

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

DZOGCHEN TEACHINGS

TASHIGAR SOUTH, 26TH DECEMBER 2000 - 1ST JANUARY 2001

Oral Commentary on the Longsal Terma "The Opening of the Gate to the State of Ati"



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CHÖGYAL NAMKHAJ NORBU

DZOGCHEN TEACHINGS

ORAL COMMENTARY ON THE LONGSAL TERMA

THE OPENING OF THE GATE

TO THE STATE OF ATI

(ATI GONGPA GOJED)

Tashigar South

26th December 2000 - 1st January 2001



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Shang Shung Edizioni

DECEMBER 26TH

THE VALUE OF THE TEACHING

Welcome everybody, to old students and new especially to those who have come a long way. Sometimes it is not always easy because the retreats are held in far away places, but your presence here means people who are interested in the teaching are capable of making sacrifices. Sometimes people live near but are not interested and do not come to teachings. It is very important both to have interest and to participate: authentic desire and active participation are fundamental to get into the sense of the teachings. So if we participate in a retreat the purpose is not only to learn a few words or techniques but above all to obtain a live knowledge in ourselves; in that way it is enough if we learned only one thing for the retreat to have benefit.

Maybe some of the new students have read something about my teachings but when we meet it is possible to receive transmission which is the most important thing. So try to go into the real sense, don't participate as you would in a conference. When we take part in a conference then we listen to what the lecturer says, maybe we take notes and then we are satisfied but if we participate in a retreat that way, our knowledge is arid and lifeless. Teaching is not just words or techniques or a way of doing something, teaching is for discovering our selves, our true condition; if we follow it like a conference, even if we follow for years, our condition remains arid, which means not integrated. Like a stone in the ocean, it may have remained there for centuries but if you break it open you will find that it is dry inside. If you use the teaching like that even over many years nothing will change. Whereas if we have integrated the teachings then it will manifest

and first of all our life becomes easier. We live in a dualistic vision and day by day we develop tensions and have many problems.

If you observe well you can discover if knowledge and the teaching are integrated in your condition or not. It is not difficult, it is very easy to understand. For example, if you always seem to have loads of problems and you feel your life is one big problem that means the teaching is not integrated. Of course if we look at everything with a dualistic vision saying, “Here, this is a problem and here I am surrounded by problems,” then problems and tensions will always develop. We are living in samsara and so our condition is full of suffering and problems but if we are not aware of the illusory nature of samsara and are convinced that problems are something important and real, that means we are conditioned by samsara and of course we have the impression that we are drowning in problems.

Teachings are for discovering our condition. Talking of our condition does not mean to be always talking of the nature of mind. Many people jump to a high level and talk about the nature of mind: of course it is very important but, before that, we need to understand the mind itself, how the mind is related to the condition of samsara and how we are limited and conditioned by dualistic vision. This means that we are beginning to get to know our real condition. If we have that awareness and knowledge then we have the possibility of overcoming the problems: and even if there are many problems they are not perceived as such and we are able to resolve them easily. This is useful, not just for those doing meditation, but for anyone living in samsara. The teaching is not a fantasy. Many think that the teaching is useful for having fantastic visions and amazing knowledge. We don’t need visions, we have them all the time: we have samsaric vision! But we do need to understand what is meant by vision. If we can understand impure vision then we can also understand pure vision, there really is no need for fantasising. This is important be-

cause many people when they start to follow a teaching develop lots of fantasies. Sometimes a fantasy can help one to progress in practice but only on the condition that you understand the difference between reality and fantasy. In this case you can also use fantasy but many, instead of just using it, are conditioned by it. And if we are conditioned by something, no matter what, it is not positive; it is not good to be conditioned even by teachings or practice. So it is very important to understand our condition and the teaching in a more concrete way, and that means not just to look outwards, making some kind of mental analysis, but also to observe ourselves looking inwards. It is only in this way that we can understand the true sense of the teaching.

SUTRA, TANTRA AND DZOGCHEN

In general there are many kinds of teachings and many masters but usually we have no real precise idea what is teaching and what is a teacher. If someone is teaching then we think that is a master. And if he says you should do this, move this way or do a certain type of practice then people think, “This is a fantastic master! Before I didn’t know how to do all these things.” But all this is relative and not the true sense of the teaching because teaching has to do with our real condition.

When you listen to a teaching, if it seems that the master is doing an analysis of your condition and you feel that this explanation is really for you it means that in some way that teaching has a function. But if you think, “Ah I should do like this, do this position or that practice,” then you have not got the point. You can learn thousands of ways of doing things but is not so easy to discover your real condition. This is why many people who follow a teaching don’t understand how to get into the essence. We should not just engage in secondary things, we must try to un-

derstand the main point of what the master is communicating, above all when following a teaching like Dzogchen which communicates directly how to discover our true nature. A teaching like the Sutra does not aim directly to do this, it is very far removed from this and, unless you already have knowledge yourself, you will not arrive at the true sense following the Sutra. For example if a master is talking, even in a rather vague way, of the nature of the mind many go, “Oh, this teaching is fantastic! This is Dzogchen!” It is a kind of pure vision as if any teaching was Dzogchen but it is not true. Dzogchen means introducing directly our true nature and our potentiality.

There are teachings with very different characteristics, and basically there are three because we say there are three conditions in everyone which in Buddhist teaching are called ‘the three gates’. A gate is something which allows us to go in and out, if there isn’t one, we cannot go in. In order to enter knowledge or understanding we need to go through a ‘gate’ and the same is true if we want liberation from samsara. The three ‘gates’ are body, voice and mind which together make a person. Everybody has these three kinds of existence and everything including teaching and knowledge goes through these three aspects so you must look on them like keys for gaining access to knowledge. Teaching too is related to these three aspects.

