

Kalu Rinpoche



Profound Buddhism
From Hinayana to Vajrayana

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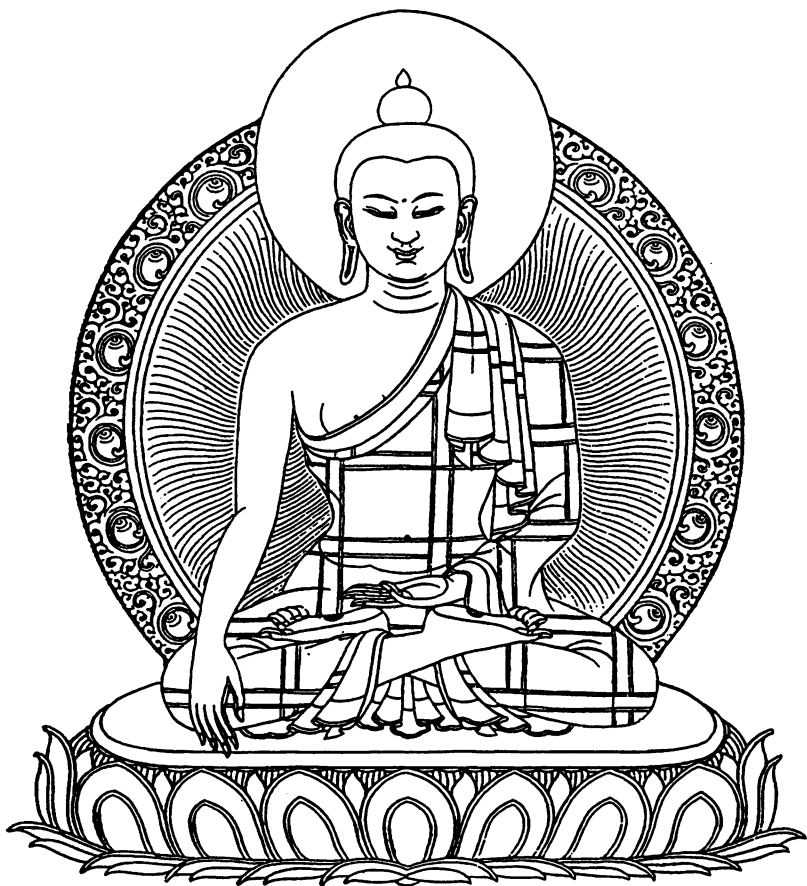
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Introduction

This volume is part of a series of three books devoted to Tibetan Buddhism as seen through the teachings of one of the most revered masters of modern times, Kalu Rinpoche. The complete three-volume work is composed of:

Excellent Buddhism

Profound Buddhism

Secret Buddhism

The first volume, *Excellent Buddhism*, contains a number of biographical documents on Kalu Rinpoche, notably the remarkable memories of Lama Gyaltsen. The first volume also contains teachings dealing more specifically with daily life and with the relationship between Buddhism and the West.

The second volume, *Profound Buddhism*, presents the teachings on Hinayana and Mahayana as esoteric aspects of Buddhism. *Profound Buddhism* expounds on the absolute nature of mind, emptiness, and compassion; dealing with conflicting emotions; the situation of the individual in the cycle of existence; and karma. Finally, the third volume, *Secret Buddhism*, reveals the principles of Vajrayana, mantras, empowerments, the six yogas of Naropa, and so on. It includes important chapters on the *bardo* (the period of time between death and rebirth), Tibetan medicine, and initiation lineages.

Kalu Rinpoche, Lama of Light, came to France for the first time in 1971. Tibet, an inaccessible stronghold of highest spirituality, had remained separate up to this time, on the grounds that the rest of the world could not understand her. Kalu Rinpoche, then almost 70 years old, was the first, despite the skepticism of the majority of his peers, to believe that Tibetan Buddhism could have an impact in the West.

History proved that he was right. He taught many people during numerous trips until his death in 1989. A great number of them were captivated by his charismatic radiance and set out on the path of liberation. Kalu Rinpoche is no longer with us, but the wealth, depth, and diversity of his recorded teachings remain.

Unfortunately, these recordings are not accessible to the public. Not only is the lamp kept in the dark, but this treasury runs the risk of becoming lost. Reflecting on this situation, Lama Gyaltsen, Kalu Rinpoche's nephew, who was for 40 years Rinpoche's servant and then his secretary, asked Claire Lumiere Publishing to collect and edit all the available teachings of Kalu Rinpoche. We have collected all the material that we have been able to find and, wishing to present the most accurate text possible, we have retranslated these teachings directly from the Tibetan. Lama Gyaltsen then asked ClearPoint Press to translate them into English.

