subdivision occurred among Gampopa's disciples. The four main disciples created their own lineages.

- the Karma Kagyu school originated with the first Karmapa Tusum Khyenpa
- the Barom Kagyu school issued from Barom Dharma Wangchuk
- the Tselpa Kagyu school issued from Tsondru Drakpa

- The Pakdru Kagyu school issued from Pakmo Drupa

Following Pakmo Drupa, eight new divisions developed:

- Drikung Kagyu
- Taklung Kagyu
- Drukpa Kagyu
- Yelpa Kagyu
- Yazang Kagyu
- Shukseb Kagyu
- Marpa Kagyu 46
- Tropu Kagyu

VARIOUS PRESENTATIONS

These two groups have been listed as forming the four great and the eight small Kagyu lineages.

All proceed from Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa. They share the practice of the six dharmas of Naropa and mahamudra. This does not preclude slightly different instructions. For example, the Karma Kagyu tradition presents the mahamudra by The Introduction to the Three Bodies (Tibetan, ku sum ngotro). The Drikung school uses The Unique Thought (Tibetan, drikunggong chik) in the presentation of the mahamudra, and the Drukpa Kagyu lineage uses the Six-fold Cycle of One Taste (Tibetan, ronyom khor druk). The expressions differ, but the meaning is the same.

The lineage particularly referred to here is the Karma Kagyu lineage. It was founded by the first Karmapa, a disciple of Gampopa, whose main disciple was Situ Drogon Rechen. They were the first two representatives of the incarnation lineages later to be known as Black Crowns (Karmapas) and Red Crowns (Situpas). Their activity, with that of other masters, formed the Karma Kagyu school that still exists in its integrity today.

DISTANT AND CLOSE LINEAGES

As we have said, the origin of the lineage goes back to Buddha Vajradhara. He revealed his teachings to the Indian yogi Tilopa, who transmitted them to Naropa. Naropa entrusted them to his Tibetan disciple Marpa. This transmission, comprising the six dharmas of Naropa and the mahamudra, is called the close lineage.

There is, however, another transmission, called the distant lineage, which includes human masters from whom Tilopa received instructions. Thus the distant lineage does not rely only on the revelation made by Vajradhara. Concerning the six dharmas of Naropa, this distant lineage lists four practice systems that were orally transmitted to Tilppa and that he united as four tributary streams, coming from the North, East, South, and West into a single river. This distant lineage includes, among others, Saraha, Shawaripa, Lawapa, and Sukkhasiddhi.

The dose lineage is considered more important than the distant lineage, because it is more directly related to Vajradhara. Tilopa said,

I have no human guru,

My guru is Vajradhara.

In a short prayer often recited in the beginning of practice or meditation,47 one addresses the dose lineage like this, Vajradhara, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, and Tusum Khyenpa, the first Karmapa.

In the framework of this dose lineage, two texts are considered the basis of reference on which the transmission of the six dharmas and mahamudra rely.

- *The Criteria of Authentic Speech* (Tibetan, Ka yangdakpol tsenma)

recording the word of Vajradhara and Vajrayogini and

codifying the six dharmas of Naropa.

- *The Inconceivable Dharma of Mahamudra* (Tibetan, *Chagya chenpo samgymikyappa chod)*, which represents the foundation of the approach to mahamudra.

In the context of the distant lineage, the transmission of mahamudra also has its origin in the Buddha Vajradhara, but, before reaching Marpa the Translator, it was passed to the bodhisattva Lodro Rinchen, the mahasiddha Saraha, then to Nagarjuna, Shawaripa, and Maitripa from whom Marpa received it in India. In the Preliminary Practices to Mahamudra, mention of this distant lineage is found.

MAITRIPA, THE BELL AND THE BOWL

It is well known that Naropa was the main master of Marpa. This is why Marpa, referring to Naropa says, "Naropa, my father, is for me like the sun and moon" Nevertheless, Marpa had many other masters in India as we have seen, like Maitripa, who comes second to Naropa.

Maitripa was a resident of the great Buddhist university of Nalanda. He was one of the main scholars there. His approach to the Dharma included all levels. He had taken the monk vows, committing himself to perfect external conduct according to the Hinayana, to the inner vows of the bodhisattva in the framework of the Mahayana, and to the secret commitments in the Vajrayana. For this reason, he was called the bhiksu endowed with the three vajras. Mahamudra was his main practice.

One time, to broaden his inner realization, he used alcohol and had a relationship with a woman companion. Of course, he kept these practices secret. One of the monks in charge of discipline at Nalanda was nevertheless puzzled by sometimes seeing rays of light coming out of Maitripa's cell. One day to see what was happening, the monk suddenly opened the door of Maitripa's cell, but Maitripa had heard him coming. By his magical powers, Maitripa transformed his bowl of alcohol into a bowl of milk and his woman companion into a ritual bell. The spying monk, observing nothing out of ordinary, however remained suspicious. Another day, he approached the cell with more caution, and this time Maitripa did not hear him coming and was caught in blatant violation of monastic rules. Neither the use of alcohol nor keeping a young woman were acceptable for the life inside of Nalanda.

The monastery's authorities had a council and made a quick decision. Maitripa would be expelled from Nalanda.

When the judgment was handed down, Maitripa made no objection. He gathered up his belongings, took a small mat, and went to the shore of the nearby river. He placed the mat on the water, climbed onto it, and crossed the river as if he was on a boat! Nalanda authorities, witnessing this spectacle, understood that Maitripa was not a simple monk having broken his vows as first believed, but a mahasiddha, a being with exceptional realization.

ATISHA, TARA, AND TIBET

At the time, one of the abbots of Nalanda was Atisha. When he learned that Maitripa, the person he had decided to expel was a mahasiddha, he thought that he had committed a serious negative act by chasing Maitripa out of Nalanda as a bad monk, rather than honoring Maitripa for his realization. Atisha did not know how to purify himself when the deity Tara appeared to him and said, "Your attitude toward Maitripa is regrettable. One of the best ways to purify yourself would be to go to Tibet to teach the Dharma to these difficult people" It is said that Tara's intervention was one of the decisive reasons for Atisha coming to Tibet.

SHAWARIPA, PEACOCKS, AND LICE

Without forsaking alcohol or his woman companion, Maitripa went into the mountains to continue his practice. He then had a vision of a yidam revealing that the yogi Shawaripa had been his master during his past lives, and that he should again request instructions from Shawaripa which will allow him to obtain complete realization of mahamudra. Maitripa visited Shawaripa who conferred on him empowerments and instructions. The behavior of Shawaripa, however, was so strange and so contrary to all conventions that Maitripa could not keep himself from being shocked. For example, Shawaripa killed peacocks and used their feathers to make skirts which he wore, acting out all kinds of fantasies. Shawaripa also killed small pigs, cut them in two and hung the two parts on the upper and lower extremities of his bow when he was going to hunt deers and other peaceful animals. When Shawaripa received Maitripa, two young women sat on the right and left sides of the master. They were concentrating on munching lice extracted from his long, dirty, and oily hair. Doubts arose in the mind of Maitripa on account of this conduct, especially as it implied the act of killing. For a long time, this conduct prevented Maitripa from completely realizing mahamudra. Nevertheless, Maitripa overcame his reticence with the final result that Shawaripafs realization of mahamudra was able to light the realization of mahamudra in the mind of Maitripa, just as the flame of a candle will light another candle.

These two masters are from the distant transmission lineage of mahamudra.

Maitripa had many Tibetan disciples. Among them, as previously mentioned, was Marpa the Translator to whom Maitripa transmitted all the instructions on

mahamudra. There was also Khyungpo Naljor, founder of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage, who received from him a complete cycle of empowerments and instructions relating to the protector deity Six-Arm Mahakala.

In summary, the distant lineage as described in the Preliminaries of Mahamudra, was passed from the Buddha Vajradhara to the bodhisattva Lodro Rinchen, then to the mahasiddha Saraha, to Nagarjuna, Shawaripa, and Maitripa, from whom Marpa received it in India. In Tibet, it passed from Marpa to Milarepa, then to Gampopa, Tusum Khyenpa, the first Karmapa, and all the lamas in the lineage until the Sixteenth Karmapa, Rangjung Rikpol Dorje. This full transmission is called the Golden Rosary of the Kagyu Lineage. It has preserved the continuity of empowerments, readings of scripture, explanations, words, meanings, and grace until the present day.

Samye Ling, Mardi 1983

NAROPA PAYS HOMAGE TO MILAREPA

Marpa was Naropa's main disciple. He made three journeys to India and spent a total of sixteen years and six months with Naropa.

When Marpa came to his master for the third time, the master asked him the reason for his visit. Marpa answered that he had come less for personal needs than in response to the request of his disciple, Milarepa Thogawa—Happy News.48 In a dream, Milarepa had the vision of a dakini who advised him to receive instructions called The Direct Transmission of the Dakinis. Milarepa had asked for these instructions from Marpa, but Marpa searched all texts that he knew, and found no trace of the so-called transmission. Therefore, he came to Naropa for them.

Naropa, hearing these words, immediately said:

How wonderful!

In the profound darkness of the northern regions,

Like the sun that rises on the mountain tops,

He who is called Happy News has come

Before this holy being, I prostrate.

Turning then toward the North, in direction of Tibet, he prostrated three times. It is said as he prostrated, all the trees bowed to the North and that, even today, the trees of that region lean in that direction.

MARPA'S MISTAKE

Marpa had several children. Among them was Dharmadode, his eldest son, for whom Marpa had great love. Marpa planned to make his son the heir of his temporal properties, and also the holder of his spiritual lineage.

Once, when Marpa was staying with Naropa, Naropa called him early in the morning to quickly look outside. Marpa's yidam had appeared in the sky! Marpa hurried and contemplated the deity Hevajra accompanied by his entourage appearing in front of him in space.

"You have in front of you your master and your yidam" Naropa told him. "To whom do you prostrate first?" "Well," thought Marpa, "I see my master every day, while the appearance of the yidam is extraordinary" Therefore, he chose to prostrate in front of the yidam.

"The yidam is only a manifestation of the mind of the master," remarked Naropa, and immediately, Hevajra and his entourage melted into Naropa's heart. "By choosing to prostrate before the yidam" he said, "you made a mistake that will have consequences on your descendants on earth. They will last no longer than a flower in the sky. However, your spiritual descendants will not be damaged, they will continue to flow like a large river. Your successors will resemble lion's cubs, each one superior to its predecessor."

Dharmadode, Marpa's son, died in an accident. Marpa had four great disciples on whom he conferred part of his spiritual inheritance. As for Milarepa, he received all the empowerments and instructions concerning the six dharmas of Naropa and mahamudra. He himself transmitted them to Gampopa, and the transmission has to this day remained uninterrupted.

Samye Ling, March 1983

SITU DROGON RECHEN AND THE MELTED SNOW

The biographies of the first masters of the lineage, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, and the First Karmapa are well known and it is perhaps unnecessary to recall them here. As a less known example of the great Kagyupa masters, we could mention Situ Drogon Rechen.

The First Karmapa was given the name of Tusum Khyenpa emphasizing his realization of the ultimate nature of all things permitting him to know past, present, and future phenomena. His fame was widespread in Tibet

Situ Drogon Rechen, who was to become his main disciple, had acquired remarkable ability in the practice of Iumo, one of the six dharmas of Naropa, during which a great physical heat is produced. In all seasons, including winter, he only wore a white cotton doth. This gave him the name of Rechen, the Great One (yogi) with Cotton Cloth. Although he had reached a certain level of realization, he had not rid himself of pride. He was especially proud of his knowledge and inner experiences, particularly of his results with tumo. The fame of Tusum Khyenpa annoyed him, and to prove that he was his peer, maybe even superior to Tusum Khyenpa, he decided to challenge him to a contest.

Tusum Khyenpa resided then in a cave carved in eternal snows on a high mountain. Obviously, he had neither good food nor comfort. When Situ Drogon Rechen arrived, he told him, "You come from far away and have taken a lot of trouble to get here. I will prepare a good soup for us"

He put some meat in a pot along with the various ingredients at hand. Then, he used an old human finger bone which was there to mix everything and mischievously said, "Usually, I stir only once, but since today I have a remarkable guest from far away, I must stir this three times."

Situ Drogon Rechen overcame his disgust, ate the soup, and told of his reason for coming. He wanted a t umo contest with Tusum Khyenpa to determine which of the two had the greatest mastery of the subtle channels and winds. "Why not?" replied the First Karmapa. "However I am getting old and it is better for you to challenge one of my disciples, Batsa Tadelwa, who practices in a neighboring cave."

Situ Drogon Rechen left to visit Batsa Tadelwa. When he arrived at the cave indicated by the Karmapa, he found no one there. He returned to Tusum Khyenpa. "Yes, I am sure he can be found there" replied the Karmapa. "Go back!"

The visitor again returned to the cave. He only saw a tiger there. He was sent back again by the Karmapa, and he saw on the third time a fire burning in the middle of the cave. The fourth time, he saw a large puddle of water. Finding these successive appearances strange, Situ Drogon Rechen distractedly threw a stone in the puddle.

Although his guest never found the person he was looking for, Tusum Khyenpa assured him that his disciple could be nowhere else since he himself had sent him to this cave to meditate. The fifth visit was better. The yogi was sitting there, in meditation posture. Curiously, the stone thrown by the visitor was posed on the pleats of his robe.

Situ Drogon Rechen explained his visit. He wanted to compare his skill in tumo with those of Tusum Khyenpa but the latter, judging himself too old, had send him to challenge Batsa Tadelwa, his disciple.

Since this was the wish of his master, Batsa Tadelwa accepted. The contest would take place at night. "However," he said, "This is my permanent residence, I am accustomed to the weather. This gives me a certain advantage I should not have. For the contest, I will meditate a little higher up on the mountain, where an icy wind makes the practice more rigorous. You will remain here, near the cave."

Each one took his place as agreed and began to practice tumo. During the night, Situ Drogon Rechen released enough heat to make the snow melt for six or nine yards around him. Although the snow was transformed into water, the water was cold and the yogi was exposed to the icy night.

As for Batsa Tadelwa, higher up on the mountain, not only had he been able to make the snow melt by a shooting ray equal to the flight of an arrow, but he bathed in a lake of hot water and splashed the waves over his body.

When dawn came, the Karmapa flew through the air to see the winner. When he observed the situation, he asked Batsa Tadelwa to show compassion and let a stream of hot water shower his competitor and warm his freezing body.

This defeat allowed Situ Drogon Rechen to eliminate his pride. "If those are the skills of the disciple" he thought, "what are those of the master!" Since that time, Situ Drogon Rechen considered the Karmapa as his source lama.

THE FEAST OF TUMO

The practice of mahamudra and the six dharmas of Naropa was passed on by Milarepa and has continued to this day, notably in Kham, in the framework of collective retreats of three years and three months. During the second and third year of these retreats on the occasion of the anniversary of Milarepa's departure from this world, traditionally fixed to the fourteenth day of the first Tibetan month,49 the retreatants decorate the retreat center in a special way and dress in simple cotton doth. Then, they gather to spend the night in practice. They first exert to produce the heat of tumo, then they ritually chant the songs of realization composed by Milarepa and the great Kagyupa masters of the past. At dawn, they practice physical exercises related to the six dharmas of Naropa.

At the end of the retreat, always scheduled in the middle of winter, the meditators go out in procession, wearing the same white cotton doth, and cirde the monastery. Despite biting cold, because of the power acquired by the practice of lumo, they release enough heat to feel perfectly at ease. The effects of this heat are visible as light steam floating around their bodies. Many Tibetans from the surrounding areas come to assist in the spectacle. They pay homage to the realization of the retreatants by prostrating themselves before the line of procession.

During his exile, the Sixteenth Karmapa again established a retreat center at the monastery of Rumtek, in India. He wished to fully preserve the traditions of Tibet and gave the mission of directing the retreat center to Bokar Tulku Rinpoche. When the first retreat ended in Rumtek, the retreatants, with Bokar Rinpoche leading them, went out in procession, just like in Tibet, dressed in white cotton doth and practicing tumo. Witnesses were impressed.

PROGRAM OF A THREE-YEAR RETREAT

In the Kagyupa tradition, the phase of completion is mainly represented by the two practices we already mentioned,

- the six dharmas of Naropa, constituting the "path of means"
- mahamudra, constituting the "way of liberation"

The phase of creation relies on three main deities, Chakrasamvara, Vajrayogini, and Gyelwa Gyamtso.

Before performing these practices, those who accomplish a three-year retreat must first accomplish the common and specific preliminary practices. Retreatants later approach the guru yoga in connection with Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa, then accomplish the practice of the lama of KarmapaksW, the second Karmapa. During the period devoted to prostr ations, the first specific preliminary, the end of each session is devoted to the bodhisattva vows, which already help to develop compassion. However, to give a greater vigor to this feeling, after the practices devoted to the lama, there is a period when the retreatant concentrates on lojong (training of the mind) particularly aimed for the development of bodhicitta.

The lojong practice represents the essence of the teachings of the Kadampa lineage. It is specific to one of the eight great original lineages. However, Gampopa, before meetingMilarepa, belonged to this Kadampa school, and it is said that he joined in his person the two rivers of the Kadampas and mahamudra. Since this time, the Kagyupas have considered lojong as one of their main practices.

During the practice of the preliminaries in retreat, when one approaches the offering of the mandate, one begins the practice of chod. Chod regroups in fact two traditions in one: that of chod, properly said, coming from Machik Labdron, and that of shije coming from Padampa Sangye. The totality forms the Shije Kagyu that is one of the Eight Great Chariots. Chod practice is incorporated in the Karma Kagyu tradition and is specifically related with the offering of the mandala. In the ordinary practice of the offering of the mandala, one places oneself at an external level and imagines offering the whole universe and all the wealth it contains. In chod practice, offering of the mandala reaches a deeper inner level as it is the different parts of our body that are presented in an offering to the four kinds of guests:

-places of refuge, guests of honor

-protectors of the dharma, guests of capacities

-the totality of beings, guests of compassion

-creditor guests

Begun during the practice of the mandala offering that it completes, chod practice is then continued daily for the duration of the retreat as a method of accumulation and purification.

Because the foundation of the practice of the Vajrayana relies on the phases of creation and completion, the retreatants accomplish the practices—implying recitations of mantras, visualizations, and rituals—of the yidams Chakrasamvara, Vajrayogini, and Gyelwa Gyamtso, successively concentrating on the external, internal, and secret levels of the practice.

PRINCIPLES OF THE YIDAM MEDITATION

In the Small Vehicle, the Buddha teaches that mind is empty and that the essential of the practice aims to know this emptiness by remaining concentrated without distraction. In the Mahayana, not only is the mind considered as empty, but the mind has the ability of knowing, which is its element of clarity called dear light. It is therefore said that the essence of mind is emptiness and its nature is clarity. Finally, one cannot ignore a third element, which is the awareness of emptiness and clarity. If there is no awareness, there is no mind. A third factor is then defined, called intelligence (Tibetan, rikpa), awareness (Tibetan, shepa), or nonobstruction (Tibetan, magakpa). In the Mahayana, there is a complete description of the mind, its essence is emptiness, its nature is clarity, and its aspect is unobstructed intelligence.

The mind, understood like that, is the potential of Buddhahood. It is also its actualization. At the causal level or at the level of result, the mind is the same. Whether it is impure or pure is the only difference. It is said,

All beings are Buddha,

But their mind is obscured by adventitious impurities.

Once the impurities dissipate, beings are truly Buddha.

The way to envision the mode of being of the mind in the Mahayana and in the Vajrayana is practically the same. However, there is a difference in the manner of conceiving the real nature of the body. The Small Vehicle considers the body as a compound of thirty-two impure components that one must reject. Arriving at the conclusion that the body is, in the last analysis, only composed of atoms, the Hinayana considers the body as nonexistent in and of itself, being nothing other than a conglomeration of atoms. The great vehicle, declaring that all phenomena are the product of dynamics of the mind, concludes that the body is similar to a mirage, a reflection of the moon on the water, or a magical illusion. Finally, in the Vajrayana, the body is looked upon as having a divine nature.

To acquire the capacity to perceive this body as being in reality the body of the deity and to make this divine nature evident and dear, the phase of creation is implemented. This is the reason that before to accomplishing the six dharmas of Naropa, one practices the meditation on the deities Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini. As for Gyelwa Gyamtso practice during the three-year retreat, it can be done either before or after the six dharmas of Naropa.

After the phase of creation, emptiness must be realized. To reach this realization, the phase of completion comprised of two aspects—with symbols or without symbols—is necessary. The phase of completion with symbols corresponds to the six dharmas of Naropa. The phase of completion without symbols corresponds to the mahamudra.

The practices we evoke can be approached successively in the framework of various levels, or separately, as each of them may lead by itself to Awakening.

We have a great opportunity to be in an actual situation where these teachings are available. They can be approached by all those who wish. We have arrived at the Island of Jewels. All Buddha's teachings, those of Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana are immediately before us. We should rejoice and choose what appears to us to be the most appropriate method for our personal situation.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Khyungpo Naljor and the Shangpa Lineage

Khyungpo Naljor

The Shangpa lineage, which once blossomed autonomously, is today, as an institution, linked to the Karma Kagyu lineage. Nevertheless, it preserves a corpus of its own practices which continue to be taught, particularly in the framework of retreats. Kalu Rinpoche had the highest position in the hierarchy of the Shangpa lineage, having received its transmission during the three-year retreat he accomplished at a very young age under the direction of Lama Norbu Tondrup. Since Kalu Rinpoche fs death, Bokar Rinpoche, his main disciple, has succeeded as the head of the lineage.

Kalu Rinpoche does not paint here a full picture of the Shangpa lineage, nor does he retrace the history of this lineage in the meaning we usually give to history. Rather, by a succession of stories, he introduces us to its mystery and to its "perfume."

THE SOURCE OF THE TEACHINGS

The kalpa of one thousand Buddhas

An age in which Buddhas appear is called a luminous kalpa, in contrast to a dark kalpa during which there is no spiritual teaching. The cosmic era in which we now live, is called the good kalpa, belonging to the first category, and will eventually see a total of a thousand Buddhas. Four of them have already come, Krakukandra, Kanaka Muni, Kashyapa,50 and Shakyamuni from whose teachings we have benefited in the present.

When a Buddha manifests, he always teaches on three levels, the Vehicle of the Listeners, the Vehicle of the Solitary Buddhas, and the Great Vehicle. Teaching of the Vajrayana is, on the other hand, very rare. Among the one thousand Buddhas of our kalpa, only Shakyamuni Buddha has transmitted Vajrayana on a large scale. During the times of other Buddhas, the word Vajrayana itself will not be mentioned. Even if this vehicle is taught, it is only in a confidential way, limited to small circles.

Very rare teachings

The prophecies give some idea of the exceptional characteristic of the kalpa in which we live. It is said that at the end of this kalpa of one thousand Buddhas, our universe will be destroyed, according to the logic of the cosmic cycle.51 Then an empty kalpa, with no manifestation, will be followed by seven hundred kalpas during which there will be no Buddhas and no Dharma. Then again, a good kalpa will return during which ten thousand Buddhas will come. The luminous kalpas happen rarely and are separated by a long succession of dark kalpas. In these luminous kalpas, the Vajrayana teaching is even more rare. The Dharma will not be revealed for an infinite number of kalpas, until the Buddha Jampeipal arrives and propagates the Dharma as did Shakyamuni Buddha. Before this, preceding Buddhas, if they teach the Vajrayana at all, will transmit it only to a very small number of disciples.

Advancing toward liberation

We have taken birth in a luminous kalpa and we have access to all the levels of teachings delivered by Shakyamuni Buddha. This is only possible by conjunction of the grace of the Three Jewels and an immense personal positive potential accumulated during innumerable kalpas. Our human existence is, in this sense, very precious.

We are able to distinguish five steps in our lives: childhood, youth, maturity, old age, and illness and death.52 Most of you are in the stage of maturity. When will sickness and death come? We have no certainty on this point. Perhaps, we can last until old age, but we are not sure. Whatever happens, part of our life has already flowed away, and it is necessary for us to make good use of the years remaining to us. We should practice the Dharma that we have encountered, advance toward our liberation from suffering in samsara, and try to help an infinite number of beings. We must use, without spoiling them, the potentialities of our precious human existence.

Facets of Buddhism

Among the teachings, as we have seen, three levels are distinguished, the Vehicle of the Listeners, that of solitary Buddhas, and the Vehicle of the bodhisattvas, or Great Vehicle. This Great Vehicle itself offers two facets, the sutras that constitute the Dialectic Great Vehicle, and the tantras that constitute the Vajrayana. At the present time, all these aspects are at our disposal.

In ancient India, many beings gained status as outstanding examples of their tradition. There are the Sixteen Shtaviras and the Five Hundred Arhats in the sutra framework, the Eighty-four Mahasiddhas in the tantric tradition, the Six Ornaments of this World and the Two Sublimes Ones, representative of the approach both of the sutras and tantras.53

Originating in India, Buddhism gradually spread to neighboring countries in one form or the other. Tibet has the peculiarity of offering the totality of the teachings of the Buddha, the sutras of the Small and Great Vehicles as well as the tantras.

Origin of the lineages

Buddhism was first introduced into Tibet by King Songtsen Gampo who invited the abbot Shantarakshita, a representative of the sutra path, and Padmasambhava, holder of the tantra path. The Vajrayana expanded in a profound way, constituting the Old School, the Nyingmapas, which produced a great blossom of realized beings. The Nyingmapa school was like the sun for Tibet.

With the passing of years, a certain number of its members emphasized in their speeches a high philosophy and claimed to practice less meditation, while having a behavior stained by negativities. This created some degeneration. At the time, King Yeshe Od,54 looked upon as a divine emanation, sent the translator Rinchen Zangpo to India to ask the Indian master Atisha, to come to Tibet. The efforts that Rinchen Zangpo as well as other scholars and translators deployed in Tibet to revive the Dharma gave place, in the framework of the Vajrayana, to the new tradition.

Atisha emphasized the importance of the three levels of practice.

- the external level represented by the vows of individual liberation, those taken by monks, nuns, and lay people

- the internal level equal to the vows of the bodhisattva, insisting on love, compassion, and having the motivation of benefitting others

- the secret level of the Vajrayana relying on the phases of creation and completion of deity meditation

This tradition of Atisha, in which many scholars and realized beings are found, was known by the name of Kadampa school.

Later, a monk of the region of Tsongkha, known as Tsongkhapa, came and gave a new impetus to the Kadampa teachings. Learned and endowed with great realization, he established himself in Ganden monastery,55 with the

result that his school was first called Gandenpa. It is the same school known today as Gelukpa school.

Marpa the Translator, a contemporary of Atisha, founded the Marpa Kagyu lineage. This school originated with Vajradhara Buddha (Tibetan, Dorje Chang), who revealed his teachings to the Indian master Tilopa. Tilopa transmitted them to Naropa. Marpa came to India, searched for these teachings, and received them from Naropa. The path of skillful means is represented by the six dharmas of Naropa and the way of liberation by mahamudra. Marpa had as a main disciple, Milarepa whose two eminent spiritual sons, who were compared to the sun and moon, were Dhagpo Rinpoche (Gampopa) and Rechungpa. The four main disciples of Gampopa founded four subsections in the Kagyu lineage, known as the four great Kagyupa schools, and because of additional subsections, eight small schools are listed.

Another of the great lineages was introduced by the Indian master Padampa Sangye. According to the tradition, he lived two hundred years and proposed a system known as shije. His main Tibetan disciple, Machik Labdron, an incarnation of Tara, developed the chod practice within this system. The union of shije and chod constitute one of the great Tibetan traditions.

As for Kunga Nyingpo, he collected a great number of Indian Buddhist traditions in a corpus called Lamdre, whose main source was the mahasiddha Virupa. Given that his monastery was established in a place called Sakya, in the province of Tsang, his school was known as Sakyapa school.

The Jonangpa lineage relies on any teachings of the Vajrayana, especially the cycle of Kalachakra. This cycle was introduced in Tibet by three translators, Re Lotsawa, Dromo Lotsawa, and Tsemo Lotsawa. This cycle became particularly famous with Dolpo Sangye and Jetsun Taranatha.

Drubtop Qrgyenpa, a disciple of Karmapakshi, the second Karmapa, had the power to visit any place on earth, including the Northern kingdom of Shambala. He codified under the name of Dorje Naljor the teachings he received from many dakinis. His lineage is generally known under the name of Dorje sum gyi nyendrup.

The Shangpa Kagyu lineage56 that holds our interest here is traced to Khyungpo Naljor. At a very young age, Khyungpo Naljor studied the sutras and tantras, then went seven times to India and Nepal where he received instructions from one hundred and fifty masters.

KHYUNGPO NALJOR'S MASTERS

A predestined child

Just when Khyungpo Naljor was born, an Indian master called Amoga, using his miraculous powers, flew to the birth place. Hovering in the sky, Amoga prophesied for the parents that the extraordinary child who was given to them would go to India several times, meet one hundred fifty masters there, and would obtain great realization. Amoga identified the various characteristics of Khyungpo Naljor's personality as the expression of five great tantric deities.

- his body represented Guyasamaja
- his speech, Mahamaya
- his mind, Hevajra
- his qualities, Chakrasamvara
- his activity, Vajrabhairava

Amoga added that the child would live a hundred and fifty years and following his death, he would be born into the Land of Bliss.

Khyungpo Naljor meets Niguma

When Khyungpo Naljor went to India, he set himself the goal of meeting a master who had direct vision of the dharmakaya Vajradhara (Tibetan, Dorje Chang). He roamed everywhere, continually praying for his objective. During his wandering, he met a number of gurus who told him that he would find what he was searching for in the person of the dakini of wisdom Niguma, who resided in a forest of sandal wood. "She has truly obtained the vision of dharmakaya" they asserted. "Perhaps you will be able to meet her"

After undergoing many difficulties, Khyungpo Naljor finally discovered the forest of sandalwood. As he was passing through it, Niguma appeared in front of him in space. She had dark skin, wore various ornaments, and danced in the sky, holding in her hands a damaru and a skull cup. Her aspect was terrifying. Khyungpo Naljor prostrated in front of her and asked for empowerments and instructions. As an offering, he presented her with gold he had brought with him. The dakini took the gold, but immediately threw it away, tossing it into the forest.

Khyungpo Naljor hesitated. Was this really Niguma? Or was this rather a flesh-eating dakini? He believed he was in danger. At this moment, a mountain surrounded by a crowd of dakinis appeared in space. On the summit, in the four directions, were four rivers of rolling waves of gold. "What is this mountain?'7 He asked himself. "Is it truly somewhere in India or is it only your creation?"

"If one has a pure view, everything is gold," replied the dakini, "Without pure view, there is no gold anywhere. I have no need for your gold." She then opened her hand and returned all his gold, which she had earlier thrown away.

Khyungpo Naljor understood that he was truly facing Niguma and, prostrating again, he uttered his request for empowerments.

Producing the appearance of the deity Chakrasamvara and his mandala, Niguma conferred on him a complete cycle of empowerments and instructions, notably the six dharmas of Niguma.57 Khyungpo Naljor also received instructions on the mahamudra known with the name of Reliquary of the Mahamudra.58 Khyungpo Naljor received this transmission first in a waking state, and then again during a dream.