The physical level is easier to understand. If you see someone arriving you recognise them because you see the physical body. You cannot see a dead person because they have no physical body and you cannot see them. We have no capacity to see beyond the material level; what we see, we see with our eyes, if we shut our eyes we cannot see. In the same way if we shut our ears we cannot hear. We have five or six senses linked with the organs of the senses. We are dependent on these organs without which we cannot perceive anything. This is why we are above all connected to the physical level.

The energy level is very different. For example if someone has some kind of illness it is much easier for a doctor to discover the problems on the physical level; but if the illness is linked to the level of energy the doctors say there is nothing wrong, because usually doctors examine the physical level. The patient won't get better, even if the doctor insists he is not ill. And it is even more difficult to understand the mental level. Teachings too are connected to the levels of body, energy and mind.

The teachings known as Sutra are related more to the physical level because they were given by Buddha Shakyamuni who had a physical manifestation and they were heard by people listening with their ears; it is called the Path of Renunciation because it renounces all causes of negativities.

Then we have Tantric teaching which is related more to the energy level as it was transmitted by manifestations which did not exist on a physical level. Buddha gave the Kalachakra Tantric teaching but this does not mean he manifested on a physical level; and those who have received it got it through the energy level and not on a physical level. This is called the Path of Transformation. Transformation is not renunciation and so Sutra cannot have the same principles as Tantra. To say the Sutra is like the Kalachakra is just to show ignorance; even if you have pure vision Sutra could never be like Tantra.

Dzogchen teaching deals mainly with the mental level. Its principle is that through the mind it introduces the nature of the mind and applies that principle. It is not dealing with transformation: Dzogchen is completely different from the principles of Tantrism and those of the Sutras and it is called the Path of Self-liberation. These three kinds of teaching are related to the three gates of our condition. When enlightened beings transmit knowledge they do not decide which teaching to give but they do adapt it to the condition of the beings they are dealing with; so if a being has more capacity then naturally it is better to teach Tantra rather

than Sutra because with Tantra you can have enlightenment in just one lifetime; if you follow Sutra you need many lifetimes. If you have the capacity to follow Dzogchen teachings then it is even better because if you receive direct transmission and discover your true nature then you are totally in the knowledge and it is enough to integrate with the knowledge one's relative condition linked to body, voice and mind. In this case you do not wait for enlightenment, rather you discover that it is in you already, and now in order to get it to mature, all you need to do is practise. So you see these teachings are completely different: the master observes the condition of the student and teaches accordingly.

INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY IN DZOGCHEN

As regards Dzogchen in particular, in order to follow it is not necessary to have perfect capacity but one thing is important: the fact of being interested. If someone is interested that means that that person has already some relation with that teaching. And a relation with the teaching does not depend only on this present lifetime. In fact our condition did not start in this life, we have passed through infinite lives we know nothing about. Maybe we were practitioners maybe not. Perhaps we were practitioners of the Sutra or perhaps of the Tantra or Dzogchen, but if we are interested in Dzogchen then that means there has been some connection or you would not even encounter the teaching and transmission. For that reason we know that a person who is interested has a certain capacity. Even when there are people with some kind of capacity thanks to a past life, in this life they may be more interested in worldly things or they may be distracted by pleasures and enjoyment and so, even if they receive teachings, their knowledge does not manifest; it can even be that

despite having a good connection with the teaching and transmission, there are still strong obstacles. So these people do not discover their real condition even if they receive direct transmission from a master. If we have this situation that means some capacity is missing. What is to be done in such cases? One can ask the teacher and he maybe has some knowledge of what to do, maybe some purification practice. Even with great obstacles there is always a possibility of getting the capacity that is lacking. So it doesn't mean that if you discover you don't have all the necessary capacity you should turn to the Sutra; those who have encountered the Dzogchen path and transmission already possess certain capacities and so it is best to fully develop them. So this is the way to follow and how to receive the teaching, and you can understand why there are different kinds of teaching.

Many people ask why Buddha didn't give a teaching which was universal, for everybody. The answer is that this would not correspond to our true concrete condition. It is like asking doctors to prepare a universal medicine for everybody: even if there may be some benefit, a single remedy cannot work for all specific needs. If we know what kind of illness we have we need the specific remedy that cures it; in the same way if we have different conditions and problems we need different methods. So that is the way you should follow teaching, and this is true not only for new students but also old students. Many old students have the idea, "I have followed for many years and I know more or less everything." Maybe they have listened to many retreats but they never integrated that knowledge. Many don't really know how to integrate and stay at the level of ideas and fine words. They think, "Ah, Dzogchen is wonderful because there is not too much to do, it is freer, I like my freedom." It is true if you really know Dzogchen you can be free but it is only an idea that there is not much to do; in real sense it is more demanding than the Sutra and Tantra.

If you are following Sutra you take vows and then you are given advice, precise instructions about what to do, how to live every day, how to practise. It is easier to follow these instructions to the letter but clearly it will not correspond to your real nature, it will just help to remove obstacles and gradually to increase clarity. But it takes a long time. Whereas Dzogchen introduces directly the real sense, so we are no longer dependent on some kind of rule or precept. In our circumstances and in this epoch there are millions of different things and different conditions and so no rules will correspond to all and be valid for all. For example if you live in Argentina you follow Argentine laws and you won't have problems but if you go to another country you cannot apply Argentine laws, you have to apply the laws of that country or you can create problems for yourself. Even in families you find that what I do in my family another would not do in another family because the way of living is not the same. This is an example. Everything is limited, so our limitations are infinite. If we go after limitations and follow rules which can be infinite in number, we only overcome obstacles temporarily. The most important thing is to become aware and be responsible, then we will not depend on any kind of rule. But being responsible is much more difficult. And this is why problems arise when Dzogchen practitioners don't know how to integrate the teachings.