We thank all persons who, in one way or another, brought their precious contribution to this publication. We more particularly want to thank the people of the following Dharma centers, who authorized us to use the teachings that have been given in the framework of their institutions:

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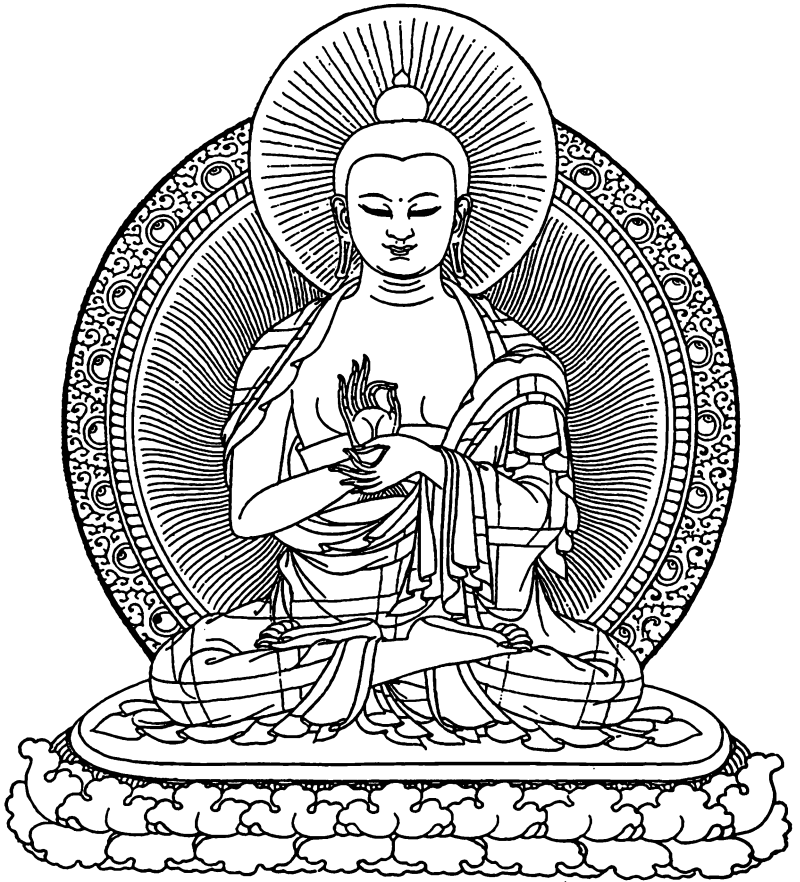
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The Method of Processing Emotions in the Hinayana: Rejecting Them

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 be 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 located 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 "klesa" or the Tibetan "nyon mongpa." For these reasons, "conflicting or afflicting emotion" is not a perfect equivalent, and "passion," covering the Buddhist notion of klesa 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 arhathood. 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, closing 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

¹ *Yarne* in Tibetan

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”:

- 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

²This perspective does not reflect contempt for women, but it is a method that the monk uses to protect himself from desire. A nun applies the same reasoning to the masculine body.

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 right renouncements," 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

³The term "the four renouncements" represents in fact two things to reject and two things to accomplish:

- rejecting already accomplished negative acts
- rejecting potential negative acts
- developing positive tendencies already present
- generating positive latent tendencies

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 clearer. 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 *paramitas*, 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, *lhakthong*), 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.

⁴The conception of an external world in the vehicle of the "solitary Buddhas" differs from that of the bodhisattvas. The latter makes further analysis of atoms revealing their nonexistence on the ultimate level.

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

⁵"Dialectic Mahayana" corresponds to what is most often called "Mahayana" in the trilogy Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana.

beginning. It has no material existence, no form, color, size, and so on. Not being perceived as a thing, 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 SAMBARA

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 this 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 meditation 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 clearly 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 clear 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 falling 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

⁶And by extension Europeans; this teaching was given in Vancouver.

⁷Or Europeans.

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 clearly 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 the 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 feel 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 clarity 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 closed 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 Ones⁸ themselves do
not see it.*

*It is not nonexistent, 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

⁸Buddhas.

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.

⁹Marpa was married, a father and family supporter, and apparently led an ordinary life; later, most practitioners were monks. Marpa was particularly known for his violent outbursts of anger.