Encounter with Sukkhasiddhi

Later, on a journey to India, Khyungpo Naljor met thirteen siddhas from whom he received empowerments and teachings. The siddhas suggested that he seek another dakini of wisdom, Sukhasiddhi, who, having achieved rainbow body, 59 also lived in a forest. "If your karma is pure" they told him, "you will be able to meet her. If it is impure, it will be impossible"

Beginning his quest once more, Khyungpo Naljor effectively met Sukkhasiddhi, who appeared in the form of a sixteen-year-old woman, with pure white skin, who was very beautiful and was adorned with jewels and silks. As had Niguma, she remained in front of him in the sky. She conferred on him instructions of the six dharmas of Sukkhasiddhi, as well as instructions on a practice bringing together the master and four deities.

Niguma

Niguma was Naropa's sister. Because of pure karma from her past lives, she had the vision of Vajradhara Buddha from whom she directly received instructions. She immediately obtained the eighth bodhisattva stage and became a dakini of wisdom.

Sukkhasiddhi

Sukkhasiddhi was originally a simple laywoman and mother of a family. She lived in Kashmir, in Western India, with her husband and five children. At this time, a terrible famine ravaged the region. To find a little food, her husband and children went begging everyday. The mother waited for them at home. She was a person of great faith. One day, when only a small pot of rice remained, a monk appeared at her house begging for food. The faith of the old woman was great, and she immediately offered him the rice, thinking that her husband and children would bring something more to eat. In the evening, however, they returned empty-handed and exhausted, and asked the mother to prepare the meal. She told them that, as she thought that they would return with food, she had given all that remained to a monk. It was too much for them. They became violently angry, reproached her for having no consideration and chased her out of the house.

After traveling for a long time, begging for food, she arrived at a large city in Kashmir where she was able to obtain a large quantity of rice. She used this rice to brew a kind of beer that she sold. She was then sixty years old. The mahasiddha Virupa60 lived near this city. He shared his life with a woman companion who came every day to the market to buy beer because Virupa consumed a great quantity. One day, the old woman asked her, "You come every day to buy beer from me, who drinks so much?" "In the forest lives a good guru who drinks it."

The old woman spontaneously felt devotion for this guru. She said, "If he is a good guru, I can no longer accept payment for the beer destined for him. I offer it to him with good heart."

She gave away the beer every day. Some time later, Virupa asked his woman companion, "Every day, you bring me excellent beer without paying for it. Where do you find it?"

"It is from an old woman who maintains a booth in the market. When she learned that the beer was for you, she no longer wanted me to pay." "Tell her to come see me," Virupa said.

The woman companion went to the city, told the beermaker of Virupa's invitation, and asked her to come. The old merchant was full of happiness. She bought some meat, and with a large quantity of beer went to visit the mahasiddha.

Seeing the immense faith of this woman, Virupa gave her his blessing and the cycle of empowerments of the Hevajra tantra, and explained the mahamudra to her. The effects of this practice were so powerful that, despite her sixty-three years, the beer brewer acquired the body of a sixteen-year-old woman and attained liberation. The body she acquired then was in fact a rainbow body, not an ordinary material body, but a physical appearance that only predestined individuals can see. From then on, she was known as Sukkhasiddhi.

Khyungpo Naljor, thanks to empowerments and instructions received from the two dakinis of wisdom, the thirteen mahasiddhas, and his one hundred and fifty masters, himself obtained the state of a mahasiddha. Returning to Tibet, he established his main monastery South of Lhassa, in a region called Shang, from which his lineage took the name of Shangpa Kagyu. The fame of his realization and erudition attracted so many disciples that he founded a total of 108 monasteries in central Tibet and Kham.

Vancouver, June 1982

Virupa does not pay for his beer

Virupa, master of Sukkhasiddhi as we just saw, was famous for a peculiar episode in his life.

Because he lived with a woman companion and drank much beer, people considered him a bad lama and harshly criticized him. One day, he came to the city and stopped over to do some heavy drinking. He asked for as much beer as it would be possible to find and specified that no one should worry about the money because he would pay before sunset. Therefore, an enormous quantity of beer was put at his disposal and he drank it all. In fact, he had no money.

When the innkeeper asked him to pay, Virupa pointed his finger to the sun, and because of his powers, immobilized the sun course in the sky. Six days passed without the sun setting or even moving. Worried people went to the king for counsel.

The king personally came to see Virupa and asked him what he wanted. Virupa explained that he had promised to pay for his beer before sunset, but because he had no money, he had no choice other than stopping the sun in its tracks. The king told him, "In this case, I will pay for you. If you do not

allow the sun to set, many people are going to die. I prefer to pay for the beer" Virupa accepted and allowed the sun continue on its course.

Virupa was a being of great realization. Although he drank excessively and lived with a woman, this did not tarnish his state of perfection at all. There are many thangkas in Tibet representing the mahasiddha Virupa stopping the course of the sun.

Madrid, Autumn 1987

KHYUNGPO NALJOR'S MIRACLES

The vision of Rinchen Dorje

Eight disciples of Khyungpo Naljor were considered particularly close to him. One of them, Rinchen Dorje, was his personal secretary. Although the disciple usually had great faith in his master, there was a time he began to doubt Khyungpo Naljor's realization and person. Khyungpo Naljor, for the purpose of purifying his disciple's mind, recommended a retreat devoted to the practice of Vajrasattva (Tibetan, Dorje Sempa) and AH yi tongra.61 At the end of the retreat, Khyungpo Naljor had his disciple to come to his room and asked, "Well, how do you see your master now?" "Under the same aspect as usual" replied Rinchen Dorje.

Khyungpo Naljor asked him to go out, and again a few moments later, he called him back. Rinchen Dorje then did not see an ordinary human being, but the deity Hevajra, surrounded by his mandate. Sheltered in the yidam's body, were the mandates of other deities, each one accompanied by a great entourage. In the head of Hevajra was the mandate of Guyasamaja, in his throat that of Mahamaya, in his heart that of Hevajra, on the level of his navel that of Chakrasamvara, and on the secret level that of Vajrabhairava.

From that time on, the devotion of Rinchen Dorje never failed.

One hundred and eight Khyungpo Naljors

One day, Khyungpo Naljor was surrounded by an immense assembly of disciples and benefactors. The hustle and disorder made any activity difficult, and it was impossible to give a teaching or receive those who wanted to make an offering. Khyungpo Naljor's secretary, not knowing how to manage the situation, went to see his master and asked what he should do.

"Do not worry" replied the master, "Go to the great plain below the monastery, and with the assistance of the monks, using stones and earth that you will find there, prepare one hundred and eight thrones"

Thus it was done. When the thrones were ready, to the great amazement of the crowd, a Khyungpo Naljor appeared on each of them! Consequently, those who wished to receive teachings could do so with no difficulty, and those who wished to present offerings could do that without hustle.

Varied miracles

On another occasion, Khyungpo Naljor arose in the sky to the height of a three-story house. He stayed there for a month devoted to teaching, not only

human beings, but also celestial beings. During this month, he took no human food, tea, or water, but only nectar from the world of gods.

One of his disciples, a great geshe, once invited him to a place near a high cliff to accomplish a vajra-feast in his honor.

After presenting him with offerings, the disciple said, "You met one hundred and fifty masters in India and have reached a level of realization which I do not doubt. Nevertheless, I have heard many people talking of your miracles without seeing any of them by myself. Would you show them to me?" Khyungpo Naljor acceded to the geshe's request. Rising in the sky, he appeared on a rainbow, multiplied his body in many appearances, disappeared, and reappeared. Finally, he went through the cliff, leaving an imprint that can be seen to this day.

A monastic plot

The monastery of Khyungpo Naljor was approximately two-day's ride from a Kadampa monastery, which before the arrival of the Shangpa master, enjoyed great influence in the region. Unfortunately for this monastery, Khyungpo Naljor's fame attracted many disciples and benefactors who had previously supported the Kadampa monastery's needs.

The Kadampa monks, feeling their future threatened, gathered to decide what to do: should they become affiliate with the monastery of Khyungpo Naljor or fight against it? Most monks had felt more jealousy than attraction for their interfering neighbor. Rejecting the idea of becoming his disciples, they chose to destroy his monastery.

The news spread and reached the ears of the disciples of Khyungpo Naljor. The Kadampas were arming themselves and obviously planning an attack. There were only two possibilities, escape or fight, accordingly to the monks. Khyungpo Naljor said, "It is contrary to the principles of Buddhism to use violence, especially against ordained people. I do not see why I should leave my monastery. We are fine here. We will stay."

Monks and disciples wondered about what appeared to them to be a contradiction. At dawn, the unavoidable happened. The monastery of Khyungpo Naljor was surrounded by the troop of armed Kadampas. Panic-stricken monks ran to their master, "We are surrounded! If we surrender, we are conquered! We cannot fight, we have no arms. We have no chance to be victorious!"

At this moment, Khyungpo Naljor, through his powers, created an illusory, numerous, and threatening army, which appeared at all the openings of the monastery. The Kadampas, stunned and frightened, abandoned their arms and retreated as quickly as they could.

A visit to the gods' realm and to hell

The story was told of 108,000 faithful people gathering one day around Khyungpo Naljor. The crowd lacked discipline. People talked, laughed, amused themselves, and wasted a lot of time. Khyungpo Naljor asked them

to go with him to a vast plain in the neighborhood. There, by the power of his mind, he created an environment like the gods' realm. Everything had vivid splendor and grace. The beauty of the gods and goddesses was much greater than that of human beings. Wonderful music charmed the ear, at the same time subtle perfumes spread in the air, and delicious dishes were offered to everyone. The crowd was delighted.

In the evening, back at the monastery, Khyungpo Naljor proposed another journey for the next day. Inspired by the day's spectacle, the crowd eagerly accepted.

Alas, the next day, the visit was something entirely different. The people, this time, had the feeling of being in hell. The environment was horrible and nauseating. Beings were tortured, burnt, cut, or scalded. The view was so unbearable that many fainted. Back at the monastery, everything was restored to normal.

"What we saw yesterday and today," asked the disciples, "was it real or only a magical creation?"

Khyungpo Naljor explained that, holding the view that all phenomena are illusory, one accomplishes an illusory practice leading to illusory liberation. Phenomena are not ultimately real, but as a mad person who sees things as being other than they are, we take them for real.

Thanks to this experience and teaching, all the people present practiced with much ardor and benefit.

The extraordinary powers of Khyungpo Naljor manifested again during a famine in the region. People came see him and begged him to intervene. He made it known that everyone should take their seeds and plants, and immediately sow and plant them. During the night, Khyungpo Naljor produced a wonderful rainfall that brought forth crops in a single day.

Khyungpo Naljor's death

When he was one hundred and fifty years old, Khyungpo Naljor felt death coming. He gathered together his disciples and benefactors. Sitting on a high throne, he instructed them at great length. He concluded by saying, "I have lived one hundred and fifty years, and I will leave this world to go to the Land of Bliss. If you know the practice of powa, consider its effects"

Everyone then saw a small sphere of white light, the size of an egg, exit from the summit of Khyungpo Naljor's head, swiftly rise up into the sky and dissolve. His mind had left.

KHYUNGPO NALJOR'S SUCCESSORS

Mochokpa and Gampopa

The main disciple of Khyungpo Naljor, looked upon as his successor, was Rinchen Samdrup, from the region of Mochok and therefore was also known as Mochokpa. For twelve years, he practiced in austere retreat, eating only

roots and wild herbs. His meditation permitted him many powers, like flying in the air.

Mochokpa was a younger contemporary of Gampopa, the main disciple of Milarepa. Wanting to know Gampopa, Mochokpa went to meet him one day. Gampopa, because of his powers of clairvoyance, knew that Mochokpa was approaching and despite his great age, he went to Mochokpa's encounter, welcoming him with great joy. "You and I" he told his visitor, "have been master and disciple for numerous lives and we are linked by an intimate karmic connection"

They spent a few happy days together, giving each other empowerments. From then on, tight bonds were established between the Shangpa Kagyu and the Karma Kagyu lineages, with the result that they became inseparable.

Kyergangpa meets Avalokita

Choky Senge succeeded Mochokpa. Choky Senge's uncle was the abbot of a monastery whose tradition decreed that following the death of the abbot, he was to be replaced by a nephew. When his uncle died, the monks wanted to install Choky Senge on the throne. He strongly refused. He did not want to administer a monastery but instead wanted to devote himself to a life in retreat. To avoid the complications created by his refusal, he left the region to live in a cave dug out of Kyergang cliff, surviving only on a mixture of tsampa,62 ashes, and water. From then on he was generally called Kyergangpa. Having spent three and half years in retreat, he went out one day, as he was accustomed, using the narrow path leading from the cave. Suddenly, he saw the sky filled with rainbows. First, he thought that it was a psychological problem due to his deficient diet. Fearing he would fall, he leaned against a boulder. Avalokita (Chenrezig) appeared to him in the sky, facing him, and conferred on him a special transmission. He then spent three and one half years meditating on Avalokita. He attained realization, and from then on was known as the *Mahasiddha* Kyergangpa.

The caravan of Sangye Nyentonpa

Sangye Nyentonpa has remained famous for the immense devotion he had for his master Kyergangpa. Twice, he offered all his personal property and belongings, including gold and silver from the monastery he directed. He was ready to accomplish the same act for a third time when he met opposition from his own monks. "Your conduct is not reasonable" they told him. "You have a master who lives far away and we never see, and because of your devotion to him, you ruin the monastery. We cannot follow you on this path" The monks refused to prepare the loading envisioned by Sangye Nyentonpa, which required a caravan of several animals accompanied by many men.

Sangye Nyentonpa was momentarily stopped in his tracks. A short time later, in the middle of the night, four people arrived at the monastery and said, "We are caravan people. We are going to Kyergang and we have no load at the moment. If by chance you have goods to carry in this direction, we will gladly help you."

"Oh, yes, I have many things to carry!" replied Sangye Nyentonpa. "I would like to take a great quantity of offerings to my master who resides there. If you agree to help me, I will leave with you tomorrow."

Assisted by the four visitors, Sangye Nyentonpa loaded the animals with cereals, brocades, objects of gold and silver, and everything else he could carry. The journey took four days. They were almost at the cave of Kyergangpa, when the caravan people suddenly declared, "Excuse us, but we are obliged to leave you here. On one of the sides of Mount Meru,63 a tantric master is in the process of accomplishing a ritual to which we must attend immediately."

Saying this, they unloaded the baggage, and quickly left Sangye Nyentonpa standing there. Disconcerted by these mysterious words, Sangye Nyentonpa nevertheless was happy to be near his master and could make arrangements to carry his offerings for the last remaining hundred yards.

Kyergangpa asked him if he had received assistance for his journey. Sangye Nyentonpa told the story of the mysterious caravan, and the master said, "I have accomplished the ritual of Six-Arm Mahakala thinking that you needed assistance, and it seems that I had been heard. They were certainly Chetrapala, Zinamitra, Takiradza, and Dugon Trakche64 who assisted you taking on the appearance of the four caravan people"

Sangye Nyentonpa caresses the thunderbolt Sangye Nyentonpa resided for awhile in a cave carved out of the side of a cliff above a great precipice. He had the habit of sitting in meditation at the edge of the cave. One day when he was in meditation, a violent storm broke out and thirteen lightning bolts simultaneously struck his knees. He was not scared or surprised, and the lightning did not wound him any more than raindrops falling on a flower. He took the thunderbolt in his hand, played with it for a moment, rolling it on the pleats of his robe, then he threw it onto the cliff. When it fell, it left an immense brown trail on the grey face of the rock. The place has become a place of pilgrimage.

The sculptor and his work

During this retreat, Sangye Nyentonpa each day performed the ritual of Six-Arm Mahakala, for whom he had great devotion. Wishing to make a statue of the deity, he gathered enough day to model a statue the size of a man. However, he was not very skillful with his hands and decided to ask a sculptor to execute his project. A short while later, an Indian yogi sought his hospitality. Sangye Nyentonpa gladly welcomed him, and during the conversation, the yogi asked him what he wanted to do with all that day in the corner of the cave.

"I would like to make a statue of Mahakala and I am looking for a good sculptor. Would you know how to work with clay, by any chance?"

"Yes, I have some ability in this domain. Give me the day" replied the yogi. And, in a short time, with incredible dexterity, he modeled an very well-proportioned and perfect statue in all its details.

Sangye Nyentonpa was impressed. "It is now necessary to paint it," he said. "Would you know how to do that as well?" "Yes, of course," replied the yogi. "Do you have the necessary colors?"

"I have everything necessary," answered Sangye Nyentonpa, as he presented some black, white, red, yellow, blue, and green pigments he had acquired. To his amazement, the yogi mixed all the pigments together in a bowl, drank them, and spit them on the statue! In an extraordinary way, each color took its appropriate place, exactly.

"Since you have such abilities," said Sangye Nyentonpa, "Wood you please consecrate the statue?" Without replying, the yogi melted into the statue.

This statue was extremely venerated. Each year, as long as he was in Tibet, the Dalai Lama had a goldsmith fabricate the different objects that Mahakala holds in his hands, a kapala, a knife, a damaru, and so on, to offer them to the statue.

During a pilgrimage, I myself have seen this statue. I and two companions stayed a week where it is installed. Nothing out of the ordinary happened, but I saw the body as golden, while my two companions saw it as dark blue. Each time we talked about it during the week, we disagreed. For them, it was dark blue; for me, nothing could change it, it was golden.

Sangye Tenpa

The successor of Sangye Nyentonpa, Sangye Tenpa had realization and such a powerful mind that many people passing by his hermitage would experience the ultimate nature of their own mind. He was also famous for having the power to cure many illnesses by the touch of his hands, with the result that many ill people came to see him.

Decline and renaissance

During several centuries, many masters integrated their own teachings with the teachings of the Shangpa lineage. The result was that this lineage had the tendency to lose vigor as an autonomous lineage and find itself diffused into other schools such as the Sakyapa, Gelukpa, and so on. We had to wait until the 19th century for its rebirth, thanks to Jamgon Kongtrul Yonten Gyamtso, known also as Lodro Thaye, whose arrival had been prophesied in various sutras and termas.65

Lodro Thaye met the enigmatic Karma Norbu

Lodro Thaye was in retreat for a while in a cave near the monastery of Palpung, placed under the authority of Pema Nyingje Wangpo, the ninth Situpa, who was his main master, when he heard that a holder of the Shangpa lineage, Karma Norbu, was visiting the monastery. Wishing to receive the empowerments and instructions of this lineage, Lodro Thaye went to Palpung to meet Karma Norbu and present his request. Karma Norbu agreed to receive him. Lodro Thaye expressed his interest in the Shangpa

lineage, but Karma Norbu did not say a single word during the interview, and answered no questions.

Lodro Thaye was profoundly troubled by this. He wondered what could have motivated Karma Norbu to be so rough toward him. Had he committed any serious faults, such as breaking his Vajrayana commitments? During the night, he could not sleep. Suddenly, he had an idea "To repair any faults I have possibly committed" he thought, "I will propose to Karma Norbu that I will build a retreat center for the Shangpa practice"

The following day, he again asked for an interview to present his project. As soon as he entered the room where Karma Norbu was, contrary to the previous day's silence, Karma Norbu did not allow him to open his mouth. Taking the initiative, Karma Norbu said, "Your idea is very good. Building a Shangpa retreat center is exactly what needs to be done. I do not have much time now, therefore, I will give you only a short empowerment. Later, I will confer on you the totality of the Shangpa empowerments and instructions."

To keep his commitments, Lodro Thaye built the retreat center of Tsadra Rinchendra, where, later, I myself accomplished a three-year retreat.

The work of Lodro Thaye

During his life, Lodro Thaye received the teachings and empowerments from the masters of the lineages of all Tibetan Buddhism that he gathered into a collection of more than two hundred volumes. He especially collected the main Shangpa teachings together in a work called the Five Golden Teachings, presented in the metaphor of a tree.

- the roots are *the six dharmas of Niguma*
- the trunk is *the mahamudra*
- the branches are *the three integrations of the practice*
- the flowers are *the two red and white dakinis*
- the fruit is *the nondeath, nonerror*

These Shangpa Kagyu instructions are today accepted by all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and no one doubts their authenticity.

Question: Why are miracles no longer seen today?

Kalu Rinpoche: Have you not seen that I have flown a lot recently? 66 For miracles to be accomplished, it is necessary to have the joint realization of the master and the faith of disciples. Outside of this context, it is not possible.

Vancouver, June 1982

Jamgon Kongtrul

HUMAN CONDITION

Our type of existence belongs to the class of superior beings, since we possess what one calls the "good human existence" It is good if it comprehends a certain liberty of body, speech and mind. We can choose to reside at a determined place or move, to speak or not speak, and so on. This freedom allows us to study and practice the Dharma and progress toward Awakening. However, this is far from a total freedom. Even if we wish for only fortunate circumstances, contrary to our will, we have to experience painful situations. Even if we do not want to become old but stay young forever, contrary to our will, months and years inescapably lead us to old age. Even if we do not want to become ill, contrary to our desire, illness will make us suffer.

From the viewpoint of its spiritual value, human existence is divided into three categories: superior, average, and inferior.

• A superior existence belongs to those people who are born in a country where spirituality is alive. They meet masters from whom they receive teachings; they feel attracted to the spiritual path and practice it. Given that it allows beings to progress toward Awakening, it is called the "precious" human existence.

• Average existence defines the category of people who are not especially concentrating on the practice of a spiritual path, performing positive acts, or accomplishing negative acts; they devote themselves only to temporal activities. This is true of a great number of people. It is an average existence in the sense that it produces neither a very good nor a very bad future life.

• Finally, inferior existence refers to those who, not knowing the Dharma, accomplish serious negative acts. It is inferior because it leads immediately after death to a rebirth in the hell realms, or rebirth as an animal, or in another type of existence marked by intense suffering.

Inferior and average human existences are numerous. They form 95 percent of the population of the planet. Only 5 percent of the population possesses the precious human existence. At best, it allows one to reach Awakening in one lifetime, or at least obtain a future, happy, divine, or human existence, with the potential to progress to ultimate Awakening. Now that we are endowed with this precious existence, it is necessary for us to give it full value by developing the three following qualities together:

- faith and confidence in the Dharma

- the spiritual intelligence that comes from a continuous study of the Dharma

- and a diligent and regular practice based on faith and intelligence

Perhaps you think that you do not have the time to practice the Dharma, that you will see to it later. But, do you know the hour of your death? When death approaches, if you find your life was not meaningful and has not reached any

positive results, you will feel an immense regret. Imagine someone who obtained 200 pounds of gold. What wealth! But, if the person loses the gold before taking advantage of it, it is a huge loss. Dying without having made positive use of human existence is an even greater loss.

Taishung, March 24,1986

THE TWO DHARMAS

Activities of the world can be divided in two categories: temporal dharma and spiritual Dharma.

Temporal dharma is designated as any activity accomplished to provide well-being in this life, such as working in the fields, an office, a factory, or elsewhere, in order to have food, shelter, clothing, and a comfortable life. Although it is useful for this life, it is useless for lives to come. During the night, we dream. It sometimes happens that we have beautiful dreams. When we wake up, the charm disappears; the dream world totally ceases to exist. It is the same when we die. All appearances of this world cease to exist. What we have done to make them pleasant is not useful for future lives.

On the other hand, the spiritual Dharma is useful in this life, and for lives to come. Why is it useful for this life? Our personality is composed of body, speech, and mind, the mind being the main element. At first, the spiritual Dharma gives peace and happiness, then freedom. Its effect on lives to come is even greater. An extremely deep spiritual practice allows us to obtain high levels of realization, by which it is possible, after death, to create many emanations of oneself, and send them to help all beings. If one's practice is not this profound, it is possible to be born in the Land of Bliss or in another Pure Land; at least, to once again obtain a good, divine, or human existence allowing oneself to make progress toward Awakening.

Depending on one's aspiration, it is possible to follow these two Dharmas separately or together. Milarepa chose the first option. Renouncing all temporal activity, he went into solitude to devote himself exclusively to the spiritual practice that allowed him to attain Awakening in one lifetime. As for Marpa, he married, had children, cultivated the fields, and was a trader. This example can only be followed by joining deep inner practice with an excellent comprehension of the Dharma. Because of the power of his meditation, his life did not prevent him from attaining liberation. A radically different manner of practice was the one used by King Indraboddhi during Buddha Shakyamuni's time. He governed a powerful and wealthy kingdom in the region of today's Kashmir and he enjoyed the company of 500 consorts during the day and 500 others at night.

Taishung, March 23,1986

DO WE HAVE THE TIME?

All the beings of the six classes experience suffering; however, in each class certain aspects dominate. In the human world, there are four great sufferings:

- the suffering of birth

- the suffering of old age
- the suffering of sickness
- the suffering of death

There are two other sufferings specific to humankind. Human beings are always feeling that something is lacking, and they always are busy. "Lacking" means that human beings always have the sense that something is missing. Whether rich or poor, they unceasingly want something more, something that seems indispensable.

"Being busy" refers to the continual activity of human beings. They always are busy working, traveling, trading, discussing, eating, or doing a thousand other activities. They have no free time.

Some people are aware that the cycle of existences is, above all, suffering, and that it is necessary to liberate oneself from it. To liberate oneself implies study and the practice of a spiritual path, using body, speech, and mind; each appears to be different even though they are one in essence.

For example, the body can be put to use by taking the posture of meditation, making prostrations, offering mandates, and so on. Unfortunately, we usually have no time to sit in meditation, no time to make prostrations, no time to offer **mandalas,** because we are too busy working, traveling, trading, and so on.

As for speech, it can be used to recite mantras or prayers. One can also keep silent and hold one's breath, or concentrate on the incoming and outgoing of the breath. But, again, we have no time to recite mantras or for remaining silent, because we are too busy talking without mindfulness.

As for the mind, picture an image. When the sky is dear during the day, it is a dear, infinite, empty space. Similarly, the true nature of the mind is infinite emptiness and darity. Dwelling in this state is dwelling in peace and happiness. But, we have no time to taste this peace and happiness, because our mind is constantly busy, occupied by the passions of desire, hatred, opacity, pride, jealousy, greed, and their consequences. Even if we are not agitated by these passions, we are preoccupied with our business, our work, our family, our projects, and a lot of other things. There is no time to establish the mind in its true nature.

Generally, human beings simply do not make time to practice the Dharma, neither with body, speech, nor with the mind. Modern times have developed some techniques that make the situation worse; movies and television have swallowed what little available time was left.

We now have the human existence, and with it we have the opportunity to work for liberating ourselves from the cycle of existence and attaining Awakening. Moreover, we have met the Dharma and qualified masters. This spiritual color transforms our existence into a "precious human existence" It is necessary to take advantage of it. If you are in a situation where there is no time to effectively put your body to practice, you will gain something if, finding yourself in the presence of a sacred representation such as a statue or a spiritual master, you show respect, even if only by joining hands. Some mantras, like those of Akshobya (Tibetan, Mitrukpa) or Vajrasattva (Tibetan,

Dorje Sempa), are perhaps too long for recitation. However, a mantra like the one of Avalokita (Tibetan, Chenrezig) has only six syllables (OM MANI PADME HUNG) and does not require a particular situation to recite it. One can redte it at the same time that one engages in any other activity, whether sitting, walking, being idle or at work, at night as well as during the day.

If you have no time to apply your mind in meditation, you nevertheless can make beneficial use of it by simply recalling, from time to time, the greatness of the Three Jewels and praying to them with sincerity for yourself and all beings to reach Awakening. Or, if you develop at least a little compassion for all beings who suffer, you will gain something. When you feel happy, think that it is an effect of the grace and compassion of the Three Jewels. When you feel miserable, think of the painful circumstances that you encounter as an expression of the compassion of the Three Jewels. Why? Because they allow you to experience now, in a relatively bearable way, the effect of a bad karmic potential that would have been expressed after your death in the form of circumstances incomparably more painful, as a birth in a hell world or in some other type of inferior existence.

If you are poor, do not be bothered by it. Think that it is the result of previous karma. Since you have not, in your past life, gathered the necessary karmic conditions to live in abundance in this life, you should be satisfied with what you have now. If, on the contrary, you are wealthy in this life, you should not be greedy but give as much as you can to the Three Jewels, to your spiritual masters, as well as those who are in need. At the moment of death, it will be necessary for you to leave all belongings behind. You will not be able to take any material object with you into the life to come. If you use your wealth to practice offering and giving, you accumulate a karmic potential that will actualize in future lives in the form of material ease. By acting like that, even if you cannot put time aside, at least be sure that your body, speech, and mind make some spiritual progress.

Hong Kong, March 20,1986

THE EMOTIONS OF EACH PERSON

The total number of conflicting emotions is traditionally fixed at 84,000. All ordinary beings are afflicted, but there is some predominance according to people and countries. Tibetans have all the conflicting emotions, but for them the strongest is, without any doubt, anger. It was not rare that people, under its influence, fought until they killed each other.30 Westerners have all conflicting emotions, but among them desire-attachment dominates; this is the source of multiple problems and suffering.

Chinese people have all the conflicting emotions, but jealousy and pride seem to be stronger in their case. It is important to know how to recognize the strongest conflicting emotion in oneself, because the first step taken should be an attempt to diminish its influence by practicing the Dharma.

Taipei, April 30,1986

WORSE THAN WAR

Most people get married. For what reason? Because they believe this can make them happy. Nevertheless, if you do not maintain a harmonious relationship with your spouse and the members of your family, you work against the objective you have set for yourself by getting married. Nowadays, people fear another world war will happen. It is a frightening prospect, but perhaps these fears are exaggerated. It is true that such a war would produce immense suffering for two or three years. However, if you do not get along with your spouse, this suffering will last until death.

Hong Kong, March 20,1986

THE MONK WHO FOUND A MAGICAL JEWEL

In some countries, one can hardly find people suffering from real poverty. Instead, one will see people who suffer from being too wealthy. This seems to be a paradox.

The following story illustrates the problem. At the time of the Buddha, one of the monks of the community happened to possess a "magical jewel"31 He led a simple existence and lived on alms. What need could he have of this jewel? It was better to give it to a poor person. But there were so many poor people! Who would he choose? Not knowing what to do, he went to see the Buddha and asked him for advice. "I possess a magical jewel and I do not need it for myself. I would like to give it to a poor person, but I am embarrassed and cannot decide to whom I should give it."

"Very well, give it to King Saja," answered the Buddha. "He is the poorest of all human beings."

However, this king was extremely wealthy. Without hesitating, the monk went to the palace, was introduced to the king and gave him the present. The king received the monk, and asked him the reason for his visit, if he had some request. The monk replied that such was not the case. He simply wanted to offer this jewel to a poor person, and the Buddha had designated the king as the poorest man in the kingdom. It is useless to describe the astonishment of the monarch. Covered with wealth and yet considered to be the poorest in the kingdom! This was a very strange pronouncement of the Buddha! Wanting to be sure, he went to the Buddha for an adequate explanation.

"A monk came to see you, asking you to indicate a poor person to whom he could give his magic jewel. Althoughthere is no richer or more powerful man than I in this country, you told him to give the jewel to me. Why?"

"It is true, King Saja, you are the richest and most powerful man in the kingdom" replied the Buddha. "But your greed is so great that you are never satisfied with what you have. You live in constant fear that your possessions will be exhausted, and you constantly desire to amass new ones. Your mind is unceasingly tormented by the thirst for wealth, and this torment makes you the poorest of men. This is why I told the monk to give you the jewel"

Whatever our belongings, whether we possess very little or we live in abundance, it is our mental attitude that makes us rich or poor. If we have

inner contentment, we will be happy; if not, we will be miserable despite all the wealth that we accumulate.