In general, problems can always manifest because we live in samsara and not in some place or dimension beyond limitations; and what is more we are not always aware, even if we are good practitioner sometimes we get distracted, forget about presence and make mistakes. This is not a problem; I never said practitioners never make mistakes; until we are like Padmasambhava or Garab Dorje we can always make mistakes. But if we are good practitioners, if we do make mistakes, we notice it immediately and do not hold on to that position; if you do, then you

are not a Dzogchen practitioner at all, and will stay in this samsaric condition; this means the practice is not working. We should immediately notice, purify and change. If everything is unreal why give so much importance to things? Even Buddha in the Sutra teachings says that everything is unreal just like a dream, and in Dzogchen and Tantra we must train ourselves in this knowledge of the unreal. And since the problems too are also unreal why give them any importance? If we don't give importance to them, as if they were dreams, then there is no source for tensions or attachments to arise. If you have strong tensions and attachments, in general that means you have not trained yourself in the unreality of things and you are giving them too much importance. If we apply this properly the teaching becomes very useful. We can learn many kinds of practice and many techniques but we must understand these are secondary things. For example in our book of practices in general there are three kinds of Thun, then there are also many kinds of practice and so many think this is Dzogchen. But it is not Dzogchen. These are secondary practices and when you have time you can do them because they help you to enter and remain in the state of Dzogchen.

Dzogchen is the knowledge of our true condition: it is not just the name of a teaching or a kind of book. Some people think it is something original, a text taught by Garab Dorje, others think it is a teaching given by a master, but even these are secondary things because through teaching you discover your true condition: Dzogchen, which is inside you. We possess this condition, even if we do not discover it or we are ignorant of it; this is the reason we need transmission. You must understand this is something important: Dzogchen is your own condition; having the knowledge means to discover this. It is discovered by listening to the teaching and the master and learning what is communicated. The master explains more or less how our condition is and how to discover it and what to do. A Dzogchen retreat is made in this way, therefore we also do practices.

A *thun* is a session of practice. All my old students know the practices in the Thun Book well but many new people may not know them and so have to learn them. You can't learn them all at once. Start with the Short Thun. Short means a short time to dedicate to that practice; Thun means a limited time, and Short Thun means a short, limited time. So you sit and you do practice which is made up by different parts that are related to Sutra and Tantra and Dzogchen. So it is very important you learn and do them. For this you need first to receive the transmission, the *lung*. *Lung* in this sense means receiving a kind of permission. We use many mantras and the power of mantras is related to sound; so you need to listen to that sound transmitted by the master and when you receive that sound in your ear you receive the ability to do that practice. Then if you use mantra, the mantra works; if you haven't received the *lung* even if you know the function and the meaning in an intellectual sense, the mantra will not work because there has been no transmission and you need transmission. So now I will give you the *lung* of the Short Thun. And the new people can learn from the old practitioners how to perform the practice.

DECEMBER 27TH

THE THREE PRIMORDIAL POTENTIALITIES

In this retreat I want to give a short teaching called *The Opening of the Gate to the State of Ati*¹, but first I want to explain something a bit more general. Yesterday I spoke about the characteristics of the Dzogchen teachings. When one follows Dzogchen the first thing the master introduces is the true condition of the individual. How is this explained? By two principles. In the Sutra teachings it is explained that the principal point is that of emptiness which is considered to be the absolute truth. So we find ourselves in that state, and we have that realization. But in Dzogchen teaching just the state of emptiness or *shunyata* does not correspond to our true nature which actually comprises two principles not just one: *kadag* and *lhundrub*. *Kadag* means pure from the beginning, and means emptiness but emptiness does not correspond to the totality of our nature which is also *lhundrub*, infinite potentiality. We must have direct knowledge of both. An essential point in Dzogchen teachings is made up of the three wisdoms which are essence, nature and energy. These represent our condition. But how does energy manifest itself? The nature of energy is movement, and when there is movement there is manifestation. How does this manifestation come about? Apart from the three primordial wisdoms there are also three primordial potentialities, which it is important to know. This knowledge belongs exclusively to Dzogchen teaching. For example today in the western world the majority of Tibetan schools talk about the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This book does not belong to all the

¹ This terma teaching is published in ChRgyal Namkhai Norbu, Longsal Teachings, Vol. 2, Shang Shung Edizioni 2001.

traditions and all the schools: naturally there are explanations in all the traditions, such as the explanations of *bardo*, the post mortem state, but the way in which all this is presented in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is characteristic of Dzogchen teaching. So why do all the traditions and schools talk of it? Because this text was one of the first Tibetan teachings recognised in the western world and was translated many years ago in Sikkim by Kazi Dawa Samdrub, and was spread around the western world by its English translators. This book too explains the principle of *kadag* and *lhundrub*, and there is also the explanation of the three primordial wisdoms. Now which are the characteristic aspects of Dzogchen teaching? All traditions use this text today, but not because they have a real knowledge, they do it to make their tradition known. It is important that you know the characteristics of a teaching. When we speak of the three potentialities we are referring to the potentialities of sound, light and rays: all sentient beings have them, not just human beings, but although we have them we do not know it, we do not have this understanding. In this way we are ignorant. That does not mean that we didn't go to school and we haven't any education: we are ignorant because we do not know our real nature and we are conditioned by dualistic vision. Through the teaching we can discover that we have the three potentialities. *Kadag*, pure from the beginning, means emptiness. An example of *kadag* is the sky: the space and the sky are empty but in this emptiness anything may manifest itself. In the same way we can manifest anything through these three potentialities. Why do we speak about primordial potentialities? Because in this case we are not talking about manifestation but about the potentiality from which the manifestation originates: having sound, light and rays means having these potentialities, it does not mean that something has already become manifest. Perhaps some of you have read Tibetan books of philosophy and know that there are many arguments

among the various schools. In particular there is a teaching, which is quite interesting, that belongs to a famous school founded by Jonangpa, a Kalachakra practitioner. Jonangpa explained that from the beginning we have the same qualifications of enlightenment as the Buddha: by this he meant to explain something like *lhundrub* in the Dzogchen teaching, but instead of saying we have these potentialities he said we have these qualifications. Qualifications mean that we do not need to construct anything because everything is already there: that is where many schools do not agree and they contest it. Some, when we talk about Dzogchen, say *lhundrub* is like what Jonangpa said but it is not true. For Jonangpa the qualities that we have are qualifications whereas in Dzogchen they are potentialities: it is important that you make this distinction otherwise, in reading the various interpretations, you can get confused.