King Indrabodhi

KING INDRABODDHI EXTENDS AN INVITATION TO THE BUDDHA

At the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, King Indrabodhi 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 the 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 the 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 Indrabodddhi 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

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 Shakyamuni 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 close 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.

UNIVERSAL COMPASSION

We can never know the karmic links in the immediately preceding life that bind us to people with whom we now have a close 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 continue 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 from 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, clothes 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 breathe 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 them. Finally, aversion drives them to kill and devour each other. Mental opacity, desire-attachment, and aversion are the three poisons that cause much suffering for them. 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 them. Their condition of existence is the 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

¹⁰Name of one of the gods realms, governed by a group of thirty-three ministers.

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 FISH¹¹

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.

¹¹Kalu Rinpoche held great fondness for animals. He liked visiting zoos and would recite mantras for the animals that were there. He also liked to release animals. Whenever he had the opportunity, he released hundreds, perhaps thousands of fish, which he bought at the market of Siliguri, the great city on the plains below Sonada, in Benares, and elsewhere. During his visits to Hong Kong and Taiwan, he released a great number of fish, shellfish, crustaceans, tortoises, and birds. Wishing that this practice be established on a regular basis, he founded an association in charge of collecting funds, and organizing monthly releases of animals. The following text is a letter written on this occasion.

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, and 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

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 Gelukpa 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 the 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*.

¹²Specific preliminaries will be approached in the volume, *Secret Buddhism*.

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

¹³That is to say, the first stars shining in the evening while the night fall or the last few remaining stars in early morning.

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, "Fearing 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

A long 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 kill the king of the country and ascend to the throne. The second man thought only of benefitting 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 SAMBARA

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 *mandala*.¹⁴ He had placed in front of him the basis with a large turquoise placed in the middle of

¹⁴Offering of the *mandala* is a short ritual, or part of a ritual, during which the practitioner imagines that he or she offers to the Buddha, yidams, or the lamas the universe and all it contains. This offering is materially symbolized by a small copper or silver disc, called “basis,” upon which rice and sometimes precious stones are piled.

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 them, and let them penetrate into our lives. By the example of the precious human

existence, 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.

Vajradharaling, September 1984



Amitayus
Buddha of Infinite Life

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 *lhakthong* (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 *lhakthong* 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, desire 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 Jambudvīpa (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. 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,

¹⁵“Reality” must be immutable and indivisible.

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

¹⁶The central channel is called *avadhuti* in Sanskrit, and *tsa urna* in Tibetan. The right channel is called *rasana* in Sanskrit, *roma* in Tibetan; the left channel *lalanda* in Sanskrit, *kyangma* in Tibetan.

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,

¹⁷See, in the volume *Secret Buddhism*, the chapter on Tibetan medicine.

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 clear 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 tiges visualized during the practice of "special shinay"¹⁸ and the tiges of the body?
Kalu Rinpoche: There is definitely a relationship since the

¹⁸A practice of *shinay* during which one visualizes the five elements in colored geometrical forms, also called *tiges*.

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 clear. 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.

¹⁹Kind of pitcher used during certain ceremonies.

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 of Avalokita 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 clear 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 Avalokita. 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 MANI 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 there 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

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, clarity, 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 the 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

²⁰Worlds such as ours, of course, are perceived not only by an individual, as in a dream, but by many people. This does not increase their degree of reality, but only implies a common karma conditioning a common manifestation.

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.