Taipei, April 15,1986

VARIOUS TRADITIONS

The Buddha was born in India, 2913 years ago.32 He became awakened in Bodhgaya and expounded the Dharma for the first time in Deer Park, near Benares. Buddhism is an ancient tradition that was first propagated in India, then China, Tibet, Mongolia, and many other countries in Asia. Christ's teachings are not as old, since we are now in the year 1987 of the Christian era. Other doctrines, for example the Muslim religion, appeared even later. The purpose of all these traditions is to help beings through varied approaches and methods. Since all have this function, all are basically good. How useful is all this diversity? When we are hungry, we can go to a restaurant. However, the restaurant does not display just one dish, because this would not suit everyone's taste. On the contrary, it offers a varied menu. Similarly, the aspirations of people in the spiritual domain are diversified and require teachings that are also diversified.

Madrid, Autumn 1987

BUDDHISM AND THE WEST

One can find three reasons for the expansion of Buddhism in the West.

- Some people, having heard about Tibet and Tibetans, conceived a favorable opinion and went to India, where they were able to meet Tibetan masters. Observing how the teachings benefitted them, they invited many lamas and tulkus to come to the West.

- The values shared by Christianity and Buddhism have prepared favorable ground: devotion (for God or the Three Jewels), the love and the compassion for beings, the respect for ethics, and so on.

- For the most part, Westerners have been studying a lot, and have developed their intelligence. They can understand the deep aspects of Buddhism more easily.

Madrid, Autumn 1987

RECEIVING THE TEACHING

To receive the Dharma, we need to be a "good vessel" To be so, it is necessary to avoid three defects.

If we attend a teaching by merely hearing it rather than listening to it, we resemble an upside down container. We can pour as much water as we want over it; nothing will penetrate it. Therefore, we should be very attentive to the teachings given to us.

However, it is not sufficient to listen correctly, it is also necessary to remember what is being said; lacking that, we are like a container full of holes. It receives water, but releases it immediately.

Finally, it is also necessary that the container be pure, in other words that our conflicting emotions do not mix with the received teaching. If, for example, desire, anger, or torpor disturbs our mind at the moment we receive the Dharma, it is said that it is like poison mixed with good food. At the moment, the poisoned food may appear delicious to us, but sooner or later, it will harm us. The power of conflicting emotions, in the same manner, may overcome the beneficial characteristics of the Dharma.

During a teaching, the right attitude is to be attentive, to retain what is explained and receive it with confidence and joy, reminding ourselves that it presents ways to reach Awakening and benefit beings.

The context of Vajrayana requires a special attitude. Vajrayana implies transformation of the impure into the pure. A teaching of this vehicle should be received thinking that we are not in an ordinary place, but in a pure land such as the Field of Bliss, taking into account that the lama who gives it is not an ordinary being, but a yidam, a Buddha, or a bodhisattva. We should look at the assembled people as a meeting of gods and goddesses. We should also think that the word of the master is union of sound and emptiness, endowed with the 60 qualities of the word of a Buddha.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

PROGRESS OF A NONGIFTED MONK

It is not easy to reach Buddhahood. Since time without beginning, under the influence of ignorance and latent conditioning, we have reinforced the veils of conflicting emotions and karma. Time and energy are needed to undo these obstructions. The rapidity of our progression depends on our capabilities; depending on whether they are superior, average, or inferior, we progress very rapidly, rapidly, or slowly.

This does not mean that inferior capabilities are an obstacle beyond remedy. It is always possible to purify oneself and accumulate merit. One cites the case, at the time of the Buddha, of a monk, Lha Drente, whose intellectual abilities were so limited that he could not even assimilate the first letters of the alphabet. His faith, however, was immense.

Observing his incapacity, other monks asked the Buddha if there was a remedy. The Buddha replied that it was sufficient for Lha Drente to avoid all negative acts and devote himself to simple positive acts. He commanded that the task of cleaning the temple be given to this monk. During many years, Lha Drente devoted himself to sweeping the temple and scrubbing the offering bowls on the altars.

Little by little, this very simple task dissipated the veils of his mind so that his intelligence awakened. He succeeded in understanding the teachings the Buddha delivered on the Four Noble Truths and the twelve interdependent links and reached the state of an arhat. He is one of the sixteen Elders (Sanskrit, Staviras), often represented on tangkas.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

THE MAN WITH A DIAMOND EAR

Purification and accumulation of merit have infallible results.

A long time ago, a merchant who hardly had any spiritual practice walked near a stupa, and felt not only a surge of faith, but an unusual joy. On the spot, he took the earring that he wore and deposited it as an offering on the monument.

By this offering, he engendered such great merit that he was reborn in the superior worlds, as human or a god during many lives.

At the time of the Buddha, a boy was born into a noble family. He had the distinction of having a diamond naturally set in his ear. Therefore, he earned the nickname of "the man whose ear costs a million" He was gifted, handsome, intelligent, and very articulate. He had assimilated all the arts of his time. When he became an adult, he met the Buddha, received ordination from him, and attained the state of an arhat.

Curious about this course of events, some monks asked the Buddha to explain. Why did this man have this diamond in his ear? Why did he give up wealth in this world? and why this sudden attainment of arhatship? The Buddha, who knew the karma of all beings, told them the story of the offering of the earring on the stupa, and explained that the diamond resulted from the nature of this offering. Faith in the Buddha and realization of arhatship were the result of the destination of the offering, which was to the stupa, a symbol of the Awakened mind.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

SAVING MERIT

The accumulation of merit is useful not only for this life, but also for future lives. As long as the fruit is not harvested, benefit is never lost.

Some circumstances risk neutralizing positive accomplished acts. For example, let us suppose you had accomplished an important offering, and that you felt some vanity, or regret at having spent too much. This vanity or regret damages the positive value of generosity. More serious is anger, since it is said that a single outbreak of anger can reduce to nothing 100 kalpas of positive acts.

However, the Buddha has taught a way that allows us to save the merit of acts. It is to dedicate them. Let us compare a positive act to a drop of water. Left in the sun, it risks sudden evaporation. Deposited in the sea, it dissolves in water, and will not evaporate unless the whole sea dries up. In the same manner, once dedication is made, the benefit of positive acts no longer disappears, even if conflicting emotions

arise in our mind. On the contrary, because of dedication, merit never decreases; it is just like the interest on money placed in a bank that does not stop being added to the capital. Dedication can be done in two ways: with an object or without an object.33 As long as one has not achieved ultimate nature of the mind, this second type of dedication, which is the greatest, is not truly accessible. Nevertheless, to approach it, we can think that we

dedicate merit as did the bodhisattvas of the past. This is why, in one of the traditional texts, it is said, referring to two great bodhisattvas: According to the knowledge of suchness34 of the courageous Manjushri,

And also that of Samantabhadra, Following them, I perfectly dedicate all these virtuous acts.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

TRUE HAPPINESS

Because of positive karma resulting from their past lives, some people now enjoy great wealth. Some possess millions of dollars. However, this wealth does not grant happiness. True happiness, happiness of the mind, is difficult to obtain.

In the contemporary world, people are animated by feverish agitation. Many cannot stay quiet; they go from one place to another, visiting one country after another. This continual search for the new is a sign of lacking happiness.

The mind, with its variety of distractions that monopolize it, wants to forget its feelings of frustration.

Practiced correctly, meditation allows us to pacify our mind, to make it stable and, by this way, to find inner well-being and an authentic happiness.

Our mind becomes tired of all the thoughts and conflicting emotions within it. Our body is equally tired due to following orders imposed by our agitated mind. Practicing meditation will bring more rest to our mind and body than a walk in a park full of flowers.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

A HEALTHY REFLECTION

Milarepa was born in a well-to-do family. Unfortunately, when his father died, his uncle and aunt defrauded him of ail his property. To seek revenge, his mother requested that he learn black magic and use it against them.

Obeying his mother, Milarepa left to study under a master of black magic and, being assiduous, he rapidly obtained some powers. He used them to destroy a house and provoke a hailstorm, which killed several people and a great number of animals and insects. He had committed several seriously harmful acts.

A short time later, he was filled with remorse and fear. He envisioned impermanence and death, and thought that he would be unable to escape the torments of hell. This prospect scared him so that he could no longer eat or sleep.

One of the main benefactors of the black magician passed away. Being very affected, the magician became conscious of the impermanence of all beings. Sharing with Milarepa, he told him, "Death inevitably waits for us; we have devoted our life to evil. Now we should repent and practice the Dharma while there is still time left. Choose! You can go in search of a lama who will teach

you the right way, or I will practice the Dharma myself and you will be my assistant" Milarepa chose the first alternative. The magician was happy. "You are young" he told his pupil "and you will be able to practice well. Myself, I am an old man and I no longer have much strength. Therefore it is a good decision" Milarepa left in quest of a master and met Marpa. After having received instructions, he practiced with extraordinary diligence, not relaxing day or night, abandoning all the benefits of this world. Reflecting on the precious human existence, impermanence, the law of karma, and on the suffering inherent in samsara, he drew upon a source of immense energy that allowed him to reach Awakening in a single lifetime.

Without filling ourselves with these four ideas just mentioned, it is difficult to turn toward the Dharma, or even if we follow the path, our practice would be like a sand castle, rapidly washed away by the waves. These four ideas in themselves do not lead to liberation, but they provide the energy that allows us to reach it.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

HAVING NO WRONG VIEW ON EMPTINESS

We believe that phenomena are real, and this belief causes so much suffering. However, it is necessary to avoid the opposite extreme of thinking that everything is empty, in such a way that nothing exists at all. In this case, one will deduce that, the Three Jewels being empty, it is not useful to pray to them, and, the law of karma being empty, it is useless to respect it, and so on.

We should understand that the Buddha has taught emptiness with a precise purpose: neutralizing all concepts that one can attach to absolute truth. This prevents us from considering it as one or many nonexistent or existent objects, one or many, or an object defined by any characteristic, whatsoever. Thinking that emptiness is real is an error even greater than completely closing the doors to liberation. Nagarjuna said that the people who believe in the reality of

the world are, in some ways, similar to animals, but that those who accept emptiness as real are even more stupid. It is also said that belief in the reality of phenomena is an error as large as Mount Meru, but that to become attached to emptiness is an even greater mistake.

As long as we have not attained liberation, the illusory appearances of relative truth remain real for us, and we have to consider this fact. As long as we are in a prison, we cannot act as if we were free.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

EMPTINESS AND KARMA

Some people, believing that they understand the Dharma, imagine that it is sufficient to meditate on emptiness without being preoccupied with karma, since karma is ultimately empty. These people should try to spend a complete day without eating, drinking, or putting on clothes. If they feel

neither hunger, nor thirst, nor cold, this will be the sign that everything is empty. Otherwise, it is necessary to conclude that everything is not entirely empty and the law of karma has some importance.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

FLATTENING CREASES

People who know the Dharma for a very short time sometimes think that it allows them to reach Awakening in a few weeks or months. After a short time devoted to practice, they notice a lot has to be done. Many conflicting emotions still are affecting their mind, perhaps even more than before. They conclude that the Dharma is not efficient as they had thought after all, and they leave.

Let us recall that the unsettling of our mind was imprinted in our mind since time without beginning, engendering restrictive tendencies. It is like a sheet of paper that has remained rolled up for a long time; it takes considerable time to get it flat again.

Kagyu Ling May 1980

POWER OF FAITH

It has been taught by the Buddha that when a person sincerely prays to him, he is truly in front of this person. It is also said that where there is faith in the Three Jewels, the Three Jewels are manifested, just as the moon is reflected on the surface of water.

It has been said that a woman who possessed all the characteristics of a dakini had married a particularly obtuse, but fundamentally good man, animated by great faith. Wishing to help her husband, the woman advised him to turn toward Manjushri, the bodhisattva of knowledge, and also requested him to spend the night praying in front of a huge statue of the deity enshrined in the neighboring temple. "At dawn, you will dose your eyes and open your hand; Manjushri will give you something that you will eat with complete trust; this will be his blessing"

The husband placed himself in front of the statue and spent the night fervently addressing prayers to Manjushri in order to become more intelligent. When the sun rose, he put forth his open hand toward the deity. His wife, hidden behind the statue, put a fruit in his hand and he ate it with immense devotion. Immediately, his intelligence litup to such an extent that he later became a famous scholar.

When we pray to the Three Jewels and Three Roots with a sincere heart, they are really present.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

NEITHER BLIND, NOR ARMLESS

It is said that practicing without studying is like a wandering blind person, and studying without practicing is like an armless person wanting to climb a cliff.

The field of Buddhist knowledge is extremely vast. Exploring it in its entirety, if one is capable, is very beneficial. Nevertheless, it is sufficient to understand the direct instructions on the foundations of practice and meditation—the instructions given to us by the lama.

Kagyu Ling, May 1980

ESSENCE OF THE TEACHING

It is said that the teachings given by the Buddha are as vast as space and as deep as the ocean. Studying all their facets would take an extremely long time. However, the most important, essentials brought together are the direct instructions given to us by our lama. We should listen to them, reflect upon them and put them into practice. To follow these instructions will soon appear beneficial.

New Delhi, February 1985

HUMAN OR ANIMAL?

At the present time, because of previous good karma, a great development of intelligence is happening. In the field of science and technology, many inventions and discoveries are being made. Without the knowledge of mind, without knowledge of what we truly are, there can be no difference between us and animals.

Vajradharaling, 1984

TAKING THE PLANE

Without understanding the nature of mind, meditation is very difficult; it is like driving a car on a bad road. However, from the moment you know the nature of mind, meditation becomes easy, as if you were flying in an airplane.

New Delhi, February 1985

POTENTIAL OF AWAKENING

The nature of the mind, which is emptiness, clarity, and intelligence without obstruction, is shared by all the beings of the six worlds. It is called the "potential for Awakening" (Sanskrit, tathagatagarbha). Given that we possess all this potential, if we accomplish what is necessary, we can attain true Awakening. Suppose that a conch, covered with mud, has become black. As it is white by nature, if you dean it, it will recover its whiteness. On the contrary, rub a piece of coal as long as you want, it will never become white. Similarly, if we did not possess the potential for Awakening, nothing would allow us to ever reach Awakening.

New Delhi, February 1985

THE TRUE SCIENTIST

Not knowing our own mind is like a blind person who does not know how to find the way and who feels around for all he or she wants to do. This is not only valid for the Dharma, but also for our ordinary activity.

Nowadays, there are extremely learned people capable of presenting elaborate descriptions of the universe and matter, discovering the most subtle laws in physics and chemistry. But when one asks a question about the nature of the mind, nobody answers.

The science of the mind, the description of its nature, in fact, was expounded by the Buddha a long time ago. Even if we no longer can meet with him as a person, his teaching continues to be transmitted and placed at our disposal as a science we can study. You will approach it more easily because the years that you spent in school or at the university have developed your intellectual capabilities. When you truly understand what the mind is, you will be a true scientist.

The mind is not far away; we always have it with us. Therefore, studying it does not require us to go somewhere or to possess any special equipment. A small piece of property, like Montchardon, has a great number of places, trees, plants, objects, and so on. If we were to look for the mind here, it would require some length of time. But the mind is within us; what difficulty would we have in finding it? It is always there. Nothing is closer. Nothing should be easier than finding it. Many people believe themselves to be learned and intelligent. However, as long as the mind has not been found, one is neither truly learned nor truly intelligent.

Karma Migyur Ling, August 1987

SIGNS OF EMPTINESS

At the end of the bardo, your karma pushed you into a human birth. When your mind joined the physical supports of your father and mother, nobody saw it enter. As it is not a substance, it cannot be seen. At the moment of death, your mind will leave your body, and even if a hundred people are surrounding you, no one will see it escaping. These are signs of the emptiness of mind.

New Delhi, February 1985

THE SHADOW OF KARMA

It is said that one cannot see the shadow of a bird gliding very high in the sky; however, that shadow becomes increasingly visible as the bird approaches the ground. In a same manner, we cannot see our karmic potential; but it becomes obvious when it actualizes itself.

New Delhi, February 1985

THE LESSON OF DEATH

One can see in Burma an immense statue representing the Buddha pointing a finger at a mother carrying the body of her dead child. This statue refers to an episode in the life of the Buddha.

A woman named Krisha Gotami had lost her child, and her sorrow was extreme. She went to see the Buddha requesting, that he resuscitate her child. The Buddha replied that he would do it on the condition that she bring him a handful of mustard seeds from a family that death had never touched. Krisha Gotami went from house to house, but everywhere she received a disappointing answer: "I lost my husband this year" "My child died three years ago" "My mother died in this bedroom" and so on. She went back to the Buddha to tell him, "Alas! Death had spared no family, it is the share of all human beings."

The Buddha, pointing to the child with his hand, told her, "Yes, that is it; you have understood. Death is a universal law. It makes no exception, not even for your child."

Many events can serve as a lesson.

New Delhi, February 1985

Compassion

A LINK OF KINSHIP WITH ALL BEINGS

Love and compassion must not be parceled out to any one particular person but should be applied to all beings. Such universality is possible if we are conscious that there is no being who has not been our father or mother in one of our past lives. Treading in the cycle of existence since time without beginning, all beings have had birth numberless times in the course of innumerable kalpas. The result is that each being has been a father, mother, son, or daughter of every other being. The Buddha is omniscient and possesses, by definition, the knowledge of all phenomena of all past, present, and future times. This omniscience allows him to assert that one can count the particles of matter composing the ground of a vast country, but it is impossible to count the number of times that each being has been in the situation of a father or a mother for all other beings.

When they were father and mother to us, how did they act on our behalf? They expressed the same kindness as our parents have shown us in this life. From birth until adulthood, they have given us all that we needed with much love. They chose for us the best things—food, clothes, care when we were sick, education, and so on. All beings, in the course of numberless lives, have acted in the same manner. Continuing to wander in the cycle of existence, they were born in difficult and painful situations that we cannot possibly imagine.

SAMSARA IS COMICAL!

Katayana was one of the direct disciples of Shakyanuini Buddha. Having reached the state of an arhat, he possessed some psychic powers. One day, he was begging for food and saw a young woman seated on her doorstep. While cradling her new-born baby tenderly against her breast, she was eating fish. When she finished eating, she threw the fish bone at a female dog that had watched the food, and yelled to chase her away. Because of his powers, Katayana was able to see the karmic bonds uniting these four beings, the woman, the baby, the fish, and the dog. The fish was none other than the father of the young woman; he had died few years earlier. The baby was a person with whom she had maintained reciprocal hatred; that person also had passed away few years previously. As for the dog, it was the reincarnation of her mother. The woman ignored these relationships. She never dreamed that she held an enemy dose to her heart, ate her father, and violently rejected her mother.

Katayana said: "Eating her father, abusing her mother, and cherishing her enemy, samsara is a strange show!" And he burst into laughter.

We can never know the karmic links in the immediately preceding life that bind us to people with whom we now have a dose relationship. We can only be certain that all these beings have been our father and our mother a great

number of times. For this, we remain gratefully indebted to them. When we see someone poor, sick, or in a miserable condition, let us remember that this person has been our father and mother many times. With mind obscured by ignorance, this person does not know this. Because we know, we have to seek all means to relieve this person and develop as much love and compassion as we can for him or her.

When we see a young person, happy and in good health, although we know that this being was once our father and mother, we may think our compassion is not needed now. However, compassion is not something to feel from time to time, it embraces the totality of the situation of all beings. The person who is young and happy now will inevitably be affected by the suffering of change. He or she will become sick, suffer, and die. This person cannot be excluded from the field of our compassion.

Older people were our father and mother at one time or another. Granting great importance to this life and world, they may have devoted all their forces and attention to them. Now, they no longer expect anything but illness and death. Perhaps, they have committed, in this life, many negative acts that will produce much suffering in their future lives. Our compassion must help them avoid suffering as much as possible, and establish them on the path of Awakening.

Powerful and wealthy people of this world are often excluded from the field of compassion. They, too, have been our fathers and mothers. Their present situation is the result of positive acts accomplished in past lives. Their situation is not necessarily enviable, because it does not lack danger. Indeed, the Buddha said:

> "The place of power is also the place of negative acts;
>
> The place of wealth is also that of greed"

These negative acts and greed will mature in future existences into the form of suffering, whether it is in the hell, hungry ghosts realm, or when beings resume a painful and miserable human existence. Powerful and wealthy people deserve our compassion, and we must seek ways to help them to avoid future sufferings.

LOVING OUR ENEMIES

We also meet people seeking to harm us, showing aggressiveness, or simply being unpleasant. Our usual reaction is to reply by manifesting anger or aggression. This is a wrong reaction. The person who acts now as an enemy has been our father and mother many times in past lives. Due to the mind being obscured by ignorance, this person cannot recognize this fact. Because of negative acts accomplished now, and because the person cannot liberate himself or herself from the cycle of existence, this person will have to contin

ue enduring innumerable sufferings. Recognizing that this person has been our father and mother, instead of displaying anger, we feel compassion and do anything in our power to liberate this person frpm suffering and make him or her happy.

Animals living on earth, underground, or in water, have a very difficult existence and suffer in all kinds of ways. All have been our fathers and mothers a great number of times. Negative acts committed in past lives have imposed on them their present existence. Not only do they suffer, but their mind is inhabited by all passions, desire-attachment, aversion, blindness, greed, and jealousy. They are incapable by nature of generating faith, compassion, and spiritual intelligence. They also must be included in our compassion.

Most people live in a family structure, as members of relationships that include the father, mother, husband, wife, children, brothers, and sisters. It is not rare that family relationships are stained by misunderstanding and quarrels. If we are beset with these kinds of difficulties, let us recall that those with whom we do not get along now have taken care of us with attention and love as our parents in past lives. Previous karmic links have forged present family bonds. If a member of our family gets angry at us or chooses to quarrel, let us reflect. "He or she is angry because of not knowing the real link uniting all beings. I am fortunate to know the Dharma. Knowing also that he or she has been my father and mother, I will not respond by anger. On the contrary, cultivating patience, with love and compassion, I will seek ways to make that family member happy"

Developing compassion, we must do the following:

- with the body, avoid killing or creating suffering, but act with softness and kindness
- with our speech, avoid criticizing others, being contemptuous, being slanderous, and using humiliating words that hurt or threaten, and instead speak with kindness
- and with our mind/ avoid malevolence and develop benevolence and the sincere wish for other's happiness

FOUR KINDS OF GIVING

Compassion is expressed by four kinds of giving, material giving, giving of security, giving the Dharma, and giving of love.

- Material giving consists in giving to those who are in need, food to those who are hungry, dothes to those who have nothing to wear, and so on.
- Giving security applies to those, who, being unable to protect themselves need the help of another, such as sick people, endangered animals, and so on. Buying live fish and releasing them in water is one of these kinds of giving.
- Giving the Dharma is practiced when having real knowledge of the Dharma, and motivated by great compassion we are driven to help others. We can explain various aspects of the spiritual life, such as the difference between negative and positive acts. We explain the necessity of abstaining from committing negative activity, accomplishing positive activity, and so on. It is the highest form of giving, but we must understand all its implications.

For example, I now talk to you in order to teach you. If I teach with the thought that, since time without beginning, you have wandered in the cycle of existence, undergoing innumerable sufferings, and have, because of karmic potential, much suffering to experience in future lives, and if I think it is

necessary that I help you to liberate yourself from it, this motivation will make the teaching beneficial to you. It will also be an opportunity for me to accumulate great merit. If I teach without compassion but for financial interest or fame, I doubt this will be useful to you. Even if it is useful to you, I would not experience any benefit because of my perverted motivation. This applies to material giving as well as to the giving of security. When we practice giving only with the wish of helping, we experience great benefit contributing to the attainment of Awakening. Practicing giving for one's self-glorification and fame will be the only reward and will consume all the benefit of the generous act.

- Giving love takes into consideration the suffering of all beings. The cycle of existence is composed of six classes, each marked by a particular suffering.

- hell beings undergo immense torments inflicted by unbearable cold or heat

- hungry ghosts suffer from hunger and thirst that they can never satisfy

- animals have limited intelligence and are driven by instinct to devour each other

- human beings undergo pains of birth, old age, sickness, and death

- demi-gods are prisoners of their own quarrels and conflicts

- gods, at the end of a very long life of pleasure, suffer in seeing themselves falling into inferior realms

TAKING SUFFERING, GIVING HAPPINESS

When we practice giving love, we should think of the ocean of suffering, not only of the suffering we experience now but also of the suffering imprinted in our karmic potential, which will actualize in the future. Then we imagine that all the suffering, faults, and veils covering the mind of all beings take the form of a black light that we breathe in by the right nostril. It dissolves into the emptiness of the heart. We imagine that all beings are liberated from this suffering that we just took within ourselves.

Then, we imagine all the qualities, all happiness and joys we have taking the form of a white light that we breath out by the left nostril. This light envelopes all beings and they become perfectly happy. Our practice continues for a certain number of breathing cycles during this visualization.

What is the real effect of such a meditation? Do beings toward whom it is directed truly receive its benefit? In fact, this meditation allows us to develop a positive mental attitude, decreasing our faults and veils, and increasing merit and wisdom, which ultimately lead to Awakening. Once Awakening is reached, we may effectively establish an infinite number of beings in states of happiness and really liberate them from suffering. The effect is not immediate, but this meditation on giving love surpasses a mere act of imagination.

As we are ordinary beings, we have strong feelings of ego: "I exist, it is me." Because the idea of "me" is strongly anchored within us, it is possible that, in practicing a meditation during which we imagine ourselves taking on the suffering of others, we would fear harming ourselves. We would prefer not to practice this type of exercise or would practice it only with reticence. This would be a mistake. On the contrary, we must fully dedicate ourselves to it by thinking, "What I want is to effectively take on myself the suffering of all beings, liberate them from it, and endure it alone, by myself." The meditation of taking the suffering and giving happiness produces benefits for the meditator in this lifetime: longevity, absence of sicknesses, and the realization of wishes and projects. Ultimately, it contributes to the attainment of Awakening. If we practice this meditation with self-benefit in mind, we totally falsify this practice. During meditation, we do not need to envision the result but we practice with pure motivation for the benefit of others.

Taichung, March 25,1986

EMPTINESS AND COMPASSION

When we understand the notion of emptiness of the mind and realize what it means, the mind, by itself, expands in joy, happiness, and freedom. We see that ordinary beings, not perceiving this emptiness, think in terms of "me" and "I exist." This mistake makes them accept all phenomena as real, and they experience all kinds of suffering. The compassion that we conceive for them is all the greater because we perceive the foundation of the mechanism of suffering. Understanding emptiness and compassion sustain each other.

Taichung, March 25 1986

THE PAINFUL CONDITION OF ANIMALS

Hell beings and hungry ghosts endure terrible torments. The karma that engenders this type of existence and our own are too different for communication to be possible. We cannot see them, and this is why we sometimes doubt their existence.

The greatest number of beings constituting the class of animals are also invisible to us. However, we can see a certain number of them. We can observe them, peaceful or fierce, living on earth or in the water. All of them have only limited intelligence, but animals of the oceans and rivers, fish and crustaceans, seem to have an opaque mind, and very limited mental capabilities. Nevertheless, they are not free of desire-attachment On the contrary, it is very powerful among them, most particularly in connection with food. This allows fishermen to catch and kill diem. Finally, aversion drives diem to kill and devour each other. Mental opacity, desire-attachment, and aversion are die three poisons that cause much suffering for diem. With body and mind, they experience, just as we do, suffering and fear.

PROVIDING REAL ASSISTANCE

However, animals hardly possess ways to protect themselves, and no one thinks about protecting diem. Their condition of existence is die consequence of bad karma accumulated in past lives. It is an act of great compassion to protect them by releasing captured animals that are put up for sale in the marketplace, destined to be killed and eaten. Releasing them in their natural habitat will preserve their lives. To do this even for a few days or a few weeks is greatly beneficial. We may use three methods in addition to material giving, such as giving spiritual benefit:

- by reciting, for the released animals, mantras and names of the Buddhas. Simply hearing this has the power to lead them to liberation.

- by giving them sacred substances to eat. It is said that touching these substances with the mouth will be sufficient for animals to avoid birth into inferior realms. They will be established on a path ultimately leading them to Awakening.

- by spreading sand consecrated by recitation of mantras on their bodies. This contact prevents falling into inferior realms.

These three methods are called 'liberation by hearing" "liberation by taste" and "liberation by contact" The scope-of giving assistance is ultimate as well as temporal.

Hong-Kong, March 19,1986

SAVING LIFE

Human beings and animals have in common an identification with the "me" the egocentric grasping. All have the feeling: "Myself, I exist" From this, fear, sickness, and suffering proceed.

There are ten negative acts committed by the body, speech, and mind. The most serious is taking life. It is said that the karmic result of this is to experience hell for a kalpa, and then to be killed 500 times. The seriousness in suppressing life is as great as the merit of saving it. When we release animals, this merit is greater if we supplement it with spiritual protection by reciting mantras, giving consecrated substances, and spreading blessed sand.

FISHES HAVING BECOME DEVAS

At the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, one of the many kingdoms of India was governed by the king, "Lord of the Gods." He had in his court a skillful physician whose young and good-hearted son enjoyed walking in the countryside. One day, the son was hiking in the hills, when, in the distance, he saw predatory birds flying in a circle at a low altitude. Approaching a pond on the point of drying up, he saw birds feeding on fish that could no longer find refuge in deep water. Completely moved by what he saw, he thought, "These poor fish are going to die. What can be done?"

As fast as he could, he returned home and, telling his father what he had seen, asked him to solve the problem. The physician understood that it was necessary to seek help from the king himself. He requested an interview with the king. He told his son's story and of his solicitude for the fish and in his son's name requested that his majesty intervene. The king was emotionally moved and ordered an elephant to be loaded with barrels of water for the pond, and that people recite the mantras and names of the Buddhas.

However, later the pond dried up again because of lack of rain, and 10,000 fish living there died. They all were reborn as devas in the "Sky of the Thirty-three Ones,"10 endowed with the power of clairvoyance particular to their present state. They could see that the Buddha was teaching in India, descended to hear him, and understood the nature of mind.

They then were curious about their past merit allowing them to have been able to obtain such a fortunate destiny, being born as devas, meeting the Buddha, and receiving his teachings. Using their mental powers, they saw that, in their previous life, they had been the fish that had received water and the blessing of mantras. To express their gratitude to the physician's son, they showered flowers on his house. Surprised, the physician's son wanted to know the reason for this out-pour. He went to the Buddha and learned that the flowers were the token gratitude from the devas he had protected when they were only fish in a pond without water.

Chiai, April 4,1986

AN ASSOCIATION WITH FISH 11

To the attention of the benefactors and disciples of Taiwan who have faith and devotion:

Any being considers its body and its life as very dear and is very attached to them. From this come pains, fears, and suffering. If someone pierces us, beats us, and fatally injures us, how great our anguish and suffering! Animals do not harm us, nevertheless, we catch them against their will, inflicting unbearable physical suffering on them and taking their lives.

During many past lives, these animals have been our fathers and mothers. We, ourselves, now enjoy the result of previous virtuous acts, an existence endowed with certain freedom and comfort. Because of this existence, as they cannot protect themselves, if we can rescue animals from death and suffering, we gratefully return the goodness of our parents in our past lives.

Suppressing one life leads to rebirth in hell during a kalpa. Five hundred times our life will be then taken in return.