So what is the potentiality of sound? It is not as some people think any ordinary sound, on a material level, that we hear through our ears. Sound can be internal or external or secret. The sound we hear with our ears is the external sound, which is linked most of all with the material level. For example in order to make music we need an instrument and a player, and so what we can hear is external. Internal sound cannot be heard with the ears but if we are in a state of contemplation we can feel it through vibrations. Sometimes if you are doing a dark retreat and you are totally relaxed in body, voice and mind, you can hear sounds: it seems like someone is playing nice music or singing the Song of the Vajra but if you observe carefully you are not hearing with your ears but through vibrations and the mental level. It is not imagination, you can really hear it: this is an example of internal sound. We can have the experience of secret sound only if we are really in the state of contemplation: then we discover what it means and how the secret sound becomes manifest. Even if we are in the state of *kadag*, of total emptiness, in this state of emptiness

there is movement, and through movement the secret sound manifests itself. In general, as a potentiality, from emptiness secret sound can become manifest. From the secret sound internal sound can manifest; from internal sound external sound can manifest.

From the original Dzogchen texts one can learn, for example, that the physical body develops in the mother's womb through vibrations and sound. With the combination of the sounds A and HAM the chakra of the navel develops. Those who have studied Tantrism know that there are practices linked to internal heat. There are many teachings of this kind in Dzogchen too. When we apply these teachings we visualize A and HAM, two syllables that we use as the symbol of solar and lunar energy. With the combination of these two energies life begins: which is why we need both a father and a mother. From the sounds A and HAM the *chakra* of the navel develops and when the sound develops further, through the vibrations, the channels are created; then the channels develop and higher up the heart chakra is created and below the inferior chakra is created. From these channels other channels form and from the chakras secondary chakras form. Each chakra has its own sound. One example of this sound is the Song of the Vajra: all the syllables and sounds of the Song of the Vajra represent the totality of our chakras and the way in which the chakras are governed by sounds. So you can understand what is meant by sound.

From sound then light develops. Both light and dark exist: the symbol of light is the colour white. For this reason Guru Padma-sambhava, in the teaching called Mahayoga, explains that the potentiality of the light is represented by cotton: white cotton has no particular colour, so it can change colour; in the same way if we have a white sheet of paper we can draw on it and paint it with many colours. So when we talk of light we are not talking of the five colours which go to form a further development which is

that of the rays; when light manifests as rays it means that it manifests the characteristic colours but not just the colours, also their functions and characteristic energies. For example the natures of fire and water are very different and these properties are linked to different colours.

Since we have these three potentialities – sound, light and rays – the presence of secondary causes is enough for things to manifest. For example a mirror has the potentiality to manifest any colour or form, there is no need for a programme. The mirror has this potentiality, but which reflections will manifest depends on the secondary causes: if there is a man in front of the mirror then a man will be reflected: if there is a tree then a tree will be reflected. Why? Because these are the secondary causes, while the mirror only had the potentiality to reflect anything whatsoever. So you can have an idea of the meaning of primordial potentiality.

In Tantric teachings one receives an initiation, or the teacher introduces the knowledge of how to transform and the possibility of carrying out the transformation through mantras, etc. so that when one applies this knowledge one can have that manifestation. But this is already a manifestation, not a primordial potentiality. Why can we have that manifestation? Because we have both the primordial potentiality and the secondary causes. The latter are the method for transforming ourselves that we have received from the teaching. This is an example of how methods of teaching are used.

When we are ignorant of our true nature we fall totally into dualistic vision, we believe in the reality of what we are seeing that we think is true and important: this is the secondary cause that produces samsara. Even samsara is only a reflection in the mirror, something which is linked to our primordial potentiality. So we have to work with primordial potentiality. In Dzogchen we talk of doing Guruyoga. Guruyoga is the name of a practice

and this term is used in all the traditions and in all the schools; but one shouldn't fix on the name because the term is the same but not the substance. You have to understand what Guruyoga means in Dzogchen and what it means in Tantrism: then you will be able to apply and integrate everything without any problem. If you think that it is all the same, you are ignorant of your true condition and perhaps you won't have any problems immediately, but later you will, so it is much better to learn things in a precise way.

In Dzogchen you do Guruyoga in a very simple way, with the visualisation of a *thigle* and a white A, which are only symbols and not our primordial potentiality. We cannot get into our potentiality just by listening to the teacher explaining and thinking we have more or less understood: in order to get into it in concrete fashion we need a method, and when we put it into practice we use these symbols. You see at the centre there is a letter A, which represents sound. In general all the letters represent sound. If we see an A or a B or C we immediately get information about the sound, so the principle is the sound not the shape of the letter. The letter A is considered to be very important, the origin of all others. When one studies Sanskrit in the traditional way, the first thing one learns is the letter A, and then you learn that from the A are formed all the other vowels, and from all the vowels the consonants are developed and from consonants, syllables and words and sentences. So A is considered the origin of everything. Even in Sutra teachings Buddha explained that the A represents the knowledge of the state of Prajñāparamita, that is, it represents the state of emptiness from which all can manifest. Even the western alphabet begins with A which thus represents the origin of all sounds.

When we do a practice we visualise a seed syllable. When we transform ourselves into Guru Tragphur, into Vajrapani or into the Dakini Sinhamukha, we always use the syllable HŪM because all these manifestations belong the Vajra family. Expla-

nations about the Vajra, Padma, Ratna family and so on are used a lot in Tantrism, but also in Dzogchen. You already know that, from light, rays develop, and so, from the state of Buddha, the four directions develop, and the four colours become manifest. In general, the Buddha family is in the centre of the mandala and is blue: blue represents space, and from this, rays and the four families develop, and they do not manifest different colours only but also characteristic actions; so when we do a practice linked to these characteristics we act accordingly.