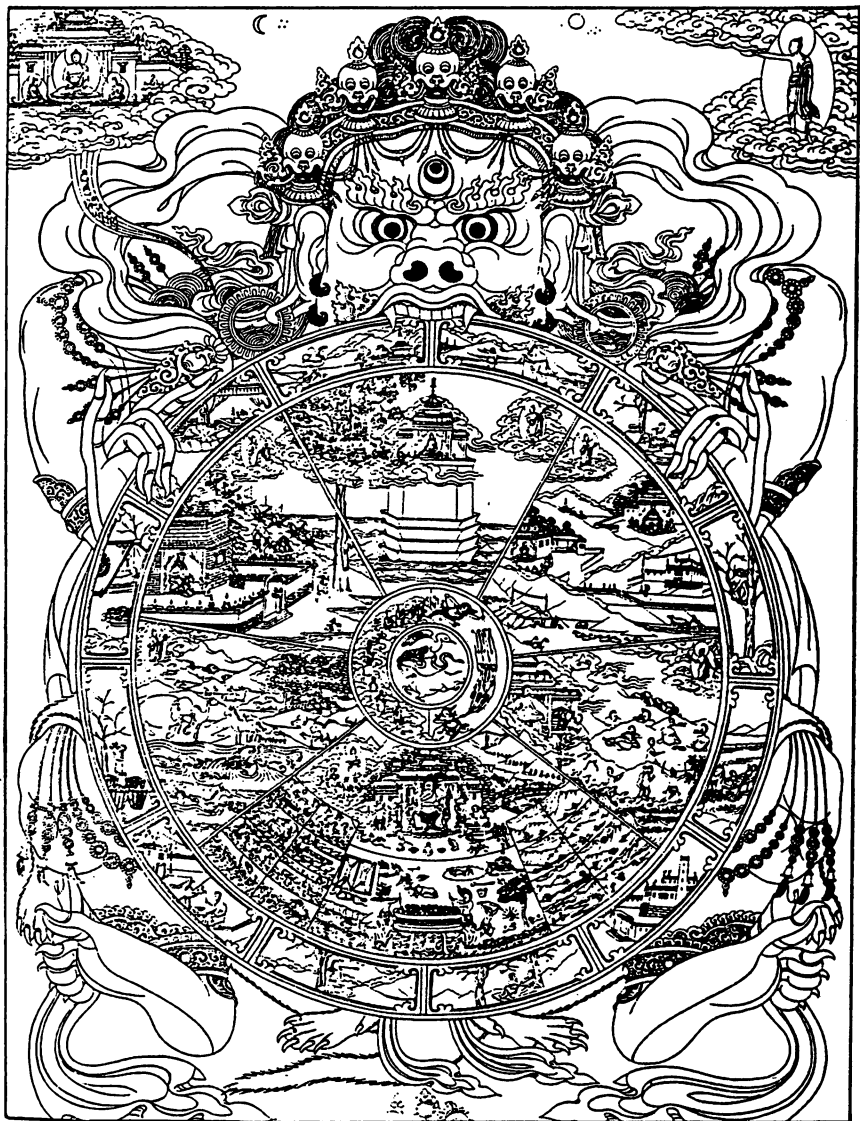
The form of the deity Avalokita and his mantra are invested with great power, grace, and compassion. Meditating on Avalokita and reciting his mantra will solicit help from a force that allows us to make swift progress directed toward Awakening.

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, 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

²¹"Fire state" is only a convenient shortcut for the translation; "energy" would probably be more appropriate, but too far from the Tibetan terms.

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 on²² in a

²²This example of the dream does not deny that in the framework of the present existence, there is a relationship between the brain, a component of the physical body, and the appearances of the dream. However, this example shows that the consciousnesses can function independently of the physical organs of

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 clear, 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 clear, 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.

eyes, ears, and so on. In the dream we see and hear with eyes and ears that do not exist outside of the mind.

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

²³Phenomena accompanying and following death are approached in more detail in the chapter devoted to the six *bardos* in the volume *Secret Buddhism*.

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 clearly, 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 close 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 close 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 faster. 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.

Vajradharaling, 1984

Mind

The use of 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 a field 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 there for all eternity, it underlies the multiple fluctuations of the ego with which we falsely identify.

The nature of mind certainly is the main teaching of Kalu 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 mind²⁴ 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

²⁴With an ontological meaning.

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 have 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;

²⁵Intelligence (Sanskrit, *vidya*; Tibetan, *rikpa*) is not the opposite of stupidity, but it has the sense of intellectual ability, the faculty to understand and know.

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, March 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 clearly 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

²⁶Sanskrit, *sugatagarbha*; expression synonymous of *tathagatagarbha*, “potential of Awakening.” It comes from one of the designations of the Buddha (Awakened being): “The one who is gone into felicity” (Sanskrit, *sugata*).

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

²⁷Latent conditionings (Sanskrit, *vasanas*; Tibetan, *bakchiak*) are extremely numerous. Created by karma, and forming the deepest layers of the consciousness, they not only shape our mode of perception, interpretation, and reaction, but also the category of existence that we experience. This appears on different levels. Our small habits, first of all including, our instincts, are part of this conditioning. Our dreams are its expression, as well as is the type of existence we have assumed, with its congenital tendencies that are its own. Nevertheless, the first of these conditionings affecting the totality of ordinary beings—human beings and animals—is the propensity for us to interpret any experience in dualistic terms of subject and object.