During many existences we will own a miserable and ugly body. Continual threats will weigh heavily on our lives. Saving only one being from death and suffering leads to rebirth for hundreds of lives as a deva or a human being endowed with a good existence. We will have long life, good health, abundance of goods, perfect happiness, and joy.

If, more particularly, we give animals consecrated substances that liberate by taste, sand that liberates by contact, and if we recite for them the names of

the Buddhas and mantras, our rebirth will bring longevity, physical beauty, a pleasant voice, great wisdom, wealth, and good friends. Our wishes will be granted. We will be born in a pleasant country, free of all threats, and we will encounter the Dharma. At the moment of death, we will endure no suffering of agony, nor fall into inferior realms. We will live in harmony with all beings and finally, we will be reborn in the Land of Bliss. Benefits are unlimited since they ultimately lead to Awakening. All this was explained by the Buddha himself.

With faith and great compassion for defenseless animals, birds, baby birds, fish, tortoises, and all sizes of animals, we offer the four kinds of giving, giving of the Dharma, giving of love, giving of material goods, and giving of security. Wishing them the best at this time will be beneficial not only for them, but for ourselves. We will obtain in this very life, longevity, health, wealth, and the absence of obstacles. In our future lives, we will obtain the same benefits that we have granted others.

It is useless to entertain hope or doubt concerning this subject since the law of karma is inescapable. Therefore, I ask you to undertake this virtuous practice whose consequences, for oneself and others, are now mundane and ultimately bring benefits and happiness, by becoming a member of the association "Releasing from inferior worlds" and by working on its behalf.

Kalu Rinpoche

Taipei, April 23,1986

Mechanisms of Samsara

THE SIX REALMS

Ignorance

Ignorance (Sanskrit, avidya; Tibetan, marikpa), that is to say, nonknowledge, has two levels:

- fundamental ignorance
- determined ignorance

Fundamental ignorance constitutes the foundation, of illusion in which all ordinary beings dwell. It is the root of samsara and is defined as the situation of the mind that does not recognize its own Awakened nature. Ignorance is the mind not recognizing itself.

Under various forms, ordinary beings experience suffering and pain. A Buddha, on the other hand, has gone beyond suffering. He or she has reached nirvana. This difference between an ordinary being and a Buddha fundamentally proceeds from the knowledge or ignorance of the mode of being of the mind. Knowledge characterizes Awakened beings, ignorance, ordinary beings.

To the question of the temporal origin of ignorance, one can only reply that it is without beginning. In this sense, fundamental ignorance is also called "innate ignorance" comparable to the ore that accompanies gold in its natural state.

Emptiness, dajity, and intelligence without obstruction characterize the tathagatagarbha, the potential of Awakening. Because this potential is not recognized, emptiness is falsely taken for "me" and clarity is falsely taken for the "other." It is the way the duality of "me-other" is structured. This mistake is referred to as "determined ignorance," because it makes us believe in the mistaken determinations of "me" and "other."

Assuming that ignorance has existed since time without beginning could lead us to think that knowledge has never existed. We must see things from an another perspective. Ignorance implies the presence of the true nature of the mind. Although not recognized, it is knowledge itself. It is expressed in the notion of Samantabhadra, the "eternal Buddha," in other words the primordially existing Buddhahood, even if it is ignored altogether.

Ignorance of the Six Realms

Because duality arises from fundamental ignorance, conflicting emotions such as desire-attachment, hatred-aversion, and blindness are created, which are subdivided into 84,000 conflicting emotions. Under their influence, beings accomplish various acts producing karma which itself produces the experience of one of the six realms of:

- hell beings
- hungry ghosts
- animals
- human beings

- demi-gods
- gods

Reality of the Six Realms

One may consider this notion of the six realms as arbitrary or see it as only a pure hypothesis without a real foundation. However, from the Buddhist point of view, simply because the Buddha himself taught it, it cannot lack validity.

The Buddha gives a precise description of the eight burning hells, attributing to them a precise underground location, each at a given distance from the ground surface. These details do not have the purpose of just impressing us. They correspond to a certain reality. Envisioning the existence of the three inferior worlds is no mere exercise of imagination. The infinite variety of the animal realm, the thirty six classes of hungry ghosts, the eight burning hells, the eight freezing hells, occasional hells, and peripheral hells are a description of states of existence effectively experienced by beings.

Similarly, the sutras give a detailed vision of the superior realms, those of human beings, demi-gods, and gods.Human beings are not, in this context, reduced to those living on Earth, the Southern continent. They are seen as various people inhabiting the four continents and the eight subcontinents surrounding the axial mountain of the universe, Mount Meru, according to traditional cosmology.

As for demi-gods, they are located on the slopes of Mount Meru.

The gods are divided in several categories in the three spheres. First, the gods of the sphere of desire make up six classes. One group resides on the upper part of Mount Meru, another one on the summit (the "World of the Thirty-Three Ones"). The four other classes dwell in the sky above. Beyond the sphere of desire, reside the sixteen categories of gods of the sphere of form, also called Brahma's worlds. Then there are the four categories of gods of the sphere of formlessness, "Infinite space" "Infinite Consciousness" "Nonperceptible," and "Neither Existent nor Nonexistent," the highest of all the worlds of samsara.

Degrees of Reality

All these worlds have been described by the Buddha and they correspond to real perceived states of existence. However, one cannot say that they possess a reality in and of themselves, since, in the last analysis, they are only a projection of the mind. According to the Buddha, where do the flames and metal in fusion of the hells come from? Where do the tortures and burning that afflict all beings there come from? These are the projections of a negative mind.

Any manifestation is only an expression of the potentialities of the mind, under various forms. For example, what appears to human beings as water, for the hell beings is molten lead, and for hungry ghosts pus or other repulsive substances. For animals, water is a habitat, for the demi-gods, it is a weapon, and for the gods, nectar. A particular potentiality is only a reality

within the experience we have of it. Objects have no essential realities outside of what our mind projects them to be.

Beyond Contradiction

On one hand, the Buddha presents the six realms as real, while, on the other hand, he explains that they have no reality in themselves, and that they are only a projection. This is not a contradiction, but rather it is bringing together two perspectives under which the manifestation can be understood. What is real from a relative point of view is not real from an absolute point of view. It is said that phenomena are neither real nor unreal. They are similar to the reflection of the moon on water. This perception is a reflection of a certain reality. At the same time, this reflection is not a tangible object. Therefore it is not really existent.

The world has only a reality in accordance with those who perceive it. Many of you listening now to this teaching will go to bed this evening, and each of you will have his or her own dreams. When we see each other tomorrow morning, will everyone claim that the only real manifestation during the night was his or her dream world, and that that of other people was false? This would make no sense. In our dreams, we each experience a world that is real for us. But this world has no reality in itself. It is the same with the different worlds.20

In the Hells and Realms of the Gods

We find another indication of the subjective nature of our relationship to phenomena in the following example. It is said that there is a certain category of hell beings, the worst of all conditions of existence in the universe, who undergo th$ suffering of each of the six classes of beings.

If we considered each realm as a physical reality, passively experienced by its inhabitants, it would not be conceivable that a single being could encounter all these sufferings at one time. At least five of those sufferings would have to take place elsewhere. The experience of the six realms gathered in one world is only made possible because they are created by the mind.

The fifth level of the gods of the sphere of desire is called "Happy Emanation" This name is given to the level of the gods possessing the ability to create, by the simple effort of mental projection, any pleasant phenomenon they need, a beautiful object, harmonious sounds, tasty dishes, even companion gods or goddesses for enjoyment. The sixth level of the gods of the same sphere, called "Authority Over Other's Emanations" presents a level even more refined, since these gods have no need to mentally create what they wish. They rely on others. These two worlds provide an illustration of the ability of the mind to shape any manifestation.

When one recalls the subjective nature of individual experience being conditioned by karma, it is easier to understand how many variations happen in the general framework of the human condition. Some beings live longer than others, some are wealthier than others, enjoy a better health, are

happier, or adapt themselves more easily to a situation than others, and so on. All these variations are external manifestations of individual karma. This is why the Buddha said that the three spheres and the six realms are mind only.

When the mind awakens from ignorance that is similar to sleep, Buddhahood is reached. From then on, the different bodies of the Buddha and the pure lands are manifested for the benefit of all beings. All good qualities spontaneously bloom because the mind directly experiences its own nature.

Samye Ling, March 1983

If phenomena exist in and of themselves, we could not liberate ourselves. The possibility of reaching liberation by the practice of the Dharma is possible because phenomena are not real. Therefore, we can release ourselves from the illusion of their intrinsic reality.

However, as we now consider them to be real, we are obliged to take into account the laws that govern manifestation. By positive activity, we begin a process that creates the system of pleasant appearance of the superior worlds, while negative activity brings forth the painful appearances of hells, the realm of hungry ghosts, and the world of animals. Although these pleasures and sufferings are illusory, as long as we are not liberated, we experience them as real.

Brussels, October 1984

THE TWELVE INTERDEPENDENT LINKS

Samsara means rotation or wheel, as one would talk about the wheel of a vehicle, implying the idea of something that continuously turns.

The force that gives movement to this wheel does not come from outside, but is the result of our own acts. Negative acts entail rebirth in inferior worlds (animal, hungry ghost, and hell). Positive acts cause rebirth in superior worlds (god, demi-god, and human realms). Samsara is described as the totality of six realms, to which a seventh realm, the bardo, is sometimes added.

Bardo means interval and as used here refers most often to the intermediate period between death and rebirth. But it can be applied to several other circumstances. For example, we could speak of a bardo as a name for the no-man's land separating France from Belgium.

Sometimes, "outer samsara" is used to refer to the six classes of beings and "inner samsara" to the bardo. One also speaks of the succession of our thoughts as composing the "secret samsara."

One way to envision the functioning of samsara is to look at it from the point of view of the process of the twelve interdependent links:

1- ignorance
2- karmic impulses
3- consciousnesses
4- name and form

5- factors of perception
6- contact
7- sensation
8- craving
9- grasping
10- becoming
11- birth
12- old age and death

Brussels, October 1984

The easiest way of understanding the twelve interdependent links, is to place them in a chronological perspective beginning and ending with death, after having passed through all the steps of the bardo, birth, and life.

1- *Ignorance*—Before this life, we have experienced another life. At the end of this previous life, the separation of mind and body which is called death, occurred, and produced a period of unconsciousness similar to deep sleep or fainting. This period varies according to the individual. Generally, it takes three and half days and corresponds to the first link of ignorance in the chain of the twelve interdependent links.

2-and 3 - *Karmic impulses and consciousnesses*—When this period ends, and one awakens from deep sleep, the mind resumes its functions, and is put in motion by karmic impulsions. This is a first, very primitive degree of activity. These impulsions are quickly followed by the more structured and elaborated activity of consciousnesses.

In the framework of the five aggregates, we find a description of the functioning of the psyche. It includes the stage of perceptions preceding the stage of the karmic impulsions or volitions. This is why one can also put perceptions between ignorance and karmic impulsions, in the twelve interdependent links. These first three links of the chain are comparable to the three joints of a finger. The totality forms a unit with components that can be separated or regrouped. In the present case, perceptions and karmic impulses are analyzed together.

4- *Name and form*—Based on consciousnesses, since time without beginning, the conditioning of the duality 'I" and "other" has formed. This conditioning automatically produces the idea, "I have a body." In the. context of the bardo it is not a physical organism but a simple mental body. However, this does not prevent the mind of the bardo from comprehending it as something real. In addition to the three preceding links, there is the feeling of having a body. This totality is called "the aggregate of the four names," ignorance, karmic impulses, consciousnesses, and the mental "form" taking the place of the body. For this reason, the fourth link is called "name and form"

5- *Factors of perception*—We then arrive at the six factors of perception. Usually, one counts eighteen factors in perception, not only six. In this analysis, however, the six sense organs, the six sense consciousnesses, and the six sense objects are taken together. The eye is associated with visual

consciousness and external objects that it perceives. The ear is associated with auditory consciousness and sounds. The nose is associated with olfactory consciousness and smells, and so on. However, in the bardo, the body and external environment, as they do not possess any physical foundation, are reduced to mind. The sense organs are not materially present, no more than external manifestation is founded on material reality. The mind alone creates the impression of a body and an external world. Therefore, one speaks only of six factors of perception.

6- *Contact*—In the system of subjective manifestation of the bardo, the feeling of perceiving objects by consciousnesses through mental organs is created, and contact occurs, as the sixth link. In the same way that we touch an object with the finger, sensory faculties of the bardo enter into contact with their respective objects.

7- *Sensation*—Because of contact, the seventh link of the chain of the twelve interdependent links is experienced as a pleasant or unpleasant sensation.

8- *Craving*—Greed takes place in the solidification of a situation because of a tendency to interpret a pleasant or unpleasant perception, as truly existent or as an external object. Craving for action directed to the object is produced.

9- *Grasping*—From craving proceeds grasping. As the object is completely accepted as real, the will to grasp it occurs. An example may clarify the process. When a person sees a fruit, visual consciousness establishes contact with the object by the medium of the eye. Then a sensation is added, which can be pleasant if the fruit looks good. From this, the desire to possess the fruit arises, and becomes concrete in the very act of grasping it.

10 - *Becoming*—In the bardo, once "the aggregate of the four names" is constituted, the six factors of perception are developed. By the force of karma, the mind is driven to see its future parents uniting. This vision corresponds to contact, followed by sensation, then greed, from which proceeds the movement of grasping. Grasping leads us directly to the womb, with the result that mind unites with matter. It is the initial point of becoming, covering in fact the time of gestation. One can envision it as an effort of the mind to incarnate, or as a force impelling the mind to incarnate.

The process of conception is dominated by an emotional reaction occurring when the parents are perceived uniting. If the karma of the future human being is to be reborn as a man, the being will strongly feel an attraction for the mother and aversion for the father. If the being is destined to be a woman, the being will feel attraction to the father and aversion for the mother. This double feeling of attraction-aversion acts as a factor provoking entry in the womb.

The material supports with which the mind unites at the moment of conception are seen occurring in the course of a seven-fold transformation with each step taking a day. The essence of food assimilated by the parents passes into the blood, from there into the muscle tissue, then into the adipose tissue, into bone and marrow. At this stage the "white and red bindus" (Tibetan, tigles), the most subtle essence of the spermatozoid and ovum spreads throughout the body and produces a physical and

psychological well-being. We find all the material factors of conception on the sixth step of the metabolic process, mind uniting with white and red bindus in the bardo.

The step of becoming corresponds to stabilization of the mind, and as long as the mind is in the bardo, it is comparable to a feather or a piece of paper scattered by sudden changes in the direction of the wind. The paper or feather may become attached to a sticky object; likewise the vagabond mind of the bardo fixes on the bindus.

For a being whose karma is positive, the period of gestation and birth can unfold without pain. In general, however, the fetus suffers because of constraints imposed by its situation. We all are familiar with the uncomfortable situation of remaining too long with folded legs or with stretched legs. The fetus is submitted to many annoyances by not being able to move at will.

11- *Birth*—Becoming naturally leads to birth, a very painful moment, even if it is later forgotten.

12- *Old age and death*—Following birth the process of aging, in which illness and much suffering are usually involved, begins. Inescapably, impermanence leads to death. We find a concrete illustration of impermanence by looking at a watch. From second to second, without ceasing, the hands advance. Impermanence also progresses from instant to instant throughout our lives. Whatever the reason—old age, accident, or sickness—we cannot escape death. Only the duration of life varies.

Birth is a painful process, and death is also painful. During our life we do meet with many difficulties. In general way, when the Buddha taught the twelve interdependent links, he emphasized suffering and all its necessary implications.

We have covered all the links composing the twelve interdependent links: ignorance, . karmic impulsions, consciousnesses, name and form, factors of perception, contact, sensation, greed, grasping, becoming, birth, and old age and death.

This succession, implying a physical existence, is similar to the growth of a flower. A child develops until reaching the fullness of a young adult just as a bud opens in the full blooming of the corolla. Then, the flower begins a process that inevitably leads to its withering, and the human being slips on the slope of old age, with a progressive decrease of abilities, and finally death. Death occurs with the reabsorption of the five elements ending in a phase of complete unconsciousness. The mind falls into ignorance, the first of the twelve links. The sequence of interdependent links continues without ceasing.

Individual and Collective Samsara

The twelve interdependent links are a way to describe samsara. We can call them "individual samsara," because they depict the cycle continually reproducing each individual. We can also see samsara collectively by envisioning the different modes of incarnations, which are the six realms.

There are the three superior realms (human, demi-god, and god), resulting from positive acts, and the three inferior realms .(animal, hungry ghost, and hell) where negative acts lead.

We should note that the twelve interdependent links automatically maintain their continuity. It is not necessary to wind them up like a watch. No external intervention is necessary. They function as does a quartz watch, without a winding stem.

Meditation on the Twelve Links

All levels of Buddha's teaching include the notion of twelve interdependent links. However, it is developed in more detail and emphasis in the vehicle of the solitary Buddhas, as an aspect of the small vehicle serving as a support for meditation. The practitioner reflects deeply upon each of the links as we have described them, from ignorance to death. Then, he or she examines them in reverse order, seeking the origin of each one of them.

How have old age and death taken place? Because they are preceded by birth. Why birth? Because of becoming, that is to say, because of the entry into the womb. Why becoming? Because of grasping. Why grasping? Because of greed, and so on.

The meditator, in this way, returns to the first link, ignorance, to ask a final question, "From where comes ignorance?" It comes from the mind. To put an end to the sequence of the twelve links it is necessary to realize emptiness of the mind. The practitioner then remains absorbed in emptiness, reaching the partial realization of the solitary Buddhas.

We are between birth and death. It is the longest sequence in the totality of the twelve links, but it can be the most fertile. It provides us with the opportunity of studying and practicing the Dharma, and of progressing on the path of liberation toward Buddhahood. It is the best use that we could make of it.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Question: When one reaches liberation, how is it, since there no longer is karma, that we do not totally dissolve but create emanations?

Kalu Rinpoche: Liberation is not physical, as if we were going out of a place into another one. It is the mind that liberates itself. The path of liberation relies on a type of meditation called "mental calming" (Sanskrit, shamatha; Tibetan, shinay). Usually, our mind is agitated, and entirely out of control. Shinay allows us to pacify and stabilize it, allowing the possibility of implementing deeper meditation leading to the recognition of the true nature of the mind.

Our present inner state is comparable to a candle exposed to the wind. We can try to light it, but gusts of wind constantly extinguish it. These windy draughts are the conflicting emotions and thoughts preventing the establishment of authentic attention. The first step of meditation aims at calming the mind.

When a sufficient degree of *shinay* is reached, we are faced with a two-fold question. Who turns in samsara and who attains liberation? Of course, it is the mind. One seeks then to understand the nature of the mind, and discovers that it is emptiness, clarity, and intelligence without obstruction.

This second phase of meditation is called "superior vision" (Sanskrit, vipasyana; Tibetan, lhakthong). It opens the way to liberation on the first level of a bodhisattva. The mind gains great control of itself and simultaneously has a capacity to act for the benefit of others.

Mental calming and superior vision form a perfectly authentic path. However, we live in an era unfavorable to the practice of the Dharma, because of the intense activity of human beings, the abundance of distractions, and idleness. Rather than trusting only our own forces in meditation, perhaps it is more prudent to rely on a force greater than our own. Suppose that you want to visit a relatively faraway place. You can go there by foot but this requires time and will be fatiguing. You can also hitchhike or take a taxi. Using someone else's vehicle, saves time and energy.

Practicing *shinay* and **lhakthong** and increasing compassion and knowledge of emptiness by relying only on the power of our own mind risk being difficult. If we rely on a force greater than our own, for example, that of Avalokita (Tibetan, Chenrezig), the progress is made easier. We go by car or train rather than traveling on foot.

The form of the deity Avalokita and his mantra are invested with great power, grace, and compassion. Meditating on Avalokita and reciting his mantra will solicit help from a force that allows us to make swift progress directed toward Awakening.

Avalokita practice includes *shinay*, since we apply our attention without distraction to visualization of the deity's body and recitation of the mantra. Even if we cannot visualize, our concentration on the recitation of the mantra would be sufficient, because of its grace, and our meditation will progress and naturally open up to lhakthong.

Avalokita provides us an easy and swift path. Most often, there is little inclination to believe its effect, thinking that there is somewhere a superior and hidden method. But this is not a personal opinion. The Buddha and Padmasambhava have taught many times that the path of Avalokita is the best and most beneficial.

Brussels, October 1984

Wheel of life

Mind

The use cf the term "mind" brings the possibility of confusion if one is not careful. In Tibetan as in French or English many terms are used to convey the nuances necessary in speaking about the mind (mind, consciousness, psyche, intellect...). Nevertheless, the term "sem," rendered, as mind, has generic value, covering afield of meaning appreciably larger than French or English, since it is used to convey the notions of "soul" used in theological terminology and of "being" used in metaphysics. It is necessary to see that the word "mind" sometimes refers to the psychological domain and sometimes to ontology. From the Buddhist point of view, one would probably say that one remains in the domain of psychology when one envisions an atrophied function, the ego, and that one passes into ontology when one sees the mind in its original purity, as an unlimited, eternal mind free of any conditioning.

In the teaching transcribed here, the reader who wants to avoid confusion must not lose the view of this double meaning. In one word, it is at times a question of the superficial apprehension of the mind that we take as normal, and sometimes it is the true nature of the mind that is to be discovered. Although mind is therefor all eternity, it underlies the multiple fluctuations of the ego with which we falsely identify. The nature of mind certainly is the main teaching ofKalu Rinpoche, a subject to which he continually returned. This is why, although the nature of the mind is extensively covered in this chapter, we also frequently find some reminders or complements in other chapters.

We have a superficial notion of what the mind is. For us, it is what has the feeling of existing, and thinks, "It is me" or "I exist" The mind is also that which is aware of the thoughts and experiences the emotions, and according to circumstances, feels happy or miserable. Other than that, we do not truly know our mind. It is even probable that we have never asked ourselves this question, "What is the mind?"

THE MIND PERCEIVES, NOT THE ORGANS

First, it is obvious that the mind has no material existence. It is not an object defined by color, size, volume, or form. None of these characteristics is applicable. One cannot point to the

mind, and say "It is that" In this sense, the mind is empty. Although the mind is lacking form, color, and so on, it is not enough to conclude that it has no existence. Thoughts, feelings, and conflicting emotions that the mind feels and produces, prove that something functions and exists, that the mind is not just empty.

What is this feeling of existing? Where is it located, outside or inside the body? If it is located inside the body, what feels it? The flesh? Blood? Bone? Nerves? Veins? Lungs? The heart? If you carefully reflect on this, you have to admit that no limb or organ claims its own existence by saying "I." Therefore, the mind cannot be identified with a part of the body. Let us take the example of the eye. The eye does not proclaim its own existence. It does not make the claim, "I" exist, or "I" must look at an external form. This form is beautiful, the other one is not. I am attached to the first one and I reject the

second one" The eye itself has no volition, senses no feeling, neither attachment, nor aversion. It is the mind that has the feeling of existing, that perceives, judges, is attached, or that rejects. It is the same for the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the skin and contacts, the mental body and phenomena. The sense organs do not perceive, the mind does.

A CAR NEEDS A DRIVER

Organs, unconscious by nature, are not the mind, but they are rather like a house in which people live. The inhabitants are called consciousnesses:

- visual consciousness
- auditory consciousness
- olfactory consciousness
- gustatory consciousness
- tactile consciousness
- mental consciousness

These consciousnesses do not exist by themselves, autonomously. They are no other than mind.

The body is similar to an automobile and the mind to a driver. When the car is not in use, it can have all the equipment necessary for driving, an engine, wheels, gasoline, and so on, in perfect shape, yet it can go nowhere by itself. Similarly, a body lacking mind, even if it possesses all the organs, is only a corpse. It may have eyes, ears, and a nose, yet it cannot see, or hear, or feel.

Some people think that death is not only of the body, but also that of the mind. The body becomes a corpse, the mind simply ceases to exist. But this is not so. The mind is not born, does not die, and is not affected by illness. It is eternal. What perceives the forms as registered by the eye, sounds heard by the ear, and all other objects through the other sense organs, that which is aware, and not interrupted by death of the body, is therefore the mind. We have yet to define the true nature of this mind. Given that the mind lacks material characteristics, as we saw previously, it is not possible to designate mind as a visible object or a thing easily recognizable because if it were someone would show it to us.

Everyone having a mind must refer to oneself and, with the guidance of a master, proceed with an investigation leading to the discovery of what the mind truly is. Does it have form, color, volume? Is it located outside or inside the body? These are necessary questions to which one must find an answer by personal experience, even if one has already received theoretical explanations such as those that have been given.

LISTENING, REFLECTING, AND MEDITATING

The practice of the Dharma is always composed of three stages: listening, reflecting, and meditating.

- Listening is receiving theoretical teachings and instructions. It is essential to be able to faithfully recall what has been told or read.

- Reflecting consists of making a discursive examination of the data that one has received or proceeding to an investigation to seek answers to certain questions. In the present case, for example, one searches for the form and color of the mind, its location, its level of existence, and so on.

- Meditating takes place once certain conclusions have been drawn by reflecting. Meditating must be nondiscursive and without discontinuity.

These three stages constitute an obligatory sequence. What is given here belongs to the listening phase. It is necessary to memorize it before approaching the next stage.

To describe the mind 24 one considers three aspects:

- its essence, emptiness
- its nature, clarity
- its mode of functioning, intelligence

EMPTINESS

The essence of mind is to be empty. This means, as already pointed out, that the mind has no material existence. It has no form, no color, no volume, no size. It is untouchable, invisible, like space.

CLARITY

The mind, however, is not like a obscure space which the sun, the moon, or the stars cannot illuminate, but rather it is like space during the day or the space of a lighted room. This is a comparison, and only an approximation. It means that the mind possesses a certain power of knowing. This is not knowledge itself, but illumination, or the ability of consciousness that renders knowledge possible. This ability includes the ability to produce manifestation. When you think of America or India, your mind has the ability of making their inner image appear. This capacity of knowing and the ability of evoking are the clarity of the mind. Because of light, you can see objects in the room where you are, and be aware of their presence. Because of clarity, the mind has also the ability of knowing.

Taipei, April 30,1986

What is meant by clarity of the mind is slightly different from clarity in an ordinary sense. Ordinary clarity allows for the exercise of visual function solely, while clarity of the mind makes it possible not only to see, but also to hear, smell, taste, touch, and be aware of pleasure or displeasure of the mind. Therefore, it is a clarity with a field of application that is extremely vast.

Samye Ling, March 1983

INTELLIGENCE WITHOUT OBSTRUCTION

The room in which you are seated contains emptiness (room space) and clarity (lighting). Nevertheless it is not enough to say it has a mind. One must find a third element of description. For a mind to be, in addition to emptiness and clarity, it must haye intelligence25 without obstruction. This intelligence allows us to effectively know separate things without confusion. The mind is not only aware of phenomena, which is its clarity, but it recognizes them without confusion, which is intelligence. In what it sees, for example, mind knows what is the sky, a house, a man, and so on.

Taipei, April 30,1986

On this basis of emptiness and clarity, there is intelligence without obstruction. It is the ability to identify, evaluate, and understand. For example, intelligence says: "This is an object; it is beautiful or ugly" Identification applies to sounds whose volume and quality are perceived, to smells being repulsive or pleasant, to tastes whose different nuances are recognized, and to pleasant or unpleasant mental experiences.

Samye Ling, March 1983

The mind is emptiness, clarity, and intelligence together. Is such a spirit small? No, since it has the ability to make appear and to embrace the whole universe. Is it large? One cannot assert that either. If we have a localized pain in a very precise place in our body—caused, let us say by a insect sting—we identify our mind with this tiny place by saying, "It hurts" Everyone identifies with his or her body that the mind completely occupies. This happens on a vast scale for an elephant or on a small scale for an insect. In fact, the mind itself, outside of all identification, is neither small nor great. It is free of these concepts.

The fundamental mind is the same for all beings. If one recognizes the mode of being of the mind, it is no other than Awakening:

- emptiness is the Absolute body (Sanskrit, *Dharmakaya*)
- clarity is the body of perfect experience (Sanskrit, *sambhogakaya*)
- intelligence is the body of emanation (Sanskrit, *nirmanakaya*)

Taipei, April 30,1986

Union of the three components, emptiness, clarity, and intelligence is called "mind" It is also called the tathagatagarbha, the potential of Awakening. When the three components are not recognized for what they are, it is the ordinary state of being.

- emptiness is expressed as mind
- clarity is expressed as speech
- intelligence without obstruction as body

The three components of pure mind are frozen into the three components of an ordinary personality. By the meditation of mahamudra, the true nature of the mind is recognized and the three components appear as the three bodies of Awakening. In truth, a Buddha and an ordinary being are identical. They possess fundamentally the same nature. Recognizing this nature is being a Buddha, not recognizing it is being an ordinary being. It is the only difference.

Taipei, April 13th, 1986

It would take us a long time to examine in detail all the implications of the nature of the mind, the cycle of existence, and liberation. A way to summarize them is to refer to the words of Gampopa.

The mind without artificial creation is happiness.

Water without pollution is pure.

When we let the mind dwell as it is in its own nature, inner happiness arises of itself. Water left alone is smooth and pure. The mind agitated by many thoughts is in turmoil. Released from an overabundance of thoughts, it regains its own limpidity. As emptiness, clarity, and intelligence our mind is perfectly good in and of itself, and is naturally free of suffering. But we do not recognize it. We think, "It is me" and we bind ourselves with the cord of ego, thinking from now on, "I must be happy. It is necessary for me to avoid all unpleasantness." Locked into this attitude, the mind becomes shriveled and creates its own suffering.

Taipei, April 13th 1986

THE FOUR VEILS

Although we possess tathagatagarbha and are Buddha by nature, how is it that we do not experience the qualities of this nature but are afflicted by all the limitations of an ordinary being? This is because of the "veils" When did these veils appear? They really have no origin. They have covered the mind since it has existed, in other words, since always.

Samye Ling, Mardi 1983

THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE

The fundamental mind is also called the "potential of going into felicity."26 It belongs to all beings. Not recognizing it is ignorance and is the main veil covering the mind. Our eyes allow us to dearly see all external objects. Nevertheless, they cannot see our own face or see themselves. In the same way, the mind does not see itself and does not recognize itself for what it is. This is called the veil of ignorance.

THE VEIL OF LATENT CONDITIONING

The first consequence of ignorance is duality. Where there is only emptiness, the mind falsely conceives a me, as being the center of all experience. Where there is only clarity, it conceives perceived objects as others. This

phenomenon is easily understood by referring to a dream. Not seeing the true nature of a dream world, we divide it into two parts. There are a subject that we identify as ourselves, and objects making up an external universe. In fact, both are no other than mind. All our experience functions on this same mode. Dividing the unique mind in two parts, we live in the universe of duality of subject-object It is the second veil, called the veil of latent conditioning.27

THE VEIL OF CONFLICTING EMOTIONS

From the notion of "me" springs hope of obtaining what is pleasant and what makes "me" feel comfortable in existence as well as the fear of not obtaining what we desire and fear of living in threatening situations. Hope and fear are grafted on the side of "me." The other side of duality, the notion of other, includes all sense objects, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, contacts, or mental objects. Any object perceived as pleasant creates joy, and any object perceived as unpleasant is upsetting. Then, these feelings are transformed into attachment and aversion. From the duality of "me and other," hope and fear as well as attachment and aversion are produced. They come from nowhere other than emptiness of the mind and have, therefore, no material existence or an entity of their own. Not recognizing this, anymore than recognizing the real nature of phenomena, we grant them an undue reality. This is called blindness or mental opacity.