For instance, if we do a practice to purify negative karma we visualise Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva belongs to the Vajra family, which is found in the east; his action or characteristic function is that of purifying. Of course if one purifies oneself, one develops clarity.

The Ratna family is in the south and is yellow in colour; yellow represents wealth; on the material level gold, which is a precious metal, is yellow. So for increasing wealth and well being we are dealing with the Ratna family. The seed syllable is TRAM.

Then in the west there is the Padma family, linked with the colour red, which is the symbol of power and dominion. We know what communists did in our society using the colour red. Sometimes people say, “Red represents our blood because we sacrifice ourselves,” but this is not the real meaning: the real meaning is that power is always connected to the colour red. For example, to destroy a village one can use fire; fire is red and is one of the most powerful means of destruction. The seed syllable is HRĪ. So the Padma family has the power to obtain many things. There are the long-life practices, for example. A long life has two aspects: one is that of prosperity, which is linked to the Ratna family; but to have a long life the Padma family is more important, it conquers and obtains all the potentialities of the elements and so on. For this reason in most of the long-life practices we use the seed syllable HRĪ.

The Karma family is in the north and is green in colour and represents the element air; the element of air represents movement because it is never still, if it stops then it is no longer air. So if we want to obtain something quickly and actively we need the Karma family. In the Sutra teachings it is said that the wisdom of Green Tara is very fast and so with Green Tara practice we can obtain things fast. Why? Because Green Tara represents the element of air.

The five directions are connected to the five Dhyani Buddhas and to their five Yum: in the book of Santi Maha Sangha Base you will find all these things explained in detail and it is important to understand them because they relate to the light and the rays and their way of developing according to secondary causes. When we do Guruyoga, the A represents sound, the colour white represents light and the five colours the potentiality of the rays. When we receive this knowledge from the master, using this symbol we find ourselves in the state and we relax. In particular, if we sing the Song of the Vajra we work with all our potentialities. In the Dzogchen teaching this is the main practice. If you follow it seriously, Dzogchen will never ask you to receive initiations and to transform yourselves. If you are Dzogchen practitioners you should have no limits, first of all you should feel totally free; if you are free and aware you know how to work with circumstances and so you have no need to be conditioned. Sometimes people condition themselves. For example some people say, “I like following the teaching but I don’t like doing practices or chanting”, or they say, “I like spiritual teachings but I don’t like religions”. These are all limitations. Why do you have these limitations? You should feel free. If there are reasons and circumstances why not follow and apply a religion? It is not a problem. If you limit yourselves by saying that you have to do this or that then you are creating a limitation by yourselves, and so certainly you don’t feel free.

For example, when I arrived in Italy there were no Buddhist practitioners. I went to work in an office every day, and on Sundays I went to church. Sometimes I went with friends. In my guesthouse there were some students who went to church so sometimes I went with them, but then I discovered they only went to meet girls so in the end I went by myself. Near the guesthouse, in Rome, there was a church and a priest who before he performed the ceremony talked for an hour. I didn't understand everything because at the time I didn't know Italian very well, I only knew a few words, but every Sunday I went there and I listened. In this way I learned the language better and in the end I understood what he was saying. From that priest I learned a lot about Christianity without any problems. This is an example: if we feel really free there is no problem. But obviously we need some kind of base, not just to feel free.

This means that we should discover our true nature and the true sense of the teaching. When we have that base there is no problem and we do not have to limit ourselves. So we should work with circumstances. For example, if one day I happen to visit a temple where there are some monks and nuns doing a Tara Puja then certainly I take part and do the practice because I can have some benefit. I must not think, "Who are these people? What tradition do they belong to?" Simply that is the secondary cause, that is the circumstance. But I don't go looking for places where they do Tara Pujas, that is another matter. If, for example, one Sunday you think, "Today I am free, I want to do a practice with the element water," and you go off and look for water for hours with the result that in the end you only do a few minutes practice near the water, this is not good, you just waste time because the circumstances are not favourable. If you feel really free, whatever circumstance is present you can be ready to take advantage of it to practice. If you do not feel free you will have many doubts. For example a master is teaching or

applying some things and you have the chance to take part, but you think, “Can I take part? If I do, what problems will I have with my master or my tradition?” This means you are conditioned both by the master and by the tradition. And so you are not free. Instead it would be very important if you could feel free from the very start and work with circumstances in an aware way. This is how we always do Guruyoga.

THE HISTORY OF THE *ATI GONGPA GOJED TERMA* TEACHING

Now I want to give you some information about the short teaching which I will transmit over the next few days. I received the knowledge and understanding of Dzogchen teaching mainly from my master Changchub Dorje. I had already followed other masters for many years and I thought I had understood everything but when I met my master Changchub Dorje I discovered that I did not have any real knowledge, and only then did I discover exactly what Dzogchen meant. Unfortunately I was unable to stay with him for much time because at that time, in my country Tibet the cultural revolution had started. So I was able to stay with him only for six months, but I received many teachings and I cleared up many doubts that I had. Changchub Dorje gave me lots of advice and told me what to do when I was unable to meet him, how to develop my knowledge etc.