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,

²⁸The analysis of the Tibetan terms translated as potential of primordial awareness and potential of individualized consciousness will allow us perhaps to notice a few details:

- First, "potential" in Tibetan is "*kunshi*," which literally means "foundation of all," an expression chosen by Tibetan translators to render the Sanskrit "*alaya*" meaning reservoir.

- Secondly, primordial awareness and individualized consciousness render, respectively, the terms *yeshe* and *namshé*. Each of these words contains the syllable, *she*, meaning to know, to be aware. From the point of view of its functioning, it refers to the nature of the mind, that, for a Buddha and for an ordinary being, is consciousness. The prefix yields the difference: *ye-* means primordial while *nam-* indicates the idea of separation and refers here to the duality of subject and object. The consciousness therefore has two modes of functioning:

- pure functioning, free of any veil, is the primordial awareness
- impure functioning, hindered by a dualistic division, is the dichotomous, ordinary, or individualized consciousness

On this point, Tibetan language is more explicit than Sanskrit, which was content to use *jnana* and *vijnana*. The first term simply means consciousness, without any other precision. The second term, with the added prefix *vi-* means, as in Tibetan, individualized consciousness. Using a prefix for the first term, Tibetan translators have avoided a false rendering of the sense and have emphasized the deep meaning of the word. To avoid all ambiguity, let us recall that the potential of individualized consciousness is not collective unconsciousness, but the potential of each individual. It contains the karmic imprints accumulated by one individual which will mature for this individual only.

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 1

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 *cha 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 great 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

²⁹This classification is peculiar to the mahamudra approach. It is not the same as the general distribution of human beings under the same three categories (inferior, mediocre, and superior) previously expounded.

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 are 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 the 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

Mahamudra 2

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 the 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 "clarity." An example will help us to understand this clarity. In the empty space surrounding us, the 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

³⁰A position of critical rejecting the teaching is damaging in this sense that, karmically, it engenders blocks that could make someone turn away from the path of liberation in future lives.

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 clear, 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, clear, and endowed with the capability of knowing. Understanding what is empty, clear, 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, clear, 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 acts 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" including prostrations, recitation of the mantra of one hundred syllables, *mandala* offering, and guru 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 clear 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 close 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 the 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 Indrabodhi, 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."

Vajradharaling, 1984

Mahamudra 3

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 clear 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 closed 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

³¹The relationship is obvious between the unconscious described by psychoanalysts and the potential of individualized consciousness. However, the potential of individualized consciousness is conceived in a larger way than the former. The *virtualities* contained in the potential of individualized consciousness and formed by our acts, not only by psychological trauma, are "carried" from one existence to another. They condition not only our reaction to the environment, but circumstances and even the events of our existences.

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, clear, 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 *mandalas*, 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

³²In construction at the time of this teaching, this temple, situated in Scotland, is now finished.

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 cloth. 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.

Samye Ling, March 1983

³³The "four reflections that turn the mind away from samsara," are treated in the chapter entitled, "The common preliminaries" in this volume. The "specific preliminaries" are treated in the volume *Secret Buddhism*.



Padmasambhava

Union of Mahamudra and Maha-ati

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 Tibet³⁴ so, in Sogyal Rinpoche are gathered the eight lineages³⁵ 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

³⁴The "old tradition," beginning with the Nyingmapa school, corresponds to the first introduction of tantric Buddhism to Tibet, at the time of King Trisong Detsen (eighth century). The "new tradition" corresponds to the second introduction of tantric Buddhism to Tibet, after the reign of terror and destruction imposed by King Langdarma. It gathers the Kagyupa, Sakyapa, and Gelukpa lineages.

³⁵There are Nyingma, Kadam, Sakya, Marpa Kagyu, Shangpa Kagyu, Shiye and Chod, Jordruk, and Dorje Nyendrup. See volume three, *Secret Buddhism*.

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

³⁶Two of the most eminent Tibetan masters of the twentieth century, now deceased.

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 clearly 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 *rikpa*³⁷ in itself." By this process, once the true face of

³⁷The Awakened intelligence.

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 pel*)
- "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

³⁸The dharmata, "thatness of all phenomena," designates their ultimate nature.

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

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Kalu Rinpoche, a lama of the Kagyu Shangpa lineage, was born in Eastern Tibet in 1904. He studied and practiced with many great beings of all traditions before living in solitary retreat for 12 years. One of the first Tibetan masters to teach in the West, he passed away in 1989.

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