One finds a group of three basic conflicting emotions, attachment, aversion, and blindness, from which three other ones proceed:

- from attachment, greed
- from aversion, jealousy
- from mental opacity, pride

This gives six main conflicting emotions. The three basic conflicting emotions can be subdivided in many ways. Attributed to attachment are 21,000 ramifications relating to the type of objects to which it applies, attachment to a person, a house, a vehicle, and so on. The same process is also detected in 21,000 variants of aversion and blindness, and 21,000 conflicting emotions composed of a blend of the three previous ones. This is the source for the traditional 84,000 conflicting emotions. Our mind is inhabited by a multitude of conflicting emotions constituting another veil.

THE VEIL OF KARMA

Under the influence of conflicting emotions, we accomplish all kinds of negative acts with body, speech, and mind, which form the veil of karma. Therefore, we have four veils that successively engender each other.

- the veil of ignorance, the mind not recognizing itself
- the veil of the latent conditioning, of duality, splitting "I" from the "other"
- the veil of conflicting emotions, the 84,000 perturbations resulting from duality

- the veil of karma, negative acts accomplished under the power of conflicting emotions.

PURITY AND BLOSSOMING

The mind covered by these veils makes us ordinary beings. Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past were also, at one time, ordinary beings. They followed spiritual masters from whom they received instructions on the nature of the mind. They meditated, and achieved mahamudra. Having rid themselves of the four veils, they became pure. All the inherent qualities of mind bloomed within them. In Tibetan, pure is sang, bloomed is gyay. The compound of the two syllables gives the word the meaning of Buddha: sang-gyay, purity and blossoming. It is a way open to us. We receive instructions, meditate and obtain the realization of mahamudra, that is, Awakening. Following the footsteps of Milarepa, it is possible for us to cover the path in a single lifetime.

Taipei, April 30,1986

SIGNS OF EMPTINESS

The person who has realized the true nature of mind understands, at the same time, that all phenomena, things and beings, universes and all their inhabitants are none other than the production of the mind, empty in essence.

A certain number of signs indicate emptiness of the mind and the absence of own entity of phenomena, but we pay no heed to them.

At the time of conception, when the mind enters the womb of the mother, the parents cannot see it. No materially perceptible effect allows us to detect its arrival.

At the moment of death, even if the dying person is surrounded by many people, no one sees the mind exiting the body. No one can say, "It has left through this way" or "It has left through that way."

Perhaps you have studied several years and acquired a great deal of knowledge. Nevertheless, this knowledge is not in a closet, a house, or in your chest. It is nowhere, because it lacks an existence of its own. It is stored in emptiness.

At night, while asleep, we dream and a whole world, with landscapes, cities, humans, animals, and all sense objects appears to us, onto which we add an emotional response made up of desire, aversion, and so on. During the dream itself, we are convinced of the real existence of all dream phenomena. Nevertheless, once we are awake, the phenomena have disappeared. They exist nowhere outside of the dreamer's mind.

It is the same process that unfolds during the bardo of becoming. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and so on are perceived as real. Appearances manifested during the life that has ended no longer have an existence. When the mind enters a womb, the appearances of the bardo vanish and no longer exist.

THREE SUPPORTS OF EXISTENCE

The waking state, the dream, and the bardo have no reality in themselves. They are only manifestations of the mind to which we wrongly attribute an entity of their own. These three states are described as three bodies:

- "Body of karmic maturity" designates the body and environment perceived during the waking state. Both are the result—after a long process of ripening—of karma accumulated in past lives.

- "Body of latent conditioning" refers to the body and environment of the dream.

- "Mental body" is the body and experience of the bardo, governed by thinking alone.

By the continual succession of these three bodies, all our experience unfolds in the cycle of existence, falsely taken as real.

Taichung, March 24,1986

PRIMORDIAL AWARENESS, INDIVIDUALIZED CONSCIOUSNESS

The foundation of the mind is good in itself. It is the nature of Awakening, similar to pure water. It has been said by the Buddha:

> All beings are Buddha,
> But their minds are obscured by adventitious impurities;
> *When the impurities are dispersed, these beings are truly Buddhas.*

Not recognizing the Awakened nature of the mind is ignorance. From ignorance arise all the conflicting emotions (desire, anger, jealousy, and so on) as well as the flow of dualistic thoughts. The Buddha nature of the mind is also called the potential of primordial awareness. Because of ignorance and dualistic grasping, the hindered functioning of the mind becomes a potential of individualized consciousness.28 When pure water is mixed with mud, it loses its quality of being pure water and becomes muddied water. In the same manner, because of impurities, the potential of primordial awareness becomes individualized consciousness.

DIFFERENTIATED CONSCIOUSNESSES

This individualized consciousness, as a mode of functioning, is a unit designated by the term "potential of individualized consciousness" From this unit, seven differentiated individualized consciousnesses branch out, just like the fingers are the differentiations of a unique hand. They are: •

- visual consciousness that perceives forms
- auditory consciousness that perceives sounds
- olfactory consciousness that perceives smells
- gustatory consciousness that perceives tastes
- tactile consciousness that perceives contacts
- mental consciousness that identifies phenomena by thinking

- disturbed consciousness that interprets perception in terms of desire, aversion, jealousy, and so on

ORGANS ISSUED FROM THE CONSCIOUSNESSES

From the ability of manifestation of the mind appears the body. These are closely linked. The existence of the eight consciousnesses in the mind produces in the body the existence of corresponding physical supports, the sense organs. Organs are similar to houses, inert in themselves, and the consciousnesses are like human beings who inhabit them. Therefore, we have:

- eyes as support of visual consciousness
- ears as support of auditory consciousness
- nose as support of olfactory consciousness
- tongue and palate as supports of gustatory consciousness
- skin as support of tactile consciousness
- mental organ as support of mental consciousness, although in this case organ and consciousness are actually confounded.

As for the potential of individualized consciousness and the disturbed consciousness, they have no corresponding organs of their own. One can say that individual consciousness is supported by the body in general and disturbed consciousness by the totality of the sense organs.

OBJECTS OF SENSES

Finally, from an external point of view, consciousnesses are reflected in the sense objects:

- forms are the object of visual consciousness
- sounds, the object of auditory consciousness
- smells, the object of olfactory consciousness
- tastes, the object of gustatory consciousness
- contacts, the object of tactile consciousness
- mental phenomena (thoughts), the object of mental consciousness

The totality of external phenomena can also be seen as objects of the potential of individualized consciousness. Phenomena that are objects of conflicting emotions can be seen as external reflections of the disturbed consciousness.

When the mind is obscured by ignorance, its mode of functioning and relationship to the world is governed by a threefold process:

- internally, individualized consciousnesses
- on the intermediate level, sense organs
- and, externally, sense objects

Taichung, March 28,1986

Vajradhara Buddha

Mahamudra

Taipei, April 30,1986

ETYMOLOGY

Mahamudra and maha-ati are two designations for the same thing and are the main methods of reaching Awakening.

Those who have a deep inner experience of mahamudra can adopt various life styles without harming their meditation practice. Indian mahasiddhas, like Tilopa or Naropa, were engaged in odd and ordinary external activity, while meditating without interruption. As for Milarepa, he chose to abandon all temporal activity and exclusively devote himself to solitary meditation. Gampopa, his main disciple, and the first Karmapa, Tusum Khyenpa, a disciple of Gampopa, opted for the monastic life. All, in spite of their diverse life styles, attained liberation.

The Tibetan word for mahamudra is dm gya chenpo and its profound meaning can be seen from the definition given to each of its parts:

- *Cha* means movement or symbol, designates empty primordial awareness, and signifies that the mode of being of the mind as well as the manifestations proceeding from its creative ability are both empty in essence.

- *Gya* means vast and indicates that nothing exists beyond this empty primordial awareness. When one has realized what emptiness is, one understands that there is no phenomenon in the cycle of existence or of nirvana (the state of liberation) which is not empty. There is nothing beyond this empty awareness.

- *Chenpo* means great and refers to that realization as the highest attainment. In mahamudra, all the teachings of the Buddha are achieved. This is why it is also called maha-ati, which means great achievement.

Taipei, April 13th, 1986

DEGREES OF MATURITY

In fact, there are two types of mahamudra, that of the sutras and that of the tantras. They are slightly different in their presentation and method of meditation, but join each other in the same final realization.

Strictly speaking, mahamudra is very easy, because it is nothing other than recognizing our own mind and residing in this state without distraction. According to their abilities in understanding the nature of their minds, beings are classified under three categories.

Beings of superior capability are those who have received an important spiritual inheritance from their past lives. They have prepared themselves by a profound work of purification and accumulation of merit and have cultivated grefct familiarity with meditation. They naturally have great faith in the Dharma and the Three Jewels, much compassion, the ability to easily understand the Dharma, and great diligence.

Beings of mediocre capabilities, in other words, those whose capabilities acquired in past lives are mediocre, have certain interest in the Dharma, but can only understand the implications of the Dharma gradually and indirectly. The mahamudra of the sutras is the best way for them.

Beings of inferior capacities have acquired little and lack spiritual intelligence. It is difficult for them to understand and practice with the instructions on the nature of the mind. For them, it is necessary to get prepared by accomplishing exercises of purification and accumulation.29

This threefold division is a general overview of the spiritual state of beings. A more precise approach again divides the category of the superior beings into three classes.

- superior superior
- mediocre superior
- inferior superior

In this second system of classification, beings of mediocre and inferior capabilities are those whose approach to the mode of being of the mind cannot be immediate. They need first of all to prepare themselves by practice, in the framework of the Vajrayana, the phase of development, and the phase of completion with symbols. On the other hand, beings of "superiorly superior" faculties have no need for the preparatory phase. As soon as they receive instructions on the nature of the mind, these beings fully understand their meaning and can apply them immediately. They are extremely rare individuals. Certainly, they exist, but are very few.

Taipei, April 30,1986

HOW MILAREPA MISUNDERSTOOD THE MAHA-ATI

Sometimes, people incorrectly understand Vajrayana in general and mahamudra in particular. They believe that a certain theoretical knowledge with a semblance of practice is sufficient. Authentic practice is, of course, indispensable. Milarepa himself, in the beginning of his spiritual career, held this erroneous belief. In his childhood, he had to confront adversity, because his family had been ruined and almost reduced to servitude. To take revenge, and following the advice of his mother, he used black magic, killing several people by collapsing a house and destroying animals with a violent hailstorm motivated by the intention of devastating the harvests.

However, he was quickly struck by remorse and fear of rebirth into hell. He went in search of a lama, called Lhaga, and introduced himself.

"I have committed extremely serious negative acts. Unless I attain Awakening in this very life, it is sure that I will be reborn into hell. I beg you, give me instructions allowing me to quickly reach Awakening"

"I will give them to you" replied the lama. "Your faults aie serious, but have no fear, because I have the instructions of maha-ati and will transmit them to you. Maha-ati is powerful. If one practices it during the day, one becomes Buddha during the day; if one practices it at night, one becomes Buddha in the night. For one who has good karmic foundation, Awakening will be

reached without any need to meditate. Such is the depth of these instructions"

Milarepa received the instructions. He was relieved and happy. "I certainly have a good karmic foundation as referred to by the lama" he thought. "Otherwise, I would not have met such a master and received such profound teachings. I have no need to meditate!" And he did nothing.

Wishing to evaluate the progress of his new disciple, the lama asked Milarepa to visit him. He quickly understood that Milarepa had gone off the track. "I was mistaken in you," the lama observed. "My teachings are not for you and I can do nothing to help you. You were right. Your faults are extremely serious. Do not despair. In die region of the Southern Cliffs, lives Marpa the Translator. He holds deep and secret teachings and will be able to give you instructions for Awakening in this very life."

Milarepa went to Marpa. Marpa saw that, to purify Milarepa of his misdeeds, it was necessary to impose severe hardships on him. Only later would he give Milarepa instructions on the practice of the six dharmas of Naropa and mahamudra. Milarepa isolated himself in a small cave behind Marpa's house, and later resided in others caves and hermitages. After many years of meditation, he finally reached Awakening.

Taipei, April 13,1986

It is impossible to practice mahamudra without knowing the mind. This knowledge is not a simple theoretical acquisition received from a master, but an inner discovery gained by a gradual approach. First of all, the disciple has to practice exercises of mental calming (Tibetan, *shinay*; Sanskrit, *shamatha*), then the master introduces the disciple to knowledge of the mind, and makes him or her follow different modes of investigation. Most often two types of methods relying on few questions are followed:

"Where does a thought come from? Where does it dwell? Where does it go?"

"What is the mind at rest? What is the mind in movement? What is the mind recognizing resting and moving?"

When the ocean is calm and smooth, one can see the sun, moon, and stars reflected on its surface, while wind and waves prevent one from seeing anything. The mind is usually agitated by a crowding of thoughts and conflicting emotions. This is why its true nature cannot be seen. To dissipate the agitation, it is necessary to first practice mental calming. Only after that, one can discover the real nature of the mind by means of investigation, technically called superior vision (Tibetan, *lhakthong*; Sanskrit, *vipasyana*) naturally opening up to mahamudra.

This progressive approach was possible in a traditional context. It is no longer always possible. This is why it is sometimes necessary to give, from the very beginning, a theoretical overview of the nature of the mind.

Taipei, April 13,1986

Realizing mahamudra implies that one meditates. To make meditation fruitful, there are two fundamental supports. The Buddha referred to these supports when he said that realization of inherent primordial awareness depends on accumulation and purification, and on the blessing of the lama. It is by accumulation-purification and through faith and devotion that sudden realization takes place.

Taipei, April 30,1986

Foundations of the Vajrayana

FROM HINAYANA TO VAJRAYANA

Hinayana

The Small Vehicle (Sanskrit, Hinayana) can be condensed into

two great principles:

-observance of an ethic that avoids all that can harm others

-understanding of the emptiness of the subject, also called the "non-I of the individual"

In this way, all conflicting emotions—desire, aversion, jealousy, pride, and so on—cease, and the mind remains totally absorbed in emptiness.

The state reached is called that of an arhat, that is to say, "conqueror of the enemy" The term "enemy" refers to conflicting emotions. It is, to a certain degree, liberation, but not ultimate Awakening.

Although one can dwell there for an extremely long time, up to several kalpas, the state of an arhat is not definitive. A day comes when the body of a Buddha emits a ray of light that touches the arhat, and awakens the motivation to engage in the Great Vehicle. From then on, the arhat follows this path and continues on to perfect Awakening.

The Small Vehicle is reduced to these two great principles. It does not envision the possibility of becoming a Buddha by the grace of the Buddha, nor does it envision the existence of the Pure Lands, which are concepts developed in the Great Vehicle.

Mahayana

The Great Vehicle (Sanskrit, Mahayana) also takes into account the two foundations of the Small Vehicle, but going further, it opens onto a vaster domain:

-to the observance of ethics that avoids harming, it adds the will to do everything for the benefit of others

-to the understanding of the emptiness of the subject, it adds understanding of emptiness of the object, or the "nonself of phenomena"

The Great Vehicle teaches that all external phenomena grasped by the senses as truly existing objects—such as form, sound, smell, taste, or contact—are, in fact, lacking a reality. They are engendered by the mind. The mind being empty, they are also necessarily empty. The conclusion is then reached that mind is empty internally, and that phenomena are externally empty also. Dualistic grasping of a subject and an object is illusory.

Furthermore, practitioners of the Great Vehicle never consider their own happiness a sufficient end in itself. Believing that all beings were once their father and mother, they want all beings to obtain the happiness of Awakening. The motivation of practitioners is extremely vast. Seeing that

beings do not understand emptiness, and that they conceive a me and other where there is no me and no other and that they wander in the cycle of existence, Mahayana practitioners develop an infinite compassion toward them. This compassion motivates the Mahayana practitioners to take on themselves the suffering and veils of all beings and to give them some of their own happiness and positive karmic potential. Relying on the union of emptiness and compassion, they practice the six paramtias: giving, ethics, patience, diligence, concentration, and wisdom. Mahayana practitioners exert themselves for many kalpas, purifying themselves, and accumulating merit and wisdom, until they ultimately reach full Awakening or

Buddhahood.

Taichung, April 13,1986 and Taipei, April 30,1986

Vajrayana

The Vajrayana, or Diamond Vehicle, retains the foundations of the Small Vehicle and the Great Vehicle: not harming others and helping them, and the emptiness of subject and object. It is based on the use of particularly efficient methods of realization, called the two phases of meditation: creation and completion.1 The phase of creation, using skillful means, is comparable to a bow. The phase of completion, using wisdom, is comparable to an arrow. The bow speeds the arrow toward the target. Awakening can be reached in a single lifetime. To use another comparison, when one wants to cross the country from one end to the other, one can go on foot—which is a very long trip—or with a car in less time, or one can take a plane, which is very fast. Traveling on foot corresponds to the Small Vehicle, traveling by car to the Great Vehicle, and taking a plane to the Vajrayana.

The Vajrayana considers that everything is fundamentally pure. The state of an ordinary being is only nonrealization of this purity. Likewise, the six classes of beings, if their purity is realized, appear as the six Buddhas' Lands.2 When the mind is impure, all appearances are samsara. When it is pure, they are nirvana. The purpose of the methods of the Vajrayana is to produce the transformation of impure into pure.

Taipei, April 30,1986

PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

Beyond existence itself

It is not possible to reach Awakening as long as we consider our body and the manifested world endowed with an existence made up of the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air), and that these elements have themselves a true material existence. This perception is false. This is why during the phase of creation, one meditates on the external world as a pure land, the house as a divine palace, and oneself and all other beings as having the body of the deity. There is nothing conceived as materially existent, but everything is looked upon as the unsubstantial union of appearance and emptiness.

Similarly, we give a real existence to outer sounds formed by contact with the four elements, as well as inner sounds which are the speech of all beings. For this reason, sounds are interpreted and judged as pleasant or unpleasant, as sources of pleasure, fear, or annoyance. In the phase of creation, all sounds are considered as the mantra. Having no reality of their own, they are the union of sound and emptiness.

The mind itself is empty. Many thoughts and conflicting emotions proceed from it. They are as empty as the mind that produces them, but nevertheless are considered as real entities. The emptiness of the mind is similar to the ocean, and the thoughts to waves that rise and fall without interruption on the surface. Waves are none other than the ocean, and thoughts are none other than the mind.

Misunderstanding this reality, we wander endlessly in the cycle of existence. The disciple must be introduced to the realization of the true nature of his or her mind by a competent master, and then must meditate. When the disciple effectively reaches this recognition, the waves of the mind are reabsorbed in the immensity of primordial awareness. It is realization of Mahamudra or Maha-ati, the union of intelligence and emptiness, to which the phase of completion leads.

Taipei, April 13,1986

Empowerment

The Vajrayana cannot be practiced if, first, one does not receive a ritual transmission that empowers one and is thus called an empowerment.

A complete empowerment is divided into four parts.

- vase empowerment
- secret empowerment
- knowledge-wisdom empowerment
- speech empowerment

Moreover, an empowerment must carry four transmissions coming from an uninterrupted lineage.

- transmission of the empowerment itself
- transmission of the words forming the text of the ritual
- transmission of the meaning
- transmission of the grace or spiritual force inherent in the ritual

Grace is a subtle notion and is hard to understand. It is comparable to electrical power, invisible and very powerful. In this comparison, Buddha, the source of grace, is like an electrical power plant and the lineage that transmits grace is the wire. As long as the wire is not cut, a bulb can be connected to it at any place, and the bulb is lit. But if the wire is cut, one may have a power plant at one end and a bulb at the other, but it is impossible to get any light. If the lineage of transmission has been interrupted at a given moment, it is impossible to receive grace through an empowerment. The lineage has become entirely sterile.

In order for a ritual of empowerment to be effective, three conditions must be met.

- The lama who confers an empowerment must be motivated by love and compassion. The lama must also have certain experience of the phase of creation and phase of completion of the deity whose empowerment is given

- the disciple must trust, without reservation, the validity of the ritual and qualification of the lama

- the symbolic objects (vase, torma, and so on) necessary for the ritual must be present

Change of identification

The empowerment is only a starting point and must be followed by proper practice. It is very difficult to directly experience emptiness of body, speech, and mind. So the Vajrayana uses skillful means. During meditation, identification with an ordinary body is replaced by an assimilation of the body to the yidam, the visualized deity. One no longer thinks, I am such and such person, but, thinks, for example, I am Avalokita (Tibetan, Chenrezig). One imagines having the form, colors, clothes, and ornaments of Avalokita. This is not envisioned with the idea of a material body, but as the union of visible manifestation and emptiness, similar to a rainbow, the image of the moon on water, or a reflection on a mirror. In the same way, by the mantras, speech is seen as the union of sound and emptiness. Finally, any mental activity becomes empty intellectualization, Mahamudra. The efficiency of this technique is due to the mind that has the power to become that which it wishes to be.

The yidams, pure manifestation

The question of the degree of existence of the *yidams* is often asked. *Yidams* really exist, but in a way different from ours, because they are not conditioned by karma.

Avalokita, for example, is an emanation of the compassion of all the Buddhas, appearing with the intention of helping all beings. It is a totally pure manifestation from its origin, and is in no way the result of karmic causes supplying the white color of its body, the lotus in the left hand, the rosary in the right hand, and the other characteristics. The different traits and attributes of Avalokita are only the formal expression of compassion.

Likewise, its two eyes mean that it possesses perfect knowledge and compassion. With the first eye, it completely knows the totality of phenomena of the cycle of existence and liberation. Having the eye (Tibetan, chen) of compassion, unceasingly (Tibetan, re) it watches (Tibetan, zig) beings with love. Consequently, its name in Tibetan is Chenrezig. The silks and jewels are worn to indicate that it is endowed with all the qualities of Awakening.

Continuation of the practice

Those who know the Vajrayana and whose qualifications are sufficient in the phase of creation and the phase of completion can use, outside of the moments of meditation, all the circumstances of existence as a support for their progress.

- with the food they absorb, they make a vajra feast
- during deep sleep, they apply instructions on dear light
- during light sleep, instructions on the dream
- at the moment of death and during the bardo of the nature in itself and the bardo of becoming, different techniques of liberation belonging to the Six Dharmas ofNaropa can be used

In fact, people whether of superior or mediocre capabilities, who have received empowerments and directives for practicing the Vajrayana, if they do not lose diligence and preserve inner meditation without failure, can attain Awakening while continuing ordinary activity and appearing to act like everyone else.

Taipei, April 30,1986

Following the Small Vehicle and Great Vehicle is like taking the stairs to the top floor of a high building. The Vajrayana is like taking the elevator.

Again, if all suffering and difficulty are the back of the hand, and the palm is Awakening, the Vajrayana is simply turning the hand face up.

Taipei, April 13,1986

THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION

Considering that it is not possible to reach Awakening by retaining the impure components of our personality, the Vajrayana proposes a system that allows us to transform impure into pure.

- the body becomes the pure body of the yidam, inseparable manifestation and emptiness

- speech becomes the mantra, the pure word, inseparable sound and emptiness

- the mind becomes the five wisdoms, pure mind, inseparable intelligence and emptiness

All phenomena are production of the mind. This is why, if one develops sufficient mastery of the mind, phenomena can all be transformed. The Vajrayana uses this power of transformation to undertake the passage from impure to pure. The two following stories illustrate this.

Multiplication of hands

A yogi placed one of his disciples in solitary retreat after having instructed him to meditate on the yidam Hevajra, who possesses sixteen arms. The disciple trained with assiduity in visualizing himself in the form of Hevajra. His meditation was good, so after some time, the disciple could effectively

manifest under the form of a being with sixteen arms. He was proud of his accomplishment. His master, although far away, became aware of this pride. Wanting his disciple to make progress he came to visit him. Arriving at the hermitage, the master said.

"I traveled a long way to get here and I am a little tired. Could you bring some water and wash my feet?"

The disciple hurried to get what was needed and started to wash the feet of his master. He had hardly touched the feet when the master manifested four feet. It did not matter to the disciple who then manifested four hands. The master then showed eight feet, and the disciple followed with eight hands.

6

Hevajra

Sixteen feet? Sixteen hands. Thirty-two feet? Impossible to go beyond this point. The disciple was used to concentrating on having sixteen arms, but, not having realized yet the ultimate nature of the mind implying unlimited creativity, he could not manifest thirty-two arms. His master then gave him new instructions, and the disciple was able to manifest numberless emanations.

The old woman who had become a tiger

Part of the region of Benares was covered by an immense forest which was the den of roaming tigers. At the edge of the forest was a small village whose residents lived in fear of the intrusion of these wild animals. It happened that an old woman of the village was always the victim of mischief by children. They made fun of her, bit her, threw rocks at her, and played all kinds of tricks on her. The old woman did not know how to get rid of the children. One day, she heard a guru and remembered this sentence, "All phenomena are products of the mind and it is possible to transform them if one trains oneself to do so."

"Very well" she told herself, "to repel the children, I just have to change into a tiger!" She began to strongly and constantly concentrate on this idea. "I am a tiger, I am a tiger." She finally succeeded by appearing as a tiger. The villagers were so scared that they ran away and never returned. The village was abandoned.

Actually, it is easier to appear with the form of a yidam than one of a tiger, because the tiger lacks the power to transform itself, while the yidam has grace and compassion. In this life however, it remains difficult to make such a metamorphosis. But it is easier during the bardo of becoming. The mind, then devoid of body, is extremely fluid, and any thought can be immediately actualized. It is enough to think,

"I am Avalokita" to take the form of Avalokita. It is then easy to go to the Land of Bliss or into another Pure Land.

Taichung, April 23,1986

MASTER AND DISCIPLE

The qualifications of the master and disciple are many. One can nevertheless consider three essential qualities of the master and four of the disciple.

Qualifications of the master

- The master must have good knowledge of the three Vehicles (Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana). In the context of the Vajrayana, the master must have received scripture empowerments and transmissions, and must have accomplished at least some practice.

- The master must have great compassion. Whether in the presence of a vast gathering or in a small group, when the master teaches, it is always with the motivation of helping those students on the path of Awakening.

- Knowing the Dharma and motivated by compassion, the master must care only about benefiting the disciple and never pursue his or her own interest. The given instructions must not have any other function than guiding the disciples on the inner path.

Qualifications of the disciple

- The disciple must have total and immutable faith and trust in the master and the Three Jewels, which are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

- The disciple must use great diligence in applying the instructions and directives received from the master

- In the Small Vehicle, the disciple must have a strong desire for liberation. In the Great Vehicle, the disciple must widen this desire to all beings and must think, "It is not enough that I liberate myself from suffering. It is even more important that all beings attain this liberation. To efficiently act on their behalf, it is necessary for me to reach Awakening having advanced on the path leading to it."

- In the Vajrayana, more particularly, the disciple must conform precisely to the word of the master without having the least doubt. If the master says that fire is water, the disciple must think, "I would say that this is a fire, but since the master says it is water, it must be water."

One master or several masters

Some people prefer to follow a single master, others several masters. Both are possible.

When one follows one master only, one believes that this master is Vajradhara Buddha. One trusts the master's word for everything and feels no need to receive directives from other masters.

When several masters are followed, one of them—in whom one has greatest faith—is considered the main master, and the others are emanations of the main master. One thinks that, in essence, they are one. Some great yogis of the past have had many masters. Khyungpo Naljor is said to have had one hundred and fifty masters, and Thangtong Gyalpo five hundred.

The right attitude

Sometimes, disciples are mistaken in their conception of the master. Although they follow a master who is poor in knowledge and compassion, they think, "He or she is my unique master, I do not want to receive teachings by anyone else." Others will follow a master; then, judging this teacher as not being good, they abandon the teacher for another, which they soon reject for a third one, and so on. This approach prevents any progression.

From the moment one considers someone as a master and receives teachings, it is no longer possible to adopt a critical attitude. In case one eventually doubts the master's knowledge, capabilities, or behavior, it is necessary to think, "These defects are without doubt not within the master,

but in my own way of seeing" Even if one loses confidence in the master, it is necessary to avoid having a negative attitude, and remain neutral without judging. It has been said, "When one has received a single word of teaching of a master, if one does not respect this master, one will be reborn five hundred times as a dog, and then as a miserable human being."

Taipei, April 29,1986

The grace of the lama

For those who practice the Vajrayana, either the phases of creation or of completion of the meditation, or even Mahamudra, it is extremely important to open to the grace of the lama.

Indeed, the lama is viewed as the union of the Three Jewels and the Three Roots.

> *The lama is the Buddha, the lama is the Dharma.*
>
> *The lama is also the Sangha,*
>
> *In front of the lama, who is the union of the Three Jewels,*
>
> *I prostrate.*

Or,

> *The lama's body: the Sangha,*
>
> *The lama's speech: the Dharma*
>
> *The lama's mind: the Buddha.*
>
> *The lama's body: the lamas*
>
> *The lama's speech: the dakinis and protectors,*
>
> *The lama's mind: the yidams.*

Why is so much importance granted to the lama? The sun emits great light and heat, nevertheless this heat is too diffuse for a piece of paper or doth to catch fire. On the other hand, when one uses a magnifying glass to focus the rays, they become more powerful and burn the paper, yet the nature of the rays has not changed. In the same way, the lama also focuses the grace of Awakening in order to transmit it to the disciple. When one considers the master as the union of the Three Jewels and the Three Roots, when one prays from the depths of the heart, this grace will consume ignorance, conflicting emotions, faults, and veils.

Taipei, April 30,1986

Importance of the lama

The Tibetan term *lama* is composed of two syllables, each possessing a definite meaning.

- *la* means "the highest" or "unsurpassable" precisely as a canopy (la-dray, Tibetan) is the highest (la) piece of cloth (dray) in the temple. The lama is for his or her disciples, the highest being.

- *ma* signifies mother, implying that a lama looks upon all beings with the love of a mother for her only child.

For the disciple, the source lama is more important than all the Buddhas. If you rely on the Buddhas to reach Awakening, this requires much time. On the other hand, it is said that if one prays to the lama from the depths of the heart, one will very quickly attain Awakening. The grace of Buddhas and bodhisattvas resembles the radiance of the sun. Even in the hot season, the sun cannot make a piece of paper on the ground catch fire, but if you have a magnifying glass, the paper will easily burst into flames. The Vajrayana consists of inserting the magnifying glass of the lama between the grace of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and the mind of the disciples. There is the story of an Awakened being called Lekyi Repa. After having prayed to his lama for six months without interruption, he gained the realization of Mahamudra and other powers such as the ability to pass through rocks.

When one accomplishes the practice of a *yidam*, one always must keep in mind that the yidam is one with the source lama. Thus, one receives both the grace of the *yidam* and that of the lama and quickly makes progress toward liberation.

The importance of the source lama is great. It is said that one can stop making offerings to the Buddhas and keep only making those to the lama, because these offerings will be incomparably powerful in accumulating merit and wisdom.

Each lineage offers meditations relating to the great masters of the past, whether it is Padmasambhava for the Nyingmapas, Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa for the Kagyupas, or Tsongkhapa for the Gelukpas. When one practices these meditations, these masters of the past are, in essence, not considered as different from the source lama.