During that period in eastern Tibet most of the people had rebelled against the Chinese government, so we escaped towards central Tibet and we travelled on horseback for more than six months, from spring to autumn, because we had to make a detour to the north, through the area which was still fairly free, otherwise we risked meeting Chinese soldiers who would have stopped us. In the end we got to central Tibet and we were pleased, but a few months on problems started even there. We

did not know what to do because the situation was very confused. I intended to stop a bit longer in Central Tibet, since the revolution had not spread there as much as in the east, but one day while we were on the road to Lhasa I met some Chinese, two of whom had been students of mine in China and a third who was an official of the Sichuan province. Since they knew me very well, they asked how I came to be there and I answered that I had asked permission to go home and I was there on a visit. They offered to introduce me to the government of central Tibet so I could get a job there. And I answered that I didn't need one because a few weeks later I would be going back to eastern Tibet. I didn't have any problems that day but later I was a bit scared to travel around since I might have met them again. At the end of that year, 1957, I went to visit Samye with a group of Tibetan pilgrims. In Samye there are many places sacred to Guru Padmasambhava; one of these is an interesting place called Yama Lung which my uncle considered really important because he had found some *termas* there. So we went to visit the place and spent a few days there, every day doing a Ganapuja in front of the statue of Guru Padmasambhava. That statue had been built during the time of Padmasambhava and people thought it has been consecrated by him. Still we were rather worried because rebellions were breaking out all the time in the area. I felt a bit like I was in the state of *bardo*, we didn't know what to do. One night I dreamed I was in the place where my master Changchub Dorje lived and in the dream I said to him, "In eastern Tibet there is a big revolution, no one can lead a normal life anymore, and now all these rebellions are breaking out in central Tibet too, so even if we want to practise we can't, and if we want to learn the teachings and practise Dharma we don't get much chance: what can we do in such a situation?" My master replied, "I gave you an essential teaching, condensed, just right for this kind of situation; it is called Ati Gojed; *ati* means primordial state, knowl-

edge, *go* means gate, *jed* means to open and so it means how to open the gate to knowledge. With this teaching you can not just receive the knowledge but you can apply it". This is the teaching that I want to give to you. In that moment I was worried because I knew it was a dream and I couldn't remember what I was to do. So I asked my master, "Please can you help me to remember this when I wake up?" So Changchub Dorje did a kind of empowerment so I would remember. At that moment the other people in the group were waking up because it was late, some had already got up and were walking back and forth, others were meditating and chanting, and so I woke up. Luckily I woke up when my master had finished all the explanations. As soon as I woke up I remembered the dream, so immediately I got up and found pen and paper and I wrote it all down. That teaching stayed in my mind for many days, as if I had learnt it by heart. The same thing happened with many other teachings that I received in dreams and stayed in my memory for many days so that I could write them down. I was not always able to write them down as soon as I received them, sometimes I had to have the dream repeated once or twice before I was able to write them down.

DECEMBER 28TH

THE FIVE PERFECT CONDITIONS FOR TEACHING

Yesterday I explained that this teaching was received in a dream from my master Changchub Dorje, but the teaching is not his, it is from Guru Padmasambhava, and explains in a very simple way how we can enter into the knowledge of Ati.

Kyema is an exclamation, a sad one, the opposite of *alalaho*, which has a joyous meaning. When we say *kyema* there is a very sad situation. Everyone is very busy with many activities, and the essence of Atiyoga has been reduced to words, that is you don't get into the true essence, people are limited to mere words. The essence of the teaching has been modified by the eight worldly dharmas, that is to say they use the teaching to obtain fame, position, wealth and so on. Men are all totally conditioned by their emotions, they are slaves to them and are distracted by this condition.

In our condition or external dimension there are many cataclysms; in the internal dimension there are illnesses and famine; *trugpa* means that we are fighting each other; *tsöpa* means that we are fighting over things: *sonam* means produce; its about food, economics etc., instead of producing we are concentrated on wars, on arms and so on. In secret dimension many poisonous weapons are developed which do not only destroy people and the environment but also provoke powerful beings, such as the local guardians. This is the reason why the class of Mamos and the Dakinis are enraged and instead of helping have started provoking.

The Eight classes have been disturbed and have started provoking, and so in our dimension there have arisen many negativi-

ties because negativities can come from provocations. When we live in the condition of Kaliyuga it is not easy to do complicated practices; in this case how can we integrate the essence of the teaching and, most of all, act for the good of others? We need to integrate and apply this essential teaching, which Padmasambhava gave us just for such occasions.

When the negative karma of all beings begins to mature there will be problems for life, for prosperity etc., and this is the characteristic manifestation of Kaliyuga. In such a situation, the essence of the teaching of Atiyoga being beyond complex preparations and limits of time and place, in order to enter into the essence of the teaching we need to use this method.

Longchen means universe; *rigdzin gyatso* means ocean of all the *rigdzins* or enlightened beings of the universe. Since the entire essence of their knowledge is condensed into this teaching, its power or empowerment is like space, that is to say it has no limits.

Since this supreme yoga is the teaching of knowledge which introduces directly to self-liberation, all men and women who have the good fortune to enter into contact with this teaching and this transmission are guaranteed to obtain enlightenment.

It is rather difficult in the universe to find a teaching like this, which is the essence of the ocean of the *Rigdzins*. The essence of Ati is represented by the six liberations; this means that using every contact of the senses with respective objects we can obtain liberation. When we meet a teaching like this we are really very lucky.

The most important point of the essence of all the Upadesha teachings is the teaching concentrated in the Longsal Khandroi Nyingthig, which means the essence of the teaching of the Dakinis of the universe. *Nyingthig* means not just essence but ‘essence of the essence’, and is the conclusion of the knowledge of Garab Dorje which is the *thigle*. *Thigle* means that everything is concentrated there, but the *thigle* is beyond everything.

How can we help others for example by communicating, or teaching? Teacher, students, place, time and teachings, which are called the five perfect conditions, are interdependent with the internal and external conditions and also with the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Thus when working with circumstances, we communicate. *Dreltsed töndang* means that all those who are linked to this teaching and this transmission will have true knowledge.

Now it is explained how masters should be. The supreme teachers – like Garab Dorje and Guru Padmasambhava who have achieved the Great Transfer, that is to say who have realised the Body of Light without manifesting death – all carry out different kinds of action, according to the situation and the dimension, and they give teachings to all enlightened beings, including the Dakinis and the ocean of the Rigdzins, this is what makes a supreme teacher.

If we consider an average master, a Rigdzin or a master who has true knowledge of Dzogchen, who has obtained full knowledge of Dzogchen Ati and has knowledge also of the tantras, of the *lungs*, of the methods of the Upadesha, and above all knows the condition of his students, or knows how to teach according to the possibilities and the capacities of those students, this is what we mean by an average teacher.

An inferior master is one who has received the transmission and the empowerment of this or that teaching or knowledge, has practised it and has had at least the manifestation of the signs; so he has the knowledge of the state of Samantabhadra, that is he has discovered the condition of his own nature and has a total compassion for all sentient beings. So these masters are needed: if possible supreme teachers, otherwise average teachers or at the least inferior teachers.

So how should students be, who follow seriously the Dzogchen teachings? First of all they should have the desire to follow

the teachings. If we do not have this capacity we will never receive teachings, but having the desire to receive is not enough: sometimes, even if we desire it we continually put it off because we have other things to do. So, knowing that the teaching is important, that the teacher is important and that the occasion is important we participate diligently, not just following the teacher and the teachings, but also knowing what the main point of the path to enlightenment is. Otherwise, what happens is that perhaps someone is interested in the Buddhist teachings but all teachers and teachings seem the same. A teacher who explains only how to do a practice session, how to do a visualization or how to chant a mantra is totally different from another who really makes one understand the main points of the path and how to achieve enlightenment. Those who consider them all to be the same has no capacity for understanding the value or the main principle of the path. This capacity is a fundamental point and must be present. Someone who even though diligent and interested, and despite participation and awareness of the importance of the teaching does not have the presence of awareness, will find many occasions for distraction during a lifetime. Indeed they can spend their time thinking, “I must practice, it is important,” but will waste time being distracted. This is not how it should be, the continuity of presence must be there.

Loten means ‘stable’: when we decide to do something we should not keep changing our minds every half minute. Perhaps we think, “I do want to do this, it is really interesting,” but as soon as we see something else we are attracted by that. This is no way to obtain anything. *The tsom chung* means not to always be thinking, judging and nourishing doubts, because our mind can create infinite things if we follow it continuously. If we believe too much in the mind and in our judgements we will never manage to get to true understanding. The mind is a secondary factor, we should not go chasing after it and when we receive a

teaching we should certainly go to the essence as in this way we will have fewer doubts. When we understand our true nature we will be beyond doubts. When you follow a teaching through which you discover your true nature you must collaborate with the teacher, with the transmission and with all the practitioners. This is very important in our relative condition.

Logpai tawa dral means “not maintaining a contradictory viewpoint”. When one keeps following thoughts there are many points of view which can develop, so perhaps one day one may think that a certain idea is interesting, but tomorrow something else might take over. You should not be conditioned in this way. In short, when you follow a teaching and do personal practice, you need many secondary causes, you need to have the capacity to organise these things, otherwise even if you want to achieve something you will not be able to. For example when we do a retreat here in Argentina many people have financial problems. Some people have money, but many haven’t and this can become an obstacle. In this case you should not be discouraged because there is always some way, you need to overcome the obstacle, do something; this capacity is needed. You need to know how to do what is necessary to have the secondary causes which allow you to overcome the obstacles. Really there is nothing important that cannot be overcome because everything is relative: only when you give it too much importance will it become a problem. So this is one of the qualifications for a student.

Which students should receive teachings and how? In Dzogchen there are many methods and some think that they should be taught to a limited number of students; some methods for example should only be taught to a maximum of twenty-one students. Why? Because if there are many students then the teaching cannot become concrete; there are many specific techniques and the teacher has to teach, and check on each and every student, in order to understand what his or her individual experience has

been. So it isn't possible to teach such things to a large number of students. Here we ask if there is this kind of constraint or not, and we say that if the students are lucky and have the list of capacities we set out above, then even if they are a hundred or even thousands or an infinite number then it doesn't matter. Garab Dorje also said that it is not necessary to limit the teaching, it is possible to communicate it but it depends on the kind of students we have. With the power of compassion we can communicate to all, to human beings and also to non-human beings. But it is preferable to maintain the secret if there is even just one student who is the opposite of that which we laid out above, someone who comes not out of interest for the teachings but just for curiosity or who is not really interested in receiving transmission but in stealing the methods. There are many people who want to create their own teachings, they learn something from Buddhism, from Hinduism, from the Sutra, the Tantra, from Dzogchen, they listen here and there and then they put it all together and write a nice book, hold a seminar and in the end call it teachings. Today many people like following this kind of new age teaching, many never ask whether there is a source, something authentic; I find this ridiculous but lots of people do this.

Sometimes people are not really interested but they can be of some use in the interests of the teaching or the Community. If these persons insist on receiving teaching one cannot say, "I am not teaching you," because they would be offended, so what can be done? One can teach some mental training so that their blindness can be cleared.

Where can teaching be given? Usually – in the Krya Tantra for example – you have to go to a fine temple, with a beautiful atmosphere, you cannot give a teaching in the road or in a bar or a restaurant. But here it says that you can give teaching in any place because in Dzogchen it says that all places are sacred places; in particular any place where we do practice and stay even for a

very short time in contemplation singing the Song of the Vajra, that will be a sacred place for ever. For a Dzogchen practitioner any place is the dimension of Samantabhadra. So that is why we say that we can give teachings anywhere and here the text lists some examples: *trongdal* means in a big city; *trongkhyer* means in a town; *trong* in a village; *lamsang* means in the road; *turtrö* in a cemetery; *nagmai lung* in the forest; *kangra* on a snow covered mountain; *tsoling*, on an island in the middle of the ocean; *tragkyib*, on a rock, in a cave; *gön* in isolated places. One can teach in any place, it depends on the situation of the students, one gives teachings according to the possibilities of the moment and their wishes: perhaps students do not like going into a temple or they have no time to do so, so one can give the teaching in a place where they are at that time, and one considers their capacity and needs, one works with all this. So you see there is a great deal of freedom. If we are in Kaliyuga and there are not many possibilities, we cannot give ourselves too many constraints. For example now we are in the western world and there are not many problems but if you were in a condition like that of the Chinese cultural revolution you would understand what it means to have or not the possibility of choosing the place, the time etc. Just now we don't have such problems but no-one can guarantee that we will not have them in the future, everything is impermanent, people follow their emotions and feelings and the situation can change. So we need to be aware and be ready for all kinds of circumstances.