New Delhi, February 1985

The name of Vajradhara

To reveal the tantras, the Buddha took the form of Vajradhara (Tibetan, Dorje Chang). This name means, "The one who holds the vajra." Vajra, comprising the idea of stability and indestructibility, refers to realization of emptiness, indestructible by nature. Dhara (the one who holds) means that the Buddha completely possesses this realization. Vajradhara is represented as holding in his hands a bell, symbol of the wisdom realizing emptiness, and a vajra, symbol of skillful means implemented to help all beings realize emptiness. This is why he is also called "Union of wisdom and means."

New Delhi, February 1985

The Six Bardos and the Six Dharmas of Naropa

Naropa

The notion of bardo is vast, and as we will see, it applies, in a broad sense, to all existential periods of time to which one can assign limits. In a narrower sense, the term applies to the postmortem period between death and rebirth. Tibetan Buddhism presents a precise analysis of this bardo, thanks to descriptions made by the Buddha and various great lamas. Interesting in itself, the study of this state is of great interest in the West, and also appears to be beneficial from a spiritual point of view because the bardo provides opportunities for liberation.

This chapter combines four teachings on the bardos. Some aspects of the subject are, therefore, considered several times, but from different perspectives. We have preserved the different presentations here, because they allow a fuller and more precise comprehension.

THE SIX BARDOS

The Tibetan word bardo simply means interval and designates any existential period having sufficiently specific characteristics for its borders to be limited. We already have experienced some bardos, and we will have to live some other ones. Even now, we are in a *bardo*. One of the possible classifications lists six bardos.

Taipei, April 1986

Variants are encountered in the classification of the six *bardos*, but the fundamental idea is the same.

- *bardo* from birth to death
- *bardo* of dream
- *bardo* of moment of death
- *bardo* of nature in itself
- *bardo* of becoming
- *bardo* of gestation

In context of the meditative path, one also counts as a bardo, under the name of bardo of concentration, the period that goes from the beginning to the end of a meditation session. When one includes this bardo in the classification of the six bardos, the bardo of the gestation is no longer considered as a separate period, but is integrated in the bardo of birth to death.

Samye Ling, March 1983

THE BARDO OF GESTATION

The bardo of gestation includes the period beginning with the conception in the mother's womb to the actual birth. Its duration is nine month and ten days. We all have experienced this bardo.

Taipei, Apri 1986

THE BARDO FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

The bardo from birth to death covers the span of life from effective birth to death. It is the bardo that we now are living. Some are at the very beginning of the path, others have reached half-way, while others are approaching the end. Among all the bardos, this one occupies a crucial place. What we make of it will result in happiness or suffering in our future lives. As reported by the Buddha,

At best, this existence is the vessel of liberation,
At worst, this existence is suffering and anguish of the world,
This existence is a servant of good and evil

If we know how to make good use of our existence, it is a ship safely leading us to the ocean shore. If we make bad use of it, we are like a human being with a stone tied to the feet and thrown into the depths of the ocean. We accomplish acts that lead to future happiness or suffering with our present body. If we want to continue to endlessly be reborn in the cycle of existence and endure uncountable sufferings, it is within our power to accumulate the karma that will lead us there. If we believe that we must attain liberation and the definitive happiness of Awakening, it is also within our power to accumulate the karma that will lead us there. We find ourselves in the position of the driver of a car parked on a slope. We can choose to drive up or down. This is as true for the lama who gives this teaching as for you who receive it. We all have at hand the possibility of choosing the direction we want to take.

Vast faith and compassion

If we have good knowledge of the Dharma and the possibility of totally devoting ourselves to practice, it is a perfect situation. But if we have neither this knowledge nor this opportunity, we still possess what is the most essential by having faith and devotion for the master and the Three Jewels, and compassion for the beings of the six classes. Faith and compassion are extremely important.

Faith must be wide. It is a good to think "My spiritual tradition and my master are good" But if one has no faith or confidence in any of the other traditions and masters, this is just small faith, comparable to the light of a candle. Faith that opens without partiality to all traditions and masters is like the light of the sun and moon.

Compassion also must be wide. Compassion directed to a small circle of dose people, relations, friends, or compassion whose range is limited to those whose suffering is obvious, is good in itself but it is small compassion. Compassion that embraces all beings as vast as limitless space, considering that all beings have been our fathers and mothers, and that all beings suffer in the endless ocean of the cycle of existence, is unlimited compassion.

It has been said by the Buddha:
Without faith, human beings
Obtain no white quality.
What will be the green sprout
Of a seed roasted by fire?

You may plant a roasted seed in the ground, but it will never give a sprout. Similarly, without faith it is impossible to reach Awakening. And compassion is necessary as well. The Buddhas of the past and Buddhas of the present have reached Awakening by relying on compassion. In the future, innumerable beings will also reach Awakening. This will be done by developing great compassion.

Having faith and compassion, even if one has no great knowledge of the Dharma and no opportunity to practice much, the day will come when one ceases to wander in the cycle of existence. Awakening will then be attained.

Taipei, April 1986

The *bardo from birth to death* resembles a bridge on which we put a foot at birth, leave by dying, and presently are in the process of crossing. Different ages in our lives correspond to our progress across the bridge:

- childhood is from birth to our fifteenth year
- adulthood lasts to the fiftieth year
- then various stages of old age

We do not know the length of our bridge. Perhaps it will lead us to an advanced age, or perhaps it will be suddenly interrupted. I surely approach the extreme end of the bridge.9 Most of you may have a longer journey, but it is impossible to know how long it will be.

When one is very young, because of lack of maturity, one has no possibility of truly practicing the dharma. When one is very old, even if one wishes to do so, one does not have sufficient strength or capability. Adulthood provides ideal conditions. We can study, meditate, purify ourselves, and accumulate merit with the result of being liberated in this life time, during the bardo of dream, bardo of the moment of death, bardo of the nature in itself, or bardo of becoming. What we do now will not only be beneficial for the time we remain on the bridge, but also when we have gone to the other side. It is necessary to take advantage of this period.

Brussels, November 1982

Limited freedom

Among all the bardos, the bardo of birth to death, which we call this life, is the most important. The physical existence that we now have is the result of karma in our past lives. Among the totality of bardos, it is the longest, the one when we possess the most force and freedom. This freedom is far from being complete. It applies perhaps to 30 percent of our life. For example, we have some freedom of our movements or of the positive or negative acts that we accomplish, but we have no great freedom. The power we lack is due to the karma accumulated in past lives, to conflicting emotions that govern us and our thoughts. Fundamentally, absence of freedom comes from ignorance and the three other great veils that cover our mind.

The practice of Dharma that begins with taking refuge gradually leads us to dissipate these four veils. This practice implements a process of inner enrichment, gradual purification, and meditation leading to freedom. Preliminary practices allow us, for example, to place ourselves under the protection of the Three Jewels and open ourselves to their grace. Preliminary practices also permit bodhicitta to appear for the benefit of all beings—a single instant of bodhicitta allows us to neutralize kalpas of negativity. Faults and veils are purified by the practice of Vajrasattva (Dorje Sempa). Merit and wisdom can be accumulated by the mandala offering, and the grace of the master can be received by the guru yoga. All these methods function to provide freedom for the mind.

If one takes up meditation, the first step is mental calming (Sanskrit, shamatha; Tibetan, shinay). In its usual state, our mind is not free to be at peace (Tibetan, shi), stable (Tibetan, nay) for a single instant. Shinay, in its various forms, with or without support, functions to liberate us from the influence of thoughts and conflicting emotions and to allow the ability to keep our mind in nondistraction and concentration. The more we develop this capacity to pacify our mind, the more we experience physical and mental benefits. We can even gain supernormal powers and obtain a long life. After death, we will be born in superior realms, as those of the gods or human beings. We can see the great benefits deriving from this capacity to only maintain a peaceful mind.

On reaching a certain degree of shinay, one approaches superior vision (Sanskrit, vipasyana; Tibetan, lhakthong) by gradual progression, allowing us to see the mode of being of the mind directly.

A progressive discovery of powers

In the Kagyupa lineage, the path of mahamudra is divided into four steps, each possessing three levels. The three levels of the first step, called concentration, refer to the development of shinay. The second step, simplicity, corresponds to lhakthong, and the third level is equal to the first bodhisattva stage, called perfect joy and characterized by twelve hundred-fold powers. Attainment on this level of realization in the present life does not mean that a person will immediately obtain these powers, such as the capacity to create one hundred simultaneous emanations of oneself, and so on. Rather, these extraordinary abilities will be fully manifested after death, when the mind is liberated from its physical envelope.

Doubts of Sakya Pandita

Sakyapandita

A great number of people in the Kagyupa lineage are recognized as having reached the first bodhisattva stage, without immediately having created one hundred emanations of themselves. In the past, this was doubted in particular by Sakya Pandita. He was surprised to see that the Kagyupas considered the third degree of simplicity as corresponding to the first bodhisattva stage and that they asserted that many had reached it, but the powers attributed to this state were not observed in any of them. According to Sakya Pandita, saying that these powers will be revealed after death is an absurdity like saying that the sun rises today but its light will only illuminate

us tomorrow. Both phenomena must simultaneously occur. Lama Shang, one of the greatest Kagyupa lamas and a contemporary of Sakya Pandita, supported the validity of the position of his school by offering another comparison. When the sun shines in winter, nobody expects that it will warm the earth and make the snow melt. Nevertheless, no one denies that the sun is present in the sky. The conditions of winter do not allow all qualities of the sun to appear. Later, the summer will provide the conditions allowing the qualities of the very same sun to manifest.

The experience occurring on the third level of simplicity is the first stable vision of the mode of being of the mind. It is compared to the crescent on the first day of the new moon. As the moon increases until it is full, realization will increase in the course of the ten bodhisattva stages until completion.

Against our will

We currently have little mastery of our situation. It is easy to observe that we have little freedom. All human beings want happiness to the exclusion of suffering. Nevertheless human beings have no power to acquire what they want and to bring suffering to an end. From the moment of birth until now, we have not controlled the development of our body, either. It has evolved from hour to hour, from instant to instant, until it reaches maturity and the peak of its strength. Then, its decline is irreversible, and there is nothing to do to stop it. We do not want to get older, nevertheless we will age. We do not want to be in ill health, but we will be ill. We do not want to die, but we will pass away. The conditions of our existence are not selected by us but are imposed by the karma of our past lives.

Free of any limitations

The teaching of the Buddha frees our mind of all limitations. If our mind becomes free, our body and speech will automatically become free. We now possess this existence and we have powerful energy to serve good or evil. We must apply our body, speech, and mind to positive acts. If we do, we will liberate ourselves during the bardo of dream, bardo of the moment of death, bardo of nature in itself, or bardo of becoming. Everything depends on what we do in this present life.

Illusory body

Among the six dharmas of Naropa, when one practices the dharma of illusory body, one learns to perceive all appearances manifested in this life time during the bardo from birth to death as a magical creation, a dream, a rainbow, or the reflection of the moon on the water. In other words, all that appears lacks reality and is only the power of manifestation of the mind itself. Such a meditation, when it is perfected, allows the performance of miracles such as those of Milarepa or other accomplished beings. Some of these miracles are flying or sitting in space, passing through a cliff, transforming one's body into water or fire, and so on. These wonders arise from realizing the absence of reality of phenomena.

Samye Ling, March 1983

BARDO OF DREAM

All human beings need sleep. When one is asleep, all kinds of illusory appearances apart from those of the waking state are manifested in the mind. For this reason, the interval between the moment when we fall asleep and when we wake up is called the bar do of dream. Among the practices used in the Kagyupa school, the six dharmas of Naropa occupy a privileged place. They are inner heat, illusory body, dream, dear light, transfer of consciousness, and bardo. The dharma of dream contains instructions on the practice that allows us to attain Awakening in the dream state.

Taipei, April 1986

The dharma of dream requires us to become conscious of the subjective nature of the dream world. This is easy to say as long as we are in the waking state, but it is more difficult to achieve in the dream itself, where we take for real all that appears. The methods of the dharma of dream first lead us to seize dreams, to become conscious that we are dreaming in the dream, then transform or multiply dream appearances, and travel within the dream. The purpose of these techniques is to use the dream for progressing toward liberation.

Sangye Nyentonpa's hair

An anecdote concerning two Shangpa lineage holders, Sangye Nyentonpa and his disciple Sangye Tenpa, gives an idea of the power and extent of this technique.

Once, they were together in retreat, but resided in different small houses. Sangye Tenpa grasped his dream one night and decided to go to meet his master Sangye Nyentonpa. Arriving in front of the master, he Decided to visualize him in the wrathful form of the bodhisattva Vajrapani. He transformed his master into a gigantic Vajrapani, the size of a mountain, with hair straight up like flames. To each hair point, he added the complete and detailed mandala of great tantric deities, Chakrasamvara, Guyasamaja, Hevajra, and others. Finally, he created an immense quantity of outer, inner, and secret offerings, which he presented to his master, now present in the form of Vajrapani crowned by this multitude of deities. Not only did he feel great joy in this dream play, but he accumulated immense merit and underwent great purification.

The next day when he visited Sangye Nyentonpa, he was told by his teacher, "What pain you gave yourself with my hair last night!"

Samye Ling, March 1983

BARDO OF THE MOMENT OF DEATH

Dissolution of elements

At the moment of death, whatever the cause of death, the elements of our body and mind are reabsorbed into each other. This process gives place to various physical alterations associated with mental sensations.

- When the earth element is reabsorbed into the water element, externally the dying person can no longer stretch or fold the limbs. Internally, the dying person has the feeling of being oppressed by a huge weight, as crushed by boulders or a mountain.

- When the water element is reabsorbed into the fire element, the mouth and nose become dry externally. Internally, the person is convinced he or she is drowning or being swept away by the current of a river.

- When the fire element is reabsorbed into the air element, the body loses its heat, beginning with the fingers of the hands and toes of the feet. Internally, the person feels an unbearable heat such as one would feel in the middle of a fire or in a burning house.

- When the air element is reabsorbed into individual consciousness, breathing becomes difficult, sometimes gasping, sometimes suspended at the moment of expiration or inspiration. Internally, the dying person has the impression of being taken away by a windstorm.

Dancing Skeletons

At the same time of these reabsorptions, the senses gradually cease to function. The eyes no longer see, ears no longer hear, the nose no longer smells odors, the palate no longer tastes flavors, and the skin no longer feels contact.

If one becomes conscious that one is dying, that death is near and unavoidable, it is then that one must apply the technique of powa which was practiced during one's life time. It is also more beneficial if one is assisted by a qualified lama while practicing powa.

Brussels, November 1982

Powa

Our body is composed of five elements. At the moment of death, they are reabsorbed into each other. This gives place to all kind of mental experiences that are often painful and frightening.

At this moment, one can practice powa, the transfer of consciousness. According to the capacities and purity of the person who does it, it has three results.

- at best, rebirth in a pure land
- if not, in a god realm
- or in human world, with good possibilities of practicing theDharma

Sufferings of agony are then avoided.

Satnye Ling, March 1983

A day will come when the first symptoms of the illness that will take us away will manifest. The illness gradually will worsen until the moment when breathing will cease and we will fall into a state of total unconsciousness, because of the mind separating itself from the body. The agonizing and final period of illness is called *bardo of the moment of death.* Several methods are used for this passage to be undertaken without suffering. The easiest and most efficient method to apply is powa, one of the six dharmas of Naropa.

This transfer may be performed in three ways.

- If one entrusts oneself to a lama whose grace is powerful and realization in this technique perfect, the lama, out of compassion, proceeds in transferring the consciousness of the disciple.

- One who is sufficiently trained and qualified can transfer one's own consciousness.

- The third possibility combines the two previous ones. The transfer is done by both the power and compassion of the lama, and by the disciple's power. The two forces supplement each other, thanks to the connection of master to the disciple. The present lama and the dying disciple do the visualization used in this technique together.

Who wants to go to the Land of Bliss?

Once at the place of residence of the yogi Thangtong Gyalpo, a great gathering took place. Thangtong Gyalpo took advantage of the situation to

address the crowd and said, "Today is a day of many favorable conditions. Those among you who wish to go to the Land of Bliss, tell me, and I will send you there"

Going to the Land of Bliss implies leaving this world and most of the people carefully pondered on this. The yogi directly asked each one of them, "You, do you want to go there?"

"Yes, of course, I want to go there! But now I must attend my father and I cannot leave him. Later." "And you?"

"Well, I still have my mother." "And you?"

"This would be wonderful, but who will take care of my children?"

In the end, only three people declared themselves ready to leave this world for the Pure Land. Thangtong Gyalpo practiced the transfer of consciousness on their behalf. They immediately died and went to the Land of Bliss.

Thangtong Gyalpo

When false dead people become true dead people

Another yogi of the Kagyupa lineage, Sherab Lodro Rinchen, remained famous for his mastery of the transfer of consciousness. When he was alive, he was famous and many people used to call on him. One day, someone came looking for him to lead him on horseback to the bedside of a

dying person. Along the way, three men working in the fields saw him coming from the distance and recognized him. "Is it not the famous Sherab Lodro Rinchen who is coming? We will see if he is as powerful as claimed"

Two men lay on the ground and pretended to be dead. The third man greeted the lama, who was riding, and simulating panic, the third man explained that his two companions had just died. He also requested the lama to practice the transfer of consciousness for them. "Are they really dead?" the lama asked. "Of course they are dead!"

"I have been requested elsewhere" answered the lama, "and I have no time to stop now."

However, while riding away, he performed the transfer of consciousness for the two men. The man thought that the lama had left because he was incapable of doing the transfer. His reputation was usurped and they would be able to make fun of him! Pleased with the trickery played on the lama, the man returned to his companions. He found his friends, indeed, dead in the field!

During the Chinese invasion of Tibet, in the sixties, suffering and terror spread throughout the country. Many lamas were imprisoned and tortured. Many of them performed then the transfer of consciousness for themselves.

These different facts illustrate how this technique is applied, whether by the master's compassion or by the disciple's own qualification.

Transfer of consciousness in Tibet

In Tibet, practice of the transfer of consciousness was in all traditions. Nyingmapas, Sakyapas, and Gelukpas used it. But in the Kagyupa tradition, it was a specialty and many monks and lamas trained themselves to do it. Kagyupas established a great number of three-year and three-month retreat centers. Part of the program was devoted to the practice of the transfer of consciousness. Today, identical retreat centers have been founded not only in India and Nepal, but also in Europe and America, so the tradition can be continued.

In Tibet, the Dharma was accepted by everyone, with the result that when a person died, one always would invite the lamas to perform the transfer of consciousness. When signs of success appeared, the entourage rejoiced, knowing that the deceased person had attained favorable rebirth.

Taipei, April 1986

BARDO OF THE NATURE IN ITSELF

Reabsorption of the tigles

If it is not possible to do powa at the immediate moment of reabsorption of the elements, the individual consciousness dissolves into emptiness during a process of three steps.

- First, the white masculine tigle descends from the summit of the head to the heart. The dying person has the impression of a light similar to that of the

moon. Simultaneously, the thirty-three forms of desire-attachment become inactive.

- Secondly, the red feminine t igle rises from the secret place to the heart. One feels a sensation of red luminosity at the same time that the forty forms of hatred-aversion become inactive.

When the two tigles move, the person who has a good practice of tumo can be liberated in empty bliss.

- Finally, when the two white and red tigles join in the heart, the mind usually falls into a state of complete unconsciousness, a total darkness which will last three and half days.

Brussels, November 1982

During the moments preceding death, three phases called *appearance, extension, and attainment* are, in succession, reabsorbed into each other.10 When the appearance is reabsorbed in extension, thirty-three types of thoughts related to desire are blocked. Even if one is in the presence of a young god or goddess, despite their beauty and incomparable seduction, one feels no desire. When extension is reabsorbed in attainment, the forty types of thoughts linked to anger are blocked. Even if we were to see someone kill our own mother, we would feel no anger. Finally when attainment is reabsorbed in total attainment, the seven types of thoughts linked to blindness are blocked. At this moment all mental activity ceases and the mind falls into unconsciousness.

If one has the experience of clear light and mahamudra, instead of falling into the unconsciousness supposed to occur at this instant, the nature of mind in all its clarity will be revealed, just as an usually dark room is suddenly illuminated. There are texts comparing this state with the fifteenth day of the month, the day of the full moon, when the moon rises at the same time the sun sets. Both simultaneously shine in the sky. The clarity of the mind instead of ceasing, radiates a particular brilliance. The mind then knows extreme vivacity and luminosity that it can maintain for several days and that give it the possibility of reaching Buddhahood. Instructions on the clear light and mahamudra practiced in this life, prepare us for the moment of death.

The ultimate nature of the mind now presented to us is called clear light as foundation. Experiences reached by the practice of mahamudra or the dharma of the clear light are called clear light as path or also clear light daughter. Finally, the dear light manifesting at the very moment of death is the clear light as result or clear light mother. It is said that when the mother meets the daughter, liberation becomes possible.

If recognition of the dear light cannot be made, the second phase of the bardo of the nature in itself begins. It is very rapid. Then, the consciousness again begins to function, producing rays or forms of light organized as aspects of the deities.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Attaining Awakening

At the moment following reabsorptions, the practice of the dear light or of mahamudra gives the opportunity to be liberated. During this time, the mind rests without distraction in the emptiness, clarity, and intelligence without obstruction characterizing the mind.

At the end of these three-and-a-half days, going to the pure lands no longer matters. Realization is complete; the pure lands manifest by themselves, proceeding out of the luminosity of the mind. In the three aspects of the mind, the three bodies of Awakening simultaneously appear.

- from emptiness, the absolute body (dharmakaya)
- from darity, the body of perfect experience (sambhogakaya)
- from intelligence without obstruction, that is also empty and clear, the body of emanation (nirmanakaya)

Because the mode of being of the mind is also great bliss by nature, the fourth body appears, the body of essence itself (svabhavakaya). Buddhahood is reached because the four bodies and the five wisdoms are actualized.

Brussels, November 1982

Clear light or darkness

When the bardo of the moment of death ends, the mind enters the postmortem state that begins with a period of total unconsciousness, called bardo of the nature in itself. The practice of mahamudra is then extremely beneficial, as is one of the six dharmas of Naropa, the dharma of dear light. The bardo of the nature in itself, in ordinary cases, is comparable to a sunset followed by total darkness. To be able to apply the meditation of mahamudra or the dear light at this moment is like switching on an immense light in utter darkness. The mind then remains in a sharp and empty awareness. In general, however, this is only an approximate period of unconsdousness lasting for three days.

Appearing of the deities

Then, consciousness again begins to function, just as one leaves sleep behind. One can consider this moment of the waking up of the consciousness as the conclusion of the bardo of the nature in itself. It is there that the forty-two peaceful and the fifty-eight wrathful deities are manifested. These deities are mentioned in the initiation of the bardo. If one has no spiritual practice, one feels attachment for peaceful deities and aversion for the wrathful ones that are frightening. This dual feeling has the effect of ending the vision of the deities and making one enter the bardo of becoming.

On the other hand, for the person who has received the initiation of the bardo, who has faith and has practiced the phase of creation, when the deities appear, it is like encountering familiar people. This person will recognize the deities received at the initiation and rejoice. This is the opportunity to be liberated from the bardo.

There are three possibilities of liberation:

- *superior*, one becomes one with the yidams and reaches full Awakening

- *mediocre*, one goes to the Land of Bliss or another pure land

- *inferior,* one is directed to favorable human rebirth or to rebirth in a divine world in which the practice of the Dharma is possible, such as the Tushita heaven. This liberation is made possible by the conjunction of three elements.

- the natural force of the mind .

- the power of latent conditioning

- grace inherent in the deities and empowerment

Shariputra's mother leaves hell

The power of latent conditioning is great. The following story gives us some idea of this conditioning.

One of the main disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha was the monk Shariputra. The mother of Shariputra loved her son and trusted him, but was not interested in spiritual practice. As for Shariputra, he wanted to find a way to help his mother with her almost not knowing it. He wanted to give her a skill that would neutralize negative karmic potential after her death. One day while visiting her, he fixed a bell above the entrance door. It rang each time anyone opened or dosed the door. "I have instituted a new rule in the house" he told his mother, "each time that the bell rings, you must say OM MANI PADME HUNG" The mother fulfilled the wish of her son. Has anyone entered the house? "Ding" rang the bell. "OM MANI PADME HUNG" recited the mother. Anyone go out? "Ding," "OM MANI PADME HUNG." This became habitual for the mother.

When she died, a bad karma from a past life effectively led to her rebirth in hell. Her torture was to bathe in boiling liquid in a cauldron that a horrible demon stirred with a iron ladle. Soon, the ladle knocked the edge of the cauldron.

"Ding" sounded the ladle. "OM MANI PADME HUNG" mechanically said the mother. Because of the conditioning of her mind and the force of the mantra, she was immediately liberated from hell.

Taipei, April 1986

The manifestation of peaceful and wrathful deities is not an external phenomenon, but the expression of the very dynamics of the pure nature of our mind, the tathagatagarbha. During our life, these deities are located in our body.

- the forty-two peaceful deities are in the chakra of phenomena, located in the heart

- the fifty-eight wrathful deities are in the chakra of great bliss at the summit of the head

The heart chakra is called chakra of phenomena because it has eight spokes that support experience of the eight consciousnesses. Consequently, the manifestation of all phenomena of samsara or nirvana is linked to this chakra. As for the chakra at the top of the head, it received its name chakra of great bliss because it is from there that the bliss of body and mind originates.

During the bardo of the nature in itself, because of the dual grasping of I and other, the deities, although none other than the radiance of pure mind, are taken for external phenomena, and the extreme radiance of their body creates an unbearable fright.

Brussels, November 1982

BARDO OF BECOMING

The bardo of becoming begins when the *bardo* of the nature in itself ends and when the deities1 manifestation ceases. It is a period similar to dreaming. Multiple appearances manifest and the mind interprets them as pleasant or unpleasant. The person who accomplished many positive acts in this life sees manifesting phenomena that bring joy. On the other hand, the person who has accomplished many negative acts, experiences fear, anguish, and suffering.

Return to the previous life

The first phase of the bardo of becoming is marked by many experiences linked to the previous life. Generally, we are strongly attached to the place where we live, our belongings, family, and activity. The force of this attachment constrains the mind of the deceased person to revisit familiar places, where known people and objects can be seen. This causes much suffering. For example, the deceased person sees members of the family or other people take what was once a personal possession. This person would like to hold these people back, grasp the objects, and say, "They belong to me" Not able to do so, the deceased person feels violent anger. Sometimes, the deceased person is invaded by immense despair, to the point of losing consciousness. Or the person becomes conscious of being dead. The shock and fright are so great that they provoke loss of consciousness, which is followed by a brief appearance of lights and luminous points. It is a kind of small death, occurring each week during the bardo.

Sometimes the mind of the deceased person, returning home, wants to communicate with relatives and friends. But no one answers and, sadly, there is no understanding of why. Sometimes, the deceased person stands in front of someone and tries to talk, but the living person is oblivious. The deceased person is convinced that he or she is being intentionally slighted. Once again, the deceased person confronts the living person, but again that person turns away. It is often through this type of reaction that the deceased person understands himself or herself to be dead. Sometimes, the deceased person becomes conscious of being dead by seeing his or her own corpse. This causes the deceased person profound anguish.

This period during which one wants to return where one has lived lasts one or two weeks and is the first phase of the bardo of becoming. It can also be used in a positive way. It is the moment, for example, when those who have prayed for rebirth in the Land of Bliss, will be able to go there. The mind of a deceased person, prepared by prayers and wishes, when it becomes conscious of its state, instead of being taken away by fright, thinks, "I am dead, now I will be able to go to the Land of Bliss" The deceased person prays to Amitabha and Avalokita, who appear as luminous and shining as the rising sun. The deceased person, filled with clarity, peace, and joy, goes toward the Land of Bliss and for rebirth there.

To future life

For those who cannot take advantage of this opportunity, the bardo continues and, after the second or third week, the links with the past life become more and more tenuous. At this time, the deceased person forgets his or her country and family and begins to perceive phenomena in relation to a future life. It is the second phase of the bardo of becoming, at the end of which the place of rebirth among the six classes of beings is dearly perceived. The being who must assume a human rebirth, sees the future parents uniting. If the being must reincarnate as a woman, attraction to the father and aversion for the mother will be felt. If the being must reincarnate as a man, on the contrary, attraction for the mother and aversion for the father appear. The force of the dual feeling of attraction and aversion provokes the entry of the mind into the womb.

The bardo of becoming generally lasts forty-nine days, although it can be shorter or longer. The dharmas of Naropa contain instructions for liberating oneself during the first phase, as well as in the second one.

Taipei, April 1986

Appearances manifesting during the bardo of becoming have no reality. They are only projections of the mind. They exist nowhere. Although similar to the dream, this state is nevertheless different in that all thought produced in the mind immediately takes on a real appearance. If, for example, one thinks of India, one is immediately in India. If one thinks of England, one is in England. If one thinks of one's house, one is home.

During the first phase of the bardo of becoming, the practice of Avalokita that has been done in this life becomes extremely useful. If it is recognized that one is in the bardo, what has been learned with imagination can be applied. The external universe is visualized as the Land of Bliss. All beings are Avalokita whose body is the union of appearance and emptiness. All sounds, like an echo, are the mantra of six syllables, the union of sound and emptiness and all thought is the union of awareness and emptiness. The person who knows how to meditate may be liberated from the bardo at this very moment.

During the second phase of the bardo of becoming, as the moment of rebirth approaches, unless one has practiced well the instructions relative to the bardo during this life time, it is unlikely to have any affect on the situation. The person who practiced these instructions will be capable of visualizing his or her future parents in the form of deities in union. This permits contact with the Dharma in good conditions for practicing the Vajrayana, in the future existence.

Rebirth of the tulkus

For the great beings who are tulkus, the process of the conception, gestation, and birth is different from that of ordinary beings. According to the realization of the tulku, various possibilities are envisaged.

- awareness of the process occurring in the bardo and during conception, then absence of consciousness during the fetal development and birth
- awareness of the process occurring during conception and the fetal development, but not at birth
- awareness with no interruption during conception, gestation, and birth

In the secret biography of the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, it is stated that, between the death of the Second Karmapa, Karmapakshi, and the birth of Rangjung Dorje, no discontinuity affected the awareness, at the moment of death, in the following period, during conception, during gestation, or at birth. In the thangkas, Rangjung Dorje is represented sitting on a lotus to symbolize that he was able to be born free of the veils that normally stain birth.

Although a fetus cannot articulate sounds, it happened that the mother pregnant with a great tulku, hear the latter recite a mantra, ask about her health, and advise her to avoid situations harmful to her pregnancy.

It is said that Shakyamuni Buddha, while he was still in the womb of his mother, could nevertheless liberate many gods and demi-gods by his teachings and the power of his mind.

Samye Ling, March 1983

During the bardo of becoming, the reading of the Bardo Thodrol can be done by another person11 for the benefit of the deceased person. This reading is particularly efficient during the first part of this bardo of becoming, when the links with the life just ended remain strong. In the second part, connected with the life to come, reading is less beneficial.

However, it is more beneficial if the reader unites three conditions.

- He must be a monk observing his vows without failure
- He must be animated by authentic bodhicitta, acting truly out of love and compassion
- He must do so in a state of meditation

Vajradharaling, 1983

Cycle of the bardos

Beginning with conception, we again experience the bardo of gestation followed by the bardo of birth to death, and that of dream, then by the bardo of the moment of death, and so on. As long as liberation is not attained, this cycle continues. Liberation can take place in each of the bardos, but the methods that make this liberation possible have to be implemented now, during the bardo of birth to death.

Taipei, April 1986

Pleasant, painful, frightening, or attractive experiences that accompany death, *bardo*, gestation, and rebirth for ordinary beings depend on the karma of past lives. Positive acts result in happiness and negative acts in suffering. More particularly, the way our future death unfolds depends largely on what we did in this life.

When a being takes rebirth, a *bardo* from birth to death begins. This continual cycle of successive bardos constitutes the framework of samsaric existence in the six realms, each being beset with suffering by nature. This is explained in detail in texts like The Ornament of liberation by Gampopa, The Progressive Way of the Three Types of Beings by Taranatha, or The Torch of Certainty by Lodro Thaye. It is good to not only study these texts, but to become immersed in them, getting a dear and precise vision of our situation in samsara. It is not enough to read that suffering in samsara is without end, but we must understand, see, and reflect on this.

Escaping when there is still time

In Tibet, for example, about twenty years ago, the sufferings were such that hell or the realm of hungry ghosts seemed to have been this world. A number of people predicted these events and, suspecting the development of this dramatic situation, chose to escape to India or to other places. They escaped the immense suffering and terror that destroyed their country. Most Tibetans, however, were not informed early enough, or although informed, believed that it was not serious. This is why they remained in the country and were not able to escape the drama of war and occupation later.

The general situation of beings is entirely comparable to that of the Tibetans. If they are conscious of the endless suffering implied in samsara, they are certain to liberate themselves. If they do not become aware, they do not seek ways of liberation, and cannot escape the torments awaiting them.

It is important, for oneself and for all beings, to establish definitive happiness and to suppress suffering. Holy Dharma is the only way. It is essential to study and practice the Dharma.

Samye Ling, March 1983

We must effectively master our minds. Merely adopting a behavior appearing to be the practice of the Dharma will not lead us far. The Buddha said,

> *Perfectly mastering one's mind*
> *Such is the teaching of the Buddha.*

Milarepa and the Vinaya

In Milarepa's life, we learn of an episode where a geshe reproaches Milarepa for not respecting the Vinaya. According to the geshe, Milarepa pretends to be Awakened but does not even wear monastic clothes and keeps his hair long. Milarepa simply replies that he may not know the texts on discipline, but that he knows perfectly the discipline of his own mind.

Milarepa and the monk who sold a yak

Another time, a monk came to occupy a room next to where Milarepa was staying. This monk had a yak and he was thinking of butchering it and selling the different parts. He spent the night thinking about the best way to make a profit. Would it be better to sell the head to one person, ribs to this or that one, the skin to this person rather than to that person, and so on? In the morning, everything was arranged in his own mind, but he had forgot to think about what to do with the tail. Still more agitated by his calculations, he performed his morning practice very early and recited mantras, adopting a very pious appearance. At a moment, through the open door, he saw Milarepa apparently in deep sleep. The monk shouted, "Hey, yogi, this is not the time to sleep! You better practice, lazy one!"

"Usually, I do not sleep so late," replied Milarepa, "But I spent the whole night trying to think what I will do with my yak and I am tired."

And Milarepa, as if it concerned himself, repeated the same complete distribution of the animal that the monk had listed. Then, he added, "I do not know what to do with the tail!"

Milarepa wanted to show the monk that the appearance of practice or the simple observance of external rules was not enough. It is the mental attitude animating them that counts. The monk was so shocked to see that Milarepa had discovered his thought, that he conceived a great faith in Milarepa and became one of his main disciples.

Brussels, November 1982

The Six Dharmas of Naropa

The six dharmas of Naropa farm a group of practices allowing one to integrate all existential situations with the path and transform them into opportunities far liberation. These situations are the state of wake, dream, deep sleep, the moment of death, and the intermediate period between death and rebirth. These six dharmas assume that many practices have been accomplished previously. The techniques allowing one to apply them are therefore never taught in public. Here Kalu. Rinpoche gives an overview of their respective function.

The six dharmas of Naropa and mahamudra have been transmitted from Milarepa, who had received them from Marpa, up until this time.

1 - TUMO

The first of these six dharmas is tumo. This practice is based on the principle that our body is intimately related to the nadis, prana, and bindus that make up the material support of mind. By acting on the support of mind, one acts on mind itself. There exists indeed a reciprocal action of the mind with this subtle energy system. Instructions on tumo concern working with the nadis, prana, and bindus.12

The beneficial effects of t umo are on two planes. First, t umo provides beneficial heat to the body. This is why one often speaks of yogis like Milarepa who, even lost in the mountains and in the middle of winter, only wear a thin garment of cotton. Mentally, this heat is associated with a sensation of happiness that, in itself, opens up to the experience of emptiness so that the practitioner finally attains realization of mahamudra, bliss, emptiness, and nonconcept.

Often, one makes a distinction between mahamudra seen as a path of liberation and the six dharmas called path of means. One should not see this as a separation but understand that the six dharmas are profound means for quick access to mahamudra. It is with this prospect that tumo is taught, as a means to achieve the bliss-emptiness of primordial awareness.

2 - ILLUSORY BODY

Right now, we believe that the world is real. We believe that "I" and "other" really exist, and that all experiences of happiness and suffering are also real. This notion of the reality of all manifestation is strongly anchored in us. What is called illusory body consists, on the other hand, of looking at all phenomena as a magical creation, a mirage, the reflection of the moon on water, or as a rainbow. There is a traditional series of twelve comparisons illustrating the lack of reality of appearances.

Khyungpo Naljor, the founder of the Shangpa lineage, remained especially famous for his realization of the illusory body. Several stories about him in the history of this lineage illustrate how his mastery over manifestation

allowed him to magically produce all kinds of phenomena. One day he made visible for his disciples, first, the appearance of celestial worlds, then the appearance of hell. The disciples asked him if what they were seeing was real or a projection of his mind. Khyungpo Naljor explained that, by preserving the vision that all phenomena are illusory, one accomplishes an illusory practice leading to illusory liberation. Phenomena are not ultimately real, but just like a madman who sees imaginary things, we invest phenomena with a reality that they have not.

3 - DREAM

When we dream, we usually consider appearances in our dream to be real, exactly as they are during waking hours. Consequently, we feel reactions also real, such as joys, fears, sufferings, and so on. Instructions provided for the practice of dream allow us first to recognize, during the dream itself, that we are actually in the process of dreaming and to become conscious that anything appearing in the dream is only the dynamics of mind lacking physical reality. From there, the practitioner can increase control of the dream by voluntarily creating phenomena in the dream, multiplying them, or traveling within the dream. For example, the practitioner can go to pure lands like the Land of Bliss, meet Buddhas, or produce all kinds of miracles. Those who obtain perfect mastery of the dream can enlarge it to the waking world. Recognizing that the waking state is not fundamentally different from the dream state gives them the capacity to create miracles.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Instructions on the dharma of dream are extremely profound. If one has the required qualities, they are easy to use.

Appearances of the waking state have no reality, yet we consider them as real. Although they are the basis of much suffering, we think that they bring happiness. They have no permanence although we perceive them as permanent. Every night, we have many dreams that we comprehend in the same way. They have no reality but as they unfold, we cannot recognize them as such and we take them as real. Although they have no permanence, we believe that they constitute an immutable world.

For these reasons, we experience a great variety of pleasant or unpleasant situations in our dreams, making us happy or miserable. In some nightmares, for example, we have real fear. Why these reactions? Simply, we are sure that the dream, in the moment it occurs, is something tangible and real. Dream appearances, however, have no reality and are found nowhere. It is impossible to locate a landscape or a country from a dream because they exist nowhere other than in our own mind.

By the grace and instructions related to this dharma of dream, we can during the dream itself, recognize that phenomena in the dream are only a projection of our own mind having no reality in themselves. Because of this, they lose their compelling power. For example, if the sea or deep waters appear and one fears drowning, it is possible to perceive this water as a

dream and to dive into it without fear. In the same way, one can also enter the flames of a fire without fear. One will not be burned to death. With this understanding of the dream, the recognition that it is only a manifestation produced by our mind, everything becomes possible, flying in the sky, going to the Land of Bliss, or traveling around the world. One also has the ability to create ten other people similar to oneself, perhaps a hundred, or as many as one wants.

When the ability to grasp the illusory nature of the dream becomes strong enough in our mind, it may be applied to appearances in waking state. It becomes then possible to produce the same miracles as in the dream, such as flying or making all kinds of extraordinary things as did Milarepa or Khyungpo Naljor. This accomplishment obtained in the dream state and in the waking state allows one not only to achieve a great number of miracles but to quickly progress to Awakening.

Madrid, 1987

4 - THE CLEAR LIGHT

When we fall into deep sleep, without dreams, we are in total darkness, with no consciousness of what happens. The practice of the dear light allows that, during deep sleep, either at the moment when one has just fallen asleep or in periods alternating with dreams, ignorance is replaced by knowledge and the mind dwells in a state of openness and clarity. It is said that the person who has been able, in his or her life time, to dwell at least seven times in the dear light is sure to obtain liberation during the first phase of the bardo, similar to deep sleep. Marpa said that when the mind sleeps, the sleep can be a meditation, and he added that he had the instructions of the dear light allowing this meditation.

5- POWA, TRANSFER OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The verb powa in Tibetan carries the idea of leaving one place for another. For example, it is used to mean moving. In the case of the six dharmas, it is related to a technique used at the moment of death, which allows one to leave the six realms that compose samsara and go to a land of pure manifestation as the Land of Bliss. The person knowing how to apply this meditation can go where he or she wants by directing his or her thought at the right moment to one of the pure lands.

6- THE BARDO

After death, during the period called the bardo of becoming, a multitude of phenomena appear that, while being productions of the mind only, are not recognized as such. The deceased person does not know in fact that he or she is in the bardo and passes through all kinds of pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Even if the person understands that he or she is dead, this discovery plunges him or her into such anguish and fear that the person falls again into a state of unconsdousness. The person who has practiced the

instructions contained in the dharma of the bardo, immediately recognizes being in the bardo and from then on applies the methods allowing him or her to be completely liberated. Even if this person cannot apply the methods, the capacity is present to freely move in the bardo and to go to the Land of Bliss or to another pure land. Instructions of the bardo open many possibilities.13

Samye Ling, Mardi 1983

Chöd

The origin of the chod practice is traced to the Tibetan yogini Machik Labdron. When it is done in public, the chod practice presents a strange and compelling ritual rhythmed by the regular clinking of bells, the flicker of the whipping balls of the damarus, and the mysterious and clear call of the kanglings fashioned out of thighbones. Beyond this external aspect, as moving as it is, chod is a profound practice using special methods to uproot the ego. In this chapter gathering two teachings, Kalu Rinpoche reveals the essential functions of chod, after recalling with much pleasure, the whimsical greatness of its founders and their contemporaries.

ORIGINS OF THE PRACTICE

Why practice the Dharma? We profoundly believe in the reality of an ego. We think that there is truly a limited "I" to which we identify ourselves. Suffering is derived from this, because this feeling of ego, pushing us to desire satisfaction and rejecting what it does not like, creates to many conflicting emotions. The Dharma leads us to knowledge that realizes the absence of an "I" and transforms emotions into primordial awareness.29

Intelligence and realization

To reach these objectives, the Dharma proposes different approaches, that of the Small Vehicle, of the Great Vehicle, and of the Vajrayana which includes four classes of tantras: Kriya tantra, Charya tantra, Yoga tantra, and Anuttarayoga tantra. In total, it is considered that the Dharma of the Buddha comprises 84,000 kinds of teachings. An intelligent person approaching the study of these teachings, either the teachings of the listeners in the small vehicle, or the teachings of the bodhisattvas in the great vehicle, easily understands that these teachings fundamentally have the same function and all propose profound spiritual approaches. Intellectual comprehension, however, is not everything. The person who teaches the Dharma by relying only on studies done without having reached a certain level of realization, teaches only according to his or her own understanding. Lacking the power of dear view and direct vision of the nature of phenomena, he or she can make mistakes. Whereas the person who has reached the realization of a bodhisattva or even of an arhat, has direct vision allowing him or her to teach without error. As for the being who has attained Buddhahood, having covered all levels and paths, he or she has reached the ultimate state. He or she knows perfectly what ordinary beings are, what a Buddha is, and what Awakening and the ways to reach it are. Nothing lies outside of the field of his or her knowledge and vision. This is why this being is called omniscient.

In Tibet, propagation of the Dharma has been carried out through two channels covering the two methods of teaching we have just mentioned. There is a type of transmission relying more on theory, conveyed by ten lineages called, The Ten Pillars of Knowledge. On the other hand, eight great schools have emphasized the practice of the teachings. They are called The

Eight Great Chariots of Practice. It is to one of these eight schools that the chod tradition belongs. We are going to introduce this tradition.

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

Cutting the ego at the root

Chod means *cutting*, in Tibetan.

All our suffering stems from the effects of the three poisons: desire-attachment, hatred-aversion, and blindness. These three poisons are themselves the product of the identification to an "I". Chod, cutting, refers to the fact of completely cutting, at the root, this identification, with the result that the problems deriving from it are automatically eliminated. Let us take the example of a poisonous tree. To get rid of it, you can try stripping away its leaves and fruits, or pruning its branches, but most likely, branches, leaves, and fruits will appear the following year. If you uproot it, however, you are sure that it will not grow again. Chod relies on this same principle, cutting the root of all our problems.

A practice inspired by Prajnaparamita

Chod belongs to the second cycle of the Buddha's teachings on the absence of characteristics. In this cycle, the Buddha has largely developed the notion of emptiness, showing that it could be seen in eighteen different ways: outer emptiness, inner emptiness, both outer and inner emptiness, emptiness of emptiness, superior emptiness, inferior emptiness, and so on. These teachings were recorded in the Prajnaparamita sutras, which exist in shorter or longer versions.

- Prajnaparamita in one hundred thousand verses comprises twelve volumes in the Tibetan canon
- Prajnaparamita in twenty thousand verses, four volumes
- Prajnaparamita in eight thousand verses, a single volume

These teachings have been brought out again, in order to make them more accessible, by the great Indian masters, Nagarjuna, who codified them in the form of the madhyamika, and Asanga who wrote the Five Treatises of Maitreya.

Machik Labdron, initiator of the chod practice, was herself well-versed in the Prajnaparamita texts, which constituted an essential factor in her spiritual development. For this reason, she was called Machik Dronma, Accomplished One of the Buddha's Speech.

As for the Indian yogi Padampa Sangye, he was the depositary of a cycle of instructions on emptiness. As a tight bond of master to disciple existed between Padampa Sangye and Machik Labdron, the cycle of teachings of the Padampa Sangye, shije, and Machik Labdron, chod, became one. In this framework, the meditation proposed by chod relies on two fundamental principles of the Mahayana.

- emptiness, the realization of the absence of me where we believe there is a me

- compassion for all beings who suffer because they lack thisrealization.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Padampa Sangye

Coming from India, a holder of knowledge (Sanskrit, vidyadhara) called Padampa Sangye (Sanskrit, Kamalashila) arrived one day in upper Tibet.30 He was more precisely known as vidyadhara of long life, that is to say that he possessed mastery over the duration of life. It is said that he was 200 years old when he arrived in Tibet.

Padampa Sangye proposed a teaching called shije, pacifying. Its particular function was to dissipate external obstacles, physical suffering, and illness as well as inner turmoil, conflicting thoughts, and emotions. This is why this system was known under the name of shije that pacifies all sufferings.

Padampa Sangye visited Tibet during the lifetime of Milarepa. Both had reached full realization and enjoyed great fame. An equally accomplished master called Dharmabodhi lived somewhere on the border between India and Tibet. Therefore, at the same time and in the same area, were three exceptional beings, Milarepa, Padampa Sangye, and Dharmabodhi.

Milarepa and Dharmabodhi

Milarepa was Marpa's disciple. He received all instructions and initiations necessary, so he did not bother to seek teachings from another lama, as great as the lama could be.

Milarepa was the disciple of a unique master. However, his own disciples, especially Rechungpa, asked him, "Dharmabodhi now resides in a place nearby. Why would you not go see him?"

"I have no need to address him" replied Milarepa. "I do not think that he has anything to ask me either, what would be the purpose of visiting him?"

"Your realization is great." said the disciples, "It is certain.

However, are you not expressing vanity?"

"No," replied Milarepa, "I have no pride. I simply do not see the usefulness of this visit. However, if it is important to you, I am willing to meet with Dharmabodhi." He told Rechungpa, "You, go ahead with a few disciples. I will join you on the road."

Therefore, Rechungpa and the other yogis went on their way. They arrived near Dharmabodhi's residence, without having been joined by Milarepa. They then saw a crystal stupa appear in the sky, and it carefully landed before them. It was Milarepa. All went to Dharmabodhi who installed Milarepa on a seat like his and the two masters exchanged teachings.

When they finished, Dharmabodhi prostrated in front of his famous visitor. This increased the faith of everyone in Milarepa.

Padampa Sangye kicks Milarepa

Another time, Milarepa agreed to meet Padampa Sangye. As Padampa Sangye approached the meeting place, Milarepa, who knew of this approach because of his supernormal abilities, said, "I am going to see if the famous Padampa Sangye really has all these powers attributed to him." Milarepa took the appearance of a small bush at the edge of the path. Padampa Sangye arrived, passed the bush as if he noticed nothing and continued on his way. "He has no power," said Milarepa, "He did not even recognized me!" At this precise moment, Padampa Sangye turned back, kicked the bush and said, "You would do better, Milarepa, not to stay here. Anyway, you have not long to live, I have offered your life force to the dakas and dakinis. They now have completely absorbed it. This is why you are going to die today"

"It is true" said Milarepa who had resumed his usual appearance, "I believe you are right, I am going to die today, because I feel very sick.77

"Ah? And what do you suffer from?"

"Well, in the back, I am afflicted by the maha-ati, in the front, my chest is affected by the mahamudra, and inside, I feel gnawed at by the madhyamika. It is certain that I am going to die soon. My death will be like that. The ego is going to die in the wisdom of nonego, emotions are going to die in primordial awareness, and thoughts are going to die in emptiness."

Then, Milarepa added, "I believe that you are truly accomplished. You come from India and at this time reside in my country. Let me honor you with a meal." "I will be happy to be your guest,77 replied Padampa Sangye.

The Indian yogi then multiplied himself seven-fold and the seven Padampa Sangyes each occupied the point of a blade of grass.

Milarepa prepared the meal. He took his own skull apart, held it in his hand, and deposited his brain, which was transformed into a wonderful nectar. From the hearth of his navel, he made a fire of tumo spray to warm the precious food. This finished, he made appear seven Milarepas who also installed themselves on the points of seven blades of grass. The seven Padampa Sangyes and the seven Milarepas shared their meal, improvising one after the other sacred songs. After that, they separated, overjoyed to have met each other.

Padampa Sangye remained for a total of one or two hundred years in Tibet. Then he went to China where it is considered that he still lives on a mountain called Riwo Tse-nga, the Mount of the five peaks. Those who have enough merit and privileged karmic connections can meet with him to this day.

Padampa Sangye and the Chinese master

While he lived in Tibet, Padampa Sangye had another famous encounter, one with a Ch'an master31 who came from China, had the name Mahayana, and taught nothing other than emptiness. "Everything is emptiness" he said, "Consequently, it is useless to abandon negative acts or accomplish positive acts, it is enough to reside in emptiness."

Many Tibetans were interested in a path apparently so easy to follow. The result was that Buddhism imported from India was being threatened by this new tendency from China. Those who remained connected to pure Buddhism were anxious. Having heard about Padampa Sangye's presence in Tibet, they asked him to refute the false views of the Chinese master. "If this master is intelligent," replied Padampa Sangye, "A debate can be useful. If he is stupid, our confrontation will be sterile."

Other Tibetans said that they ignored who the Chinese master exactly was, but it seemed to them that only Padampa, because he was both a great scholar and a realized master, could solve the difficulties of Buddhism in Tibet. Padampa Sangye agreed therefore to go where Mahayana was.

As Mahayana approached to welcome him, Padampa Sangye, raising his stick, made three circles above his head in the air, then three circles on his right, and three on his left, followed by a certain number of movements. Through these signs, without using a word, he asked, "What is emptiness? What is relative truth? What is ultimate truth?" The Ch'an master understood the messages and replied. Padampa Sangye knew that he had found a person deserving his attention.

The two masters agreed to organize a great public debate. The most famous scholars and all authorities of Buddhist philosophy residing in the area were invited. They fixed the stake. The defeated would have to return to his country of origin, Mahayana to China, or Padampa Sangye to India.

The debate, long and subtle, occurred. Finally, the victory went to Padampa Sangye with the result that the Ch'an master returned to China. However, the victorious one paid homage to his adversary, "When an intelligent man embarks on a wrong path, he can recognize his error if it is explained to him and he can abandon his error. But a stupid opponent will remain deaf to all attempts to explain and will persist in treading his wrong path"

Tibetan Buddhism feels an immense gratitude for Padampa Sangye who re-established the right view and allowed the perfectly pure Dharma to bloom again in Tibet.

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

Since the Chinese master Mahayana was a true scholar—someone who sincerely sought the truth—he was able to recognize that he was mistaken. An unintelligent person, on the contrary, never questions his or her opinions. This person always believes that what he or she thinks is definitively true, and locks himself or herself within these ideas.

Sakyapandita and the two ignorant monks

A Tibetan story illustrates the difference between open intelligence and stupidity.

Two monks came to see the great scholar Sakyapandita. "Do you know well the texts you have studied?" asked Sakyapandita.

"We have perfectly assimilated them" the two monks replied. "Can you tell me the kind of activity to abandon (pang-ja) and which activity is necessary to adopt (lang-ja)?"

He expected an uncomplicated answer from them, thai is, which acts are negative and which ones are positive.

But the two dullards took the two terms for names of birds and proudly replied that pang-ja was a certain species and lang-ja 32 another. Then they began to talk about the habits of these birds like experts. According to them, the pang-ja lived on the plains and the lang-ja haunted the mountains.

Sakyapandita, not knowing if the two monks had misunderstood his question, if they were teasing him, or if they were truly stupid, again asked them an easy question. "What are the eighteen hells?"33

"Let us see," the two monks said, "We have the eight hot hells and the eight cold hells, that makes sixteen." They were missing two of them. They could not think of an answer when two words unexpectedly popped up in their memory, with not the least idea of their meaning. "And we also have sha-nak and sha-marl" Sha-nak and Sha-mar, Black Crown and Red Crown were in reality two expressions naming the Karmapa and Situ Rinpoche, the two most famous Kagyupa lamas of the time.

Sakyapandita was so saddened by the ignorance and stupidity of the two monks that he began to cry. And the two duU ones thought, "Poor thing, he did not begin his studies in his youth, as we had, and he cries out of ignorance!"

Samye Ling, March 1983

MACHIK LABDRON

Exceptional gifts

At the same time, in the region of Lab, at the edge of the province of Kham, lived a young girl who had all the best qualities. She was beautiful, had an extremely pleasant voice, and was endowed with great intelligence. She had received the foundation of her spiritual education from a master called Ngushechen, known as the first *terton* of Tibet. Then, she became the disciple of Padampa Sangye for whom she conceived great faith even before meeting him, by simply hearing about him.

This young girl was exceptionally gifted in oral reading. It was usual in Tibet for monks or lamas to read aloud the Kangyur, the Tibetan translation of the Buddhist canon. For many mendicant yogis, it was a way to earn their food. In the Kangyur, the twelve volumes of the Prajnaparamita in one hundred thousand verses are found. They are the most developed explanation of the second cycle of the Buddha's teachings on the lack of characteristics. The young girl of Lab was able to read the twelve volumes in a single day, while fifteen days were necessary for an ordinary reader. Not only was she an expert in reading technique, she also had accessed the deep meaning of what she read, assimilating subtle notions such as the eighteen kinds of emptiness. This young girl was called Dronma, Blazing One. Because she

was born in the region of Lab, she was called Machik Labdron: Unique Mother, Blazing One from Lab.

Machik Labdron and Thopa Bhadra One day she was invited to give a reading of the Prajnaparamita and met a great accomplished one, called Thopa Bhadra, who was also doing this kind of reading. They bonded and apparently lived as an ordinary couple. Some people were offended, "It seems that this man and this woman are great masters, yet they live as common mortals!"

However, one day someone saw a great light inside the house of the couple. The person peeped in and saw something like the sun and moon united. This sun and moon, in fact, were Machik and Thopa Bhadra.

They had several children. Thopa Bhadra cared for them while Machik traveled. Two of their sons were particularly well-known, Gyelwa Samdrup and Thonyen Samdrup, as was their daughter Dorje Drolma. All three reached realization.

The great erudition of Machik, her exceptional talents, and great intelligence made her reputation spread quickly throughout Tibet and India. When she met Padampa Sangye, she received from him the complete cycle of the teachings of the shije lineage from which the practice of chod is derived.

Fast reading

One day, some Indian scholars proposed a fast reading contest to Machik. She accepted, although she hardly saw its usefulness. Tibetan texts printed in the sense of the length, are composed of independent sheets that generally comprise six lines each. An ordinary being reads one line at a time. Machik read six lines simultaneously! She easily won the contest, and talked about her past lives on this occasion.

Memory of a past life

She revealed that she was a yogi in India and that the remains of this past body were in a specified cave. Among the Indian yogis, some had various powers and could walk a hundred miles a day. One of them accompanied Padampa Sangye to India and quickly verified Machik's words. They found traces of her past life according to the indications she had given. They then understood that Machik was truly a fully realized being, and developed total faith in her. Machik's fame again increased.

The conversion of the bad son

Among Machik's children, one was following a wrong path. He stole, associated with bandits, killed animals, and refused to listen his father and mother. Not far from him a ngakpa lived, a yogi who wears long hair, a little like the saddhus of India. He had the power to cast spells. He owned an ox that he used every day to get water from a distant source. One day, Machik's bad son went to the yogi's house, robbed him, and killed his ox. When he realized who his victim was, he was terrified. "He will use magic against me.

He will certainly kill me" he thought. He ran to Machik's and begged her, "Mother, I have stolen from a ngakpa. I have killed his ox, and he is going to take revenge! Mother, you must protect me!'7 "Have no fear, I will help you" Machik assured him. "For my protection to be efficient, you must practice the Dharma, otherwise I will be unable to do anything for you" "I will do anything you want, mother, I will practice"

Machik then bestowed the necessary empowerments and instructions to her son and installed him in a cave, magically sealing all exits.

In the cave, the young man devoted himself to chod practice for many years, meditating with no distraction. His only link with the external world was a ray of light filtering into the cave through a tiny crack and on which dakinis made food and drinks slide. After several years of practice, Machik's son also became a realized being.

Karma Migyur Ling, March 1984

FUNCTION AND ASPECTS OF THE PRACTICE

The chod practice leads to realization of emptiness and compassion. At the same time, it is especially helpful in ridding ourselves of fear and notions of material purity or impurity. For example, when fear arises or danger occurs, one trains to think, "Who feels fear? It is mind. Outside mind, there is nothing that could feel the fear. Since mind is empty, fear is also empty." No longer is there anything frightening. To make training more efficient, Machik recommended seeking for the most frightening places to practice chod, like haunted places populated by demons and deserted by human beings, and repulsive sites like carnal grounds littered with corpses. Machik herself frequented one hundred and eight of these places and her realization was considerably increased.

Sangye Nyentonpa and the collapsing cave

Machik mainly transmitted chod practice to eighteen great disciples. One was the Karmapa Rangjung Dorje of the Kagyupa lineage. In the Shangpa Kagyu lineage, it was Bepol Neljor, the Hidden Yogi, also known by the name of Sangye Nyentonpa, who received this transmission.

To practice chod, he frequently went to terrifying places for the function we just mentioned.

One day, while sleeping in a cave, he woke up with small pieces of earth falling onto his face. Looking upward, he observed that the rock above him was in the process of disintegrating. His first impulse was to run to the cave's exit. However, at the moment he was going out, he remembered that he had practiced chod to learn how to overcome fear. He went back in, placed himself again under the threatening boulder and remained there for three days, practicing chod and meditating on emptiness. At the end of three days, he left the cave free of fear. As soon as he crossed the threshold, the boulder collapsed.

A remedy to madness

Chod is a profound practice allowing one to quickly reach Buddhahood if one can practice it perfectly. It is also especially beneficial for beings in grip of the fear, anguish, illness, or affected by madness. Let us suppose that a person is under the influence of neurosis that makes him or herunable to remain in one place and keeps this person restlessly wandering through nature. An expert practitioner in the practice of chod will have the power to terminate this desire for escape.

Tibetan medicine lists 404 kinds of illnesses, among them 101 are due to bad spirits. To cure them, there is no more efficient way than the practice of chod.

Essence of the practice

Five verses of the ritual permit us to understand the essential function of this practice.

The first of these verses says, "Grant your grace that I may avoid becoming involved in the activities of the illusory world" Indeed, chod allows us to recognize that all external objects are only illusory appearances and by this recognition we detach ourselves from them.

Secondly, it is said "Grant your grace that I may rid myself from attachment to this illusory body consisting of the four elements" The powerful methods taught by Machik lead to disentanglement from our attachment^ the body, and to our ceasing to think of it in terms of "I am this body"

The text continues, "Grant me to welcome as one taste adverse circumstances, illnesses, bad spirits, and obstacles" The practice allows us to be unafflicted by adverse circumstances, to be rid of fears, dangers, illnesses, and sufferings by residing in their essence.

The fourth verse states, "Grant your grace that I may recognize my own face in the manifestation, which is only an expression of mind" Chod is an efficient way for all appearances to liberate themselves, which means that they are recognized as production of the mind. The mind itself is perceived as empty, all appearances are liberated in emptiness.

Finally, it is said, "May I obtain the freedom of the three bodies, self-knowing, existing in and by themselves" By this practice, we can obtain inner freedom, mastery of our own mind recognized as being ultimately the three bodies a Buddha. Its emptiness is the absolute body (dharmakaya). Its clarity is the body of perfect experience (sambhogakaya), and the union of both, the body of emanation (nirmanakaya).

Let us now look at some points which, in the process itself of the ritual, are specific to chod, and give it a unique characteristic.

Offering of the mandala

Many practices include what is called a mandala offering.34 One thinks that one offers to the Buddhas and deities, the axial mountain of the universe surrounded by the four continents, the circles of iron mountains, and so on.

The mandala offering in chod is not the usual offering of the universe as such, but the practitioner offers his or her own body as a mandala. Each part is visualized as having a correspondence with a part of the universe. The chest symbolizes the axial mountain, the head corresponds to the different worlds of the gods, eyes are the sun and the moon, the four limbs the four continents, and so on. In this way, the body itself becomes the mandala of the universe.

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

The notions of me and mine are deeply embedded in us, covering three aspects, first, me, second, my body, and thirdly, my businesses, property, house, and so on. Of these three objects, the first is the most demanding, the body comes in second, and our belongings are third in importance. One way to undo these fixations, while accumulating merit and purifying ourselves, is to practice offering of the mandala. Generally, this practice focuses on the external world and on the third aspect.