When can one communicate and teach? This too is relative to the conditions of the teacher and of the student: when it is possible it can be combined with the tenth day of a waning moon, that is on the day of Guru Padmasambhava and of the Dakinis, because this can have more effect; or during the full moon or the new moon, days in which the Pawos and Dakinis gather in many sacred places. When we have this type of condition we can trans-

mit. What do we transmit? The essence of the knowledge of the true state of Samantabhadra; this is what we introduce with the empowerment, with symbolic methods, and this essence is connected to the potentiality of the Song of the Vajra. You know that the syllables of the Song of the Vajra represent our potentialities. In a tantra of the Dzogchen Upadesha it is explained that the Song of the Vajra has infinite potentialities: first of all for having knowledge, that is for discovering our true nature; then when we have discovered it, for integrating this knowledge with all the aspects of body, voice and mind, with the aim of total realization in the state of Samantabhadra.

All practitioners and Dzogchen teachers know very well that the Song of the Vajra is very important because it is found in the original Dzogchen Tantra, and for this reason the tantras of the self-liberation, *tagdrol* and *thongdrol*, they always speak of the Song of the Vajra. But others do not use it in their practices very much like we do, they just know that it is a very important mantra. Personally I have used this song a great deal from when I began practising. In fact, at the age of thirteen I did not yet have a true knowledge of Dzogchen but I had some very interesting dreams about the Song of the Vajra which has always manifested in my dreams. I asked my teachers, my two uncles, what this mantra was like and they gave me the transmission. I also asked my teacher Changchub Dorje for it and I discovered that the Song of the Vajra is one of the most important mantras.

The Song of the Vajra keeps recurring in my dreams; the teachings I have received through dreams are always connected with the Song of the Vajra, so for my path, for my practice, the Song of the Vajra is very important. For this reason I have taught my students how to sing it and I use it as main practice of Dzogchen. But if you encounter other Dzogchen teachers who do not use the Song of the Vajra you should not be surprised.

Through empowerment, the Song of the Vajra, the oral teachings and methods, one introduces the students directly to the

knowledge, allowing them to discover their true nature. If you have not really discovered your true nature, if you have not the knowledge, even if you are great scholars and know a great number of Buddhist texts and know in depth all and any of the Mahayana trainings, you are still very far from the true knowledge like a continent isolated by the ocean.

If you are able to apply the experiences of visions and emptiness through symbols, or the experience of clarity and emptiness related to the energy of prana, or the experience of the *thigle* of infinite bliss – which is connected mostly to our Kundalini energy, - by introducing the knowledge through these experiences you may possess it beyond all possible doubt. There is no need for the teacher or anyone else to decide that your knowledge is perfect, you can discover it for yourself. What we know is discovered directly through our experience: this is the unique state of Samantabhadra. With experience we do not remain in any doubt: this is the main point of the path of Atiyoga. When we have this knowledge, when we discover what it is like, we have total enlightenment: this does not mean that we are totally realised immediately, but that we are in a state of enlightenment and so if we apply the methods and do the practice we can obtain total enlightenment. When we do not know this, through the three gates of the body, voice and mind illusions arise and in consequence we have the karmic visions of the Six Lokas, and this is why we transmigrate infinitely in samsara.

By discovering our true nature we discover what is the basis for illusion, how we fall into illusion, what is our illusory karmic vision, and thus the condition of the three gates of body, voice and mind are overturned. When this condition is overturned we do not remain within the three gates but we find ourselves in the three Vajras, which are the state of the body, the voice and the mind. In this way, all is perfected in the state of Ati, which can give us the knowledge of all that is connected to the three princi-

pal points. Since we have these three existences we have three Vajras. Related to this, in our base we have the three wisdoms and the three primordial potentialities; on the path we have three main points of the path which are related to the various types of experience; and finally we have the realisation of the three Kayas. The knowledge of the three Vajras implies all this.

The true sense of the deep knowledge of the teaching, the essence of Atiyoga, the sacred teaching of self-liberation, is the state of Samantabhadra who possesses the six liberations. Even if we are erudite or experts in logic and we have elevated capacities for judging and analysing, if we do not have this fundamental point which is the essence of the teaching of Samantabhadra, we cannot enter into the true sense of the teaching.

THE PRACTICE OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE SIX LOKAS

Up to now the text has given instructions about how to follow the teaching, how to teach, and how to apply it in general; now we will see how to practice in concrete terms. For this we do not need many books and complicated methods of practice, the essential thing is to learn just a few words. The most important is the letter A, by which we enter into the state of Guruyoga. Then you need to learn the letters OM Ā HŪM, which represent the three states of Samantabhadra, of Garab Dorje, of Padmasambhava and of all the realised beings, and which also represent the true nature of the three Vajras. Then you remember that we are in samsara: even if we have this knowledge, in order to free ourselves from the Six Lokas – the six dimensions of samsara – we need to find ourselves in the six dimensions of Samantabhadra which are represented by the six syllables 'A A HA SHA SA MA. Then we need to learn them. In fact, the true state of Samantabhadra can be simply the letter A, but when we are in

samsara we have five types of emotion and with these we create the Six Lokas, and having the Six Lokas we have six dimensions of Samantabhadra. If we were not in samsara there would be no need for six syllables, the A would be sufficient. Since we