We offer, by imagination, the universe, all it contains, and all our personal belongings. In chod, however, we offer our own body, placing ourselves at a more demanding level of cutting up our attachment.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Powa

The practice of powa,35 ejection of consciousness, done in the context of chod, also has its particular characteristic. Powa follows three variants, outer powa with symbols and support, inner powa with symbols and without support, and secret powa without symbol or support.

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

The ego identified with the body, is a belief deeply ingrained in us. To rid ourselves of it, chod integrates the practice of powa, during the ritual of which, mind and body are seen as separate.

Accomplishing powa, the meditator visualizes that the "I," or ordinary consciousness, is sent into the sky and melts in the emptiness of space. The meditator then remains in the state where the mind is omnipresent as space, knowledge is omnipresent as the mind, and the dharmakaya is omnipresent as knowledge. This powa, called opening of the door of the sky, is said to be one hundred times superior to ordinary powa.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Offerings

In any ritual, one make offering of water, flowers, and incense to the Three Jewels and imagine that these offerings are innumerable. In chod, they are done according to a particular procedure. Gods and demons coming from the different sensory organs present them. From the eyes, gods and goddesses

emanate and offer forms; from the ears, there are those who offer sounds; from the nose, those who offer perfumes; and so on.

Rituals in general include an offering of torma. In chod, it is our own body, flesh and blood, that we offer as a torma. A variation consists of thinking that the universe is a container containing the torma and that beings who inhabit it are the torma. Another possibility, in chod, is to visualize the skin as the container, while flesh, bone, and blood are the torma. Finally, it is possible to consider that, on the support of the external appearances, is offered, as a torma, our ability of thinking.

When dealing with demons or harmful spirits, we make even more special offerings to them. We give them love, compassion, our flesh, and our blood.

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

The four types of guests

Among the different kinds of offering done in the ritual, the main ones, using the body under various forms after having ejected the mind by the practice of powa, are called white feast and red feast, and are presented to the four categories of guests.

- The guests of honor, gathering the Three Jewels, the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, and the lamas. We offer them our body transformed into different offerings, outer, inner, and secret.

- The guests of capacities, protectors of the Dharma as well as gods or spirits. Although not liberated, they have turned to the Dharma, animated by motivation of benefitting beings and have taken commitments to Shakyamuni Buddha, Padmasambhava, or Machik Labdron. We think that our body is transformed into what pleases them.

- The guests of compassion, beings of the six classes. All these beings have all been our fathers and mothers. Therefore, we owe them gratitude that we show to them by thinking that our body becomes all what they can wish* - The guests of whom we are obliged, composed of spirits seeking to harm us. They do so because of karmic debt that we have incurred in relation to them in our past lives. We have committed harmful acts toward them, perhaps even killing them. To make it up to them, we now offer them our own flesh and blood on which they feed.

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

Once the mind has been ejected out of the body, the body is transformed by the visualization, into a great variety of offerings corresponding to those to whom they are addressed.

First of all, the body takes the form of a multitude of pleasant and beautiful objects, offered to the source lama and all the lamas of the lineage. This offering is called nine-fold, because it includes, for each of the three elements of the personality of the lamas—body, speech, and mind—the three degrees of outer, inner, and secret offering. In this phase of meditation, offering is

extended to yidams, Buddhas, and bodhisattvas, under four forms, outer, inner, secret, and ultimate.

In the second step, the substances of repair and accomplishment are offered to the protectors and guardians of the Dharma, always following the transformation of the body.

The third step is aimed at the six classes of beings. Gifts in the form of beautiful things to see, pleasant sounds to hear, delicious dishes to taste, subtle perfumes, and so on appear.

Finally, offerings are addressed to a fourth category of beings, the karmic creditors.36 For countless past lives, we have accomplished acts that have caused suffering for others.

We have killed them or inflicted various pains on them. Karmically, we are in debt to them. This debt allows them, for example, to cause us illness. In the cycle of offerings that we are envisioning, we present them with our own flesh, blood, bone, or any part of our body to please them.

Samye Ling, March 1983

CONTINUITY OF THE PRACTICE

Giving our body

Generally, when a follower of the Dharma is prey to fear, anguish, or danger, the remedy is to pray to the Three Jewels. But the chod practitioner will consider that these unpleasant experiences are produced by harmful spirits and will think, "These beings, although harmful today, were in the past my fathers and mothers. They showed me the greatest kindness. If they now wish to feed on my body, I gladly offer it." Addressing them, the chod practitioner thinks, "This body is mine, do whatever seems pleasant to you. It is more pleasant for me to give it to you than keep it for myself."

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

Complete acceptance

In the perspective of chod, illness can be integrated into practice. When illness occurs, rather than wanting to reject it, we think, "It is good. May I, thanks to this illness, take on myself all illnesses and sufferings of all beings!" At the same time, we consider that this illness may be provoked by karmic creditors. Whether they originate it, maintain it, or lead it on to its end, we tell them, "Come! Welcome! If I have to be sick, may I be sick. If I must die, may I die!" Whatever happens, everything is perceived beyond appearances in the emptiness of the situation.

Generally, when we are sick, we seek treatment by the intermediary of a physician, various prescriptions, and even rituals. In chod, the approach is totally different. We completely accept the illness and death. The body is integrated in the notion of emptiness and is no longer an object to worry about. It is simply offered to those who desire to see a sick body.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Not forgetting the essential

If one has received the empowerment and instructions for chod, has well understood the meaning of the practice, and has practiced it efficiently, it is said that one can then adopt any kind of conduct. Behaving in a strange way or being considered as mad, has no importance.

The essential part of practicing chod is to understand the ultimate nature of mind and to realize that the mind is empty. At the same time, one develops great compassion for all beings, knowing that they suffer because they are still ignorant of the nature of the mind. Chod includes both the ultimate aspect, the realization of the nature of the mind, and the relative aspect, the practice of compassion. Practicing chod allows one to develop these two facets, which are the foundation of the Dharma. It is toward this, for example, that the offering of our body as mandate to the Three Jewels and other visualizations of the same type contribute.

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

Machik Labdron said that the accumulation of merit of the chod practitioner is superior to one hundred accumulations of ordinary merit; the practice of the red and white feasts is superior to one hundred other practices; a terrifying place is superior to one hundred hermitages; and gods and demons who are our karmic creditors are benefactors superior to a hundred others.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Question: Can a layperson practice chod?

Kalu Rinpoche: Yes, of course. For this practice, it is sufficient to have received the empowerment and have full confidence in it. If you wish to practice it, you must receive explanations from a qualified lama.

In the Vajrayana, it is said that what we receive greatly depends on the view we have about things. If we consider the lama as a Buddha, we truly receive the grace of a Buddha. If we consider the lama as a bodhisattva, we receive the grace of a bodhisattva. If for us a lama is good but an ordinary human being, the grace of a good person will be given to us. Finally, if we have no faith in the lama, we receive nothing at all.

The practice of chod includes the lineage of the father tantras, coming from Shakyamuni Buddha, passed on by Manjushri, and the lineage of the mother tantras, lineage of the knowledge, coming from Yum Chenmo (The Great Mother), then passed on by Tara, and the dakini Sukkhasiddhi. Finally, chod integrates the lineage of the nondual tantras.

Question: Is it necessary to go to cemeteries to practice chod? The problem is that there is no cemetery in Montchardon. Kalu Rinpoche: If you feel like going to a cemetery, fine, but this is not necessary. A cemetery is a place where corpses and frightening and repulsive things are found. Milarepa said that we permanently have a corpse at our disposal, it is our body! There is even another cemetery, the greatest of all cemeteries, it is the place where all our thoughts and emotions come to die.

Question: Is it necessary to have done the preliminaries before practicing chod?

Kalu Rinpoche: Yes, it is necessary to do the preliminary practices first. There are also specific preliminaries for the practice of chod. If one finds this practice in all the Buddhist schools, Sakyapas, Nyingmapas, and Gelukpas, it is even more closely linked to the Kagyupa school. This is why, if one has accomplished the preliminaries of the Kagyupa school, it is not really necessary to engage in the specific preliminaries of Chod.

Question: If the practitioner is not qualified, can this practice be dangerous?

Kalu Rinpoche: If one has sufficient comprehension of emptiness and compassion, there is no danger. Then, even what are called adverse causes—demons, obstacles, fears, and all negativity—can be transformed.

Machik Labdron said, "If you have an enemy and you decide to use a knife to destroy this enemy, perhaps you will succeed. Perhaps, it will be the enemy who will get rid of you. If you make a friend from this enemy, your enemy will disappear" If, similarly, you are ill and wish your health to be restored but have doubts about whether you will be successful, the result is uncertain. If you think that this illness itself is a good thing, then you^are healed right there by the fact that there is nothing to reject.

The heart offered to the demon

One day, a horrible demon with a knife approached someone doing the ritual of chod. The demon struck the chest of the practitioner and pulled out the heart. Still alive, the practitioner was first terrified, "Alas, I am going to die!" Then he thought, "I am in the process of practicing chod, there is no fear to have! This demonic being was my father or my mother in a past life. Today, he has taken my heart, it is wonderful! So it is better I die!" After he meditated about twenty minutes, the demon came back and replaced the heart in the chest. "I do not need it," said the yogi, "You can keep it!"

The practitioner terrorized by the damaru

Even so, a certain habit of practice is necessary before putting oneself in delicate situations. One example is the relatively mediocre practitioner who decided one day to practice chod in a cemetery. As long as it was daylight, things went almost well, but when night came, he no longer felt confident. Nevertheless, he began to blow his kangling and playing the damaru. Suddenly, a ball of the damaru stuck his cheek. Believing himself to be in the presence of a demon and becoming terrified, he abandoned everything and ran away!

The sacred syllable

In the One Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, precious explanations to this ritual are found because Milarepa answers, in a precise manner, a

woman who asks him many questions on the personality of the lama instructor, the empowerment, practice itself, its benefits, and so on. Milarepa also gives very precise explanations on the meaning of the syllable phat,37 which is used several times in the ritual of chod. In this passage of the One Hundred Thousand Songs, according to Milarepa, the force of this syllable is three-fold.

- from an external point of view, it releases the mind from torpor

- from an internal point of view, it has the power to stop a excessive wave of thoughts

- from a secret point of view, it makes the mind liberate itself into its own nature, which is emptiness, clarity, and intelligence without discontinuity.

In this song, Milarepa also explains the three levels in which an empowerment can be understood. Placing the *bumpa* on the head constitutes the external empowerment. The contemplation of our body as the body of the deity is the inner empowerment, and the recognition of the essential nature of our mind constitutes the ultimate or real empowerment.

Question: What is the relationship of chod and Prajnaparamita? Kalu Rinpoche: There is a close relation because chod is based on the understanding of emptiness and compassion. This is also the essential point of all the Vajrayana. Prajnaparamita is concerned precisely with understanding emptiness.

Question: How is chod practice reconciled with yidam practice! Kalu Rinpoche: It is automatic. In the practice of chod, when we do powa, we think of mind leaving the body and transforming into the deity Vajra Yogini (Dorje Pamo). Therefore, we become a yidam and we are this yidam during the entire practice. As for our body, which is no more than a corpse, we offer it to the different guests we have mentioned.

Karma Migyur Ling, 1984

Tibetan Medicine

In his early years, Kalu Rinpoche studied Tibetan medicine with his father, who was a famous lama physician. After the three-year retreat, however, he exclusively devoted himself to the Dharma and did not practice medicine. Whenever he responded to certain requests, he approached Tibetan medicine in a way that would clearly show its spiritual implications.

We included this chapter in the volume Secret Buddhism. Although medical art in Buddhism is not covered by a secret seal, it has its origin in a revelation of tantric type.

THE FIVE SCIENCES

The Buddha, because of his omniscience, had the complete vision of what is useful to human beings and what human beings were capable of understanding. In this perspective, he expounded the *five traditional great sciences.*

- the grammar, particularly the Sanskrit grammar
- the arts, painting, sculpture, and so on
- logic which, by reasoning, allows us to establish the validity of a theory of spiritual or philosophical nature. The stronghold of this science in Tibet was the great monastery of Ganden, dose to Lhassa. One of the fundamental exercises of this science is the art of debating.
- medicine
- the science of inner meaning, the Dharma

A REVEALED MEDICINE

Traditional Buddhist medicine was revealed by the Buddha while residing on Mount Malaya in southern India, a region famous for the abundance of its medicinal plants, particularly the arura. At this time, the Buddha took the form of Sangye Menla (Sanskrit, Bhaishajya Guru, the Buddha Physician), then created two emanations, appearing in the form of two rishis 38 dressed in white. From the Buddha's heart the rishi Wisdom of Science went out and took his place in space, and from the Buddha's throat Born of Mind, who sat on the ground facing the first rishi. Born of Mind then put a knee to the earth and, joining hands, asked Wisdom of Science to expound the medicinal science for relieving all suffering beings. Acceding to his request, the rishi in the sky then expounded the Four tantras of medicine including the eight branches of therapy.

Vajradharaling, August 1984

ILLNESSES AND MIND

We can assign a quality called divine or demonic to everything that occurs in the world. What is beneficial, useful, and good has a divine quality. On the

contrary, what is harmful and destructive has a demonic quality. Divine quality is presented under two aspects: the temporal divine and extratemporal divine. The temporal divine aspect gathers what is beneficial in the framework of the necessities of this life. The extratemporal divine aspect applies to the presence and influence of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and yidams. Medicine is inscribed in both temporal divine and extratemporal divine aspects.

Our organism is submitted to a great variety of illnesses that entail much suffering. Their primary cause is the notion of ego with which we identify ourselves. The Buddha said, "The identification to a me is our greatest enemy in the universe." It is our greatest enemy because it is the cause of all our sufferings. On the notion of "I" is grafted the notion of "other," which in turn entails two reactions: attachment if this other is perceived as pleasant or gratifying, aversion if the other is perceived as threatening or unpleasant. Moreover, because we do not recognize the empty nature of the situation, we take it as real, and so we are in blindness. Attachment, aversion, and blindness form thus the fabric of our behavior.

Samye Ling, March 1983

Through the body, the medicine affects the mind. Suppose that you suffer from a painful illness of the hand. The hand does not fed the pain. It is the mind that feels it and thinks, "I suffer" Healing the hand is easing the mind. Suppose now that your hand was severed, the hand itself no longer feels anything because it is no longer related to the mind.

Illnesses affect the body and the mind. But as the body is only a product of the mind, it is first of all the mind that is involved. Assimilation to an "I" is the source of all our difficulties and all our sufferings. Without this assimilation to an "I," the notion of illness will be null.

Karma Migyur Ling, August 1987

THE THREE HUMORS

"I," attachment, aversion, and blindness are nothing more than the mind functioning in a mode called individualized consciousness, which is also considered to be the vital force or great subtle energy (Tibetan, lung; Sanskrit, prana). When this prana-mind is in the bardo and approaching human birth, it sees its future parents uniting and, under the influence of desire enters the womb.

As the body develops, the three conflicting emotions—attachment, aversion, and blindness—serve as the basis for the formation of the three humors—air, bile, and phlegm.39 The three emotions can therefore be seen as a cause and the three humors as the result. A fully formed organism, consequently, is animated by these three humors, each having its seat in a region of the body.

- pneuma (air) in the pelvic basin and belt

- bile in the middle part of the trunk, more particularly in the liver and bile vesicle

- phlegm in the brain

In context of Tibetan medicine, illnesses are looked on as being provoked by a dysfunction of these three humors that can be of three kinds, excess, insufficiency, or disturbance. This last term indicates that one of the humors has the tendency to control a region of the body normally under the influence of another humor. The disturbance of humors can touch a single one, sometimes two, or even the three simultaneously.

ANATOMY AND MICROORGANISMS .

Tibetan anatomy gives a quantified description of what has to be a perfectly constituted organism. A perfectly constituted organism has weight equal to 300 handfuls of flesh (the measure being the handful of the patient), 900 ligaments, 16 tendons, 72,000 subtle channels, 360 main articulations, and so on.

The number of microorganisms inhabiting an organism is said to be 84,000. A part of them participates in the life of the organism by consuming certain material. Others use the body only as their habitat just as we reside in a house. Others, by reason of their karma, have to accomplish all kinds of functions. Whatever their category, we bond to them with the result that we suffer from the disturbances affecting them.

The nyung ne practice implies total fasting, refraining from solid food and drink for 24 hours. This fast is broken in the morning by taking a thin soup. This soup is in fact prescribed by the texts to bring an appropriate relief to the microorganisms that may have suffered during the fast.

404 TYPES OF ILLNESSES

A total of 404 main illnesses are categorized in four groups.

- 101 benign illnesses, which are cured by themselves when one is a little careful or which necessitate only a very simple treatment

- 101 illnesses due to harmful spirits treated by medicine and specific rituals

- 101 serious illnesses, which if correctly treated by medicine can be cured, but which otherwise end in death

- 101 illnesses due to ripening of karma. They result from karma of past lives and whatever remedies one tries will be of no avail.

THE EIGHT BRANCHES OF MEDICINE

Confronting this totality of 404 types of illnesses, the Buddha revealed a traditional medical science divided into eight branches.

- general pathology
- pediatrics
- gynecology
- demonology

- toxicology
- traumatology
- geriatrics
- *rotsawa*

The first branch, general pathology focuses on diagnosis and treatment of illnesses affecting the organism without entering into any category of the other seven branches. The second one, pediatrics, treats the illnesses of small children. The third one is specifically related to women's illnesses. The fourth one treats illnesses caused by different kinds of harmful spirits. The fifth one treats problems caused by poisons, natural or prepared by human beings. The sixth one particularly treats injuries inflicted by weapons. The seventh one relates to pathologies associated with old age. Finally, the eighth one, rotsawa, treats states of anemia. These eight branches are considered as covering all possible cases.

Samye Ling March 1983

EMBRYOLOGY

Tibetan medicine also includes a well-developed embryology. Before birth, the mind resides in the bardo and has a mental body giving to the faculties more flexibility than the physical body. Because of that, mind sees its future parents uniting, and this releases emotional reactions. If its destiny is to take rebirth as a man it feels attraction for the future mother and aversion for the future father. If its destiny is to be reborn as a woman, it feels, on the contrary, attraction for the future father and aversion for the future mother. By the power of karma and also under the influence of these emotions, like a magnet attracting a needle or like the ear perceiving a sound, the mind instantaneously enters into the womb. Conception is the meeting of the three components: the sperm of the father, ovum of the mother, and the mind of the bardo. Between these components, there is a common structure since the mind and the two material supports include the five elements in their nature.40

The embryo then begins its development. In the first week, its consistency is compared to soft fresh cheese. Then it hardens, flesh and bone form, the head becomes distinct from the body, in the beginning resembling that of an ant, then arms, legs, and genital organs take form, as explained in detail in the Sutra of the Five Reliquaries. Sufferings of the embryo are considered great. When limbs appear, it feels the same pain as a tortured victim being quartered. When eyes and ear orifices form, it is as if someone incised its body. Being unable to move, seeing nothing, feeling excessive heat or cold are many added discomforts.

When the time of birth approaches, under the influence of inner winds, the fetus, feeling frightened, turns over. Finally, birth properly is said to be very painful. We do not remember but without even relying on statements in the sutras, we know well that babies are born shouting and crying. Personally, I have never seen a child coming into the world laughing.

Karma Migyur Ling, August 1987

DIAGNOSIS

In making a diagnosis, first of all, we take into account the part of the body that is affected. The body is divided into seven parts, the four limbs, the head, and the upper and lower parts of the trunk. To diagnose an illness affecting one of these seven parts is relatively easy. Things are more complex when it concerns the internal organs, which are divided into two groups comprising the six hollow organs and five full organs.41 Three methods are then used to make the diagnosis, observation, feeling the pulse, and asking questions.

Observation here is limited to a visual examination of the tongue and urine. The interview consists of questions about external circumstances, such as the weather or the diet, that may have played a role in causing the illness.

Samye Ling, March 1983

OBSERVATION OF THE TONGUE

A red, thick, and nonflexible tongue will indicate a disorder of the pneuma. Sickness affecting the bile will give a tongue an orange color. A streaked and grayish tongue presenting an excess of saliva is the sign of an imbalance of the phlegm. Examination of the tongue gives precious indications, which are usefully complemented by the observation of the urine.

OBSERVATION OF URINE

The urine to be examined has to be from a patient who has an empty stomach, because a recent consumption of a beverage or of food will interfere with the diagnosis. Three elements are taken into consideration in testing the urine: color, sediments, and foam. Observation of the urine is particularly helpful in determining illnesses that are traced to the influence of a harmful spirit. The analysis of urine helps determine the category of spirit. To do this, one asks the patient to face toward the East and urinate into a bowl on which four sticks have been intersected, delimiting thus nine spaces. If the bubbles rapidly ascend to the surface and crackle with a small dry noise, that confirms, first, the activity of a harmful spirit. Secondly, the site where they ascend in the checkerboard formed by the sticks indicates which category of spirits has provoked the illness.

Vajradharaling, August 1984

EXAMINING THE PULSE

When one proceeds to taking the pulse, it is necessary to consider a certain number of factors that, if neglected, would cause errors in the diagnosis. It is necessary to know, first of all, that each individual naturally has a pulse that can be of three qualities: masculine, feminine, or mind of awakening. This has no direct relationship with the sex or spiritual level of the person. The season in which the person is, carries signifying characteristics in relation to the four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Each season lasts 90 days. The first 18 days of each season are under the sign of the element earth and the

next seventy-two days are successively marked by one of the other elements. The physician must know, at the moment of

taking the pulse, the dominant element exerting an influence on the pulse to avoid a wrong interpretation.

THE THREE BASIC PULSES

The pulse of masculine type is characterized by sharp and powerful beats. If it is not recognized as such, the therapist may mistakenly think that the patient has a blood problem. A feminine pulse will present weaker and more rapid beats. Wrongly interpreted, it will seem to be a bile problem. As for the pulse mind of awakening, slow and regular, if misdiagnosed, it could suggest a sickness of phlegm.

The basic quality of the pulse, aside from pathological considerations, gives a number of general indications. It is said, for example, that a man with a feminine pulse without doubt will have a long life. A woman with a masculine pulse will be able to bear many children, mostly boys. When a couple, if both the man and the woman have a pulse of type mind of awakening, they will have a harmonious relationship with their superiors but problems with subordinates. It is probable that they would have no children.

One of the first indications given by the pulse comes from its relationship with breathing. Ideally, a breath corresponds to five pulsations. A faster pulse that indicates an illness called hot, a slower beat, a cold illness.

ORGAN EXAMINATION BY THE PULSE

Nevertheless, taking the pulse allows to obtain far more signifying indications. For this procedure, the therapist uses three fingers on each hand: index, middle, and ring fingers. Each finger has two points of taking the pulse, its upper part relating with the full organs and its lower part related with

the hollow organs.42 We have a total of twelve points of taking the pulse on the radial artery, corresponding to twelve organs. First of all, when the physician uses the left hand to take the pulse on the right wrist of the patient, information on the following organs is obtained.

- with the upper part of the index, lungs; with the lower part, large intestine
- with the upper part of the middle finger, liver; lower part, bile vesicle
- with the upper part of the ring finger, right kidney; with lower part, bladder

Then, using the right hand to take the left pulse of the patient, the physician examines the functioning of the remaining organs.

- with the upper part of the index, heart; with the lower part, small intestine
- with the upper part of the middle finger, spleen; with the lower part, stomach
- with the upper part of the ring finger, left kidney; with the lower part, samtseu 43

The radial artery is called the physical artery, but the physician can also feel the ulnar artery, called the divine artery, to get some general indications. If

the physician, for example, can count one hundred beats with no alteration of rhythm, he or she will deduce that this person will probably enjoy long life and good health. On the contrary, if there are irregularities—whether pauses or groups of faster beats—this indicates, according to the case, future illnesses, troubles caused by harmful spirits, or accidents. On an even more subtle level, the therapist can take a so-called secret pulse. Feeling the pulse of a son or daughter, the physician is able of discerning the health state of the father or mother. Children may by also diagnosed by taking the secret pulse of the parents, whatever the distance separating parents from children.

Samye Ling, March 1983

These latter findings derived only from taking pulses can appear unbelievable to us. Nevertheless, they are possible because phenomena do not exist independently but are interconnected.

When one examines the pulse of children to determine the state of health of the parents, one takes the pulse on a point corresponding to the lung. When one wants to know the health of children by feeling the pulse of parents, one trusts a point corresponding to the heart. This is because the parents1 feelings toward their children are the strongest. The heart, more sensitive, implies a stronger bond than the lung, just as we react more forcibly to a sting to the eye than to a sting to the ear.

Vajradharaling, August 1984

TREATMENTS

To treat illnesses in Tibetan medicine, there are various techniques but mainly medicines are used. It has been said by the Buddha that there is no mineral, vegetable, or animal substance on earth, when properly used, that could not serve as a remedy. There are seventeen ways to prepare medicinal substances in pills, powders, ointments, infusions, decoctions, mixed with tsampa,44 and so on.

Metaphors are sometimes used to describe the use of a medicine. If it is used alone for curing a illness, it is called a hero, comparing it to the single warrior that confronts a group of enemies. In the case of a simple fever, camphor functions thus as a hero. Conversely, some combinations of remedies are called, the *king and his ministers*. There is, for example, a remedy called *agar* 35, a compound of a main substance (the king) accompanied by thirty-four secondary components (ministers).

The most famous substance in Buddhist medicine is the arura.45 Each part of this plant is considered as being endowed with specific healing virtues.

- roots for the bones
- the trunk for muscles
- branches for joints
- the bark for the skin
- leaves for hollow organs
- fruit for full organs

Five kinds of arura are used in medicine. They possess seventeen qualities, six flavors, eight powers, and three general virtues. They constitute a remedy for all kinds of illnesses.

The giwang, a concretion extracted from some organs of the elephant, is seen as the queen substance from the animal world. It has not only the ability to affect the three humors but also the three conflicting emotions which are their roots.

Beside the pharmacopeia, Tibetan medicine, in some cases, uses bleeding that can be practiced on 72 different points, or hot applications administrated with woods, iron, copper, or heated stones applied on 360 points. There was also in Tibet a certain surgery, which remained rudimentary because of a lack of technical means.

THE FUNDAMENTAL UNITY OF MEDICINES

Although traditional Buddhist medicine is considered to have been revealed by the Buddha, it does not mean that the value of other medical arts is neglected. On the contrary, Tibetan medicine considers them as inspired by the Buddha for those of another faith, for example, ayurvedic medicine in the vedantic culture of India, or even in the interest of atheists. In this way, modern Western medicine is related to the expressed activity of compassion of the Buddha.

PHYSICIAN AND PATIENT

The possibility of curing an illness depends on many factors, including the availability of remedies. Nevertheless, one essential factor is the karmic connection linking the physician and the patient. If this connection is good, it will have a great role in the establishment of a correct diagnosis and in the efficiency of the treatment A bad connection will not permit an efficient therapeutic relationship.

Medicine is one of the five great traditional sciences taught by the Buddha. It belongs to the temporal sciences and also to the spiritual science that is the Dharma. It is spiritual if the person who practices it, having recognized all beings as his or her parents in past lives, is motivated to liberate all beings from their suffering. Guided by compassion, the physician follows the fundamental teaching of Buddhism. The physician unites temporal and spiritual activities within him or herself. In contrast to this, a person who only works for profit or fame in medicine, practices only the temporal side of medicine without spiritual implication. It has been said by the Buddha that the negative or positive quality of an action depends in fact on personal motivation.

Samye Ling, March 1983

A HAND WITH TWO CUTTING EDGES

A famous physician, treating many patients, sometimes earns a lot of money, which according to the Buddha, is entirely legitimate, especially if the physician uses the gains to perfect his or her art and to always bring greater

benefit to ill people. As for the patient, he or she should be as generous as possible with the physician. It is a duty for the patient to express gratitude toward the person who has helped him or her to avoid many sufferings, perhaps preserving his or her most precious possession—life. This does not mean that a physician should refuse a patient who cannot pay. On the contrary, the physician has the duty to treat destitute people and even to give them money in order for them to acquire the necessary medicines. Acting with love and compassion, the physician fulfills his or her role.

The physician has a responsibility in the recovery of patients, but this responsibility also has its human limitations. A Tibetan saying tells us.

> *Show me a hand that has taken one hundred lives,*
> *it is that of a physician.*
> *Show me a hand that has saved one hundred lives*
> *it is that of a physician.*

There are two factors that engage and limit the responsibility of the physician: his or her motivation and competence. The physician must be animated by a real solicitude for the patient through which he or she implements all available means. But it is also necessary to have acquired complete medical knowledge through solid studies accomplished to their term. Armed with these two qualities, the physician does not commit a negative act, even if the patient dies. The physician's attitude was entirely good and his or her activity can be only virtuous. The physician who would not adequately treat a patient, either through a lack of compassion or because of not having the necessary training, and who has misled people concerning his or her capacities, commits a serious negative deed.

The competent physician acting out of love totally follows the teaching of the dharma. If the physician practices giving love and security, medicine can be made more efficient.

Vajradharaling, August 1984

THE MEDICINE BUDDHA

The spiritual aspect of medicine is also emphasized by the practice of Sangye Menla, the medicine Buddha. The practice includes the visualization of Sangye Menla's body and the recitation of his mantra and his name. This practice is considered as one of the most efficient means for treating physical or mental illnesses. Furthermore, this practice brings the purification of our karma and a decrease in our conflicting emotions. Sangye Menla's practice also prevents the manifestation of illnesses in our future lives.

It is said that Sangye Menla has formulated very powerful wishes for the benefit of beings, with the result that the simple fact of hearing his name is enough to avoid rebirth in inferior worlds. The person praying to Sangye Menla will see attachment, aversion, and blindness decrease within himself or herself. As these three poisons are the fundamental cause of illness, their suppression will automatically eliminate illness itself.

The manner of approaching the practice of Sangye Menla affects the results. If we pray to Sangye Menla and do his meditation for ourselves and all

beings to be definitively liberated from all sufferings, the effects will be, at term, as vast as our motivation. When an illness affects a particular part of our organism, we are encouraged to visualize Sangye Menla in the painful part while reciting his mantra. We imagine that his body emits a luminous radiance that dissolves the illness like the rising sun dissipates the night frost. This is also very beneficial although in a more limited perspective.

The sutras related with Sangye Menla give an idea of the power of his mantra and meditation. It is said that the person who had committed serious negative acts, the breaking of monastic ordination or transgressing commitments to the Vajrayana, but engages in the practice of Sangye Menla, would initially fall into inferior realms. By the grace of Sangye Menla, however, this being would almost immediately leave this lower state and assume birth in a higher existence.

THE FOUR MEDICINE TANTRAS

The traditional Buddhist medicine is an extremely vast subject. We have given here only a brief overview. Those who wish to deepen their knowledge must study the texts constituting the foundation of this medicine, that is, the Four Medicine Tantras.

- the Root Tantra
- the Explanatory Tantra
- the Tantra of Particular Instructions
- the Tantra of Conclusion

The Root Tantra is compared to a seed potentially containing all elements of medicine, just like a vegetable seed virtually contains the entire plant. The Explanatory Tantra, on anatomy and diagnosis, is similar to the sun and moon illuminating the world, because it does not leave any of the necessary elements in the dark. The Tantra of Particular Instructions expounds the treatment of illnesses. It is compared to the jewel that accomplishes wishes because it responds to the needs of the therapist for remedies. As for the Tantra of Conclusion, it is similar to the diamond and gives complete mastery of medicine.

Samye Ling, Mardi 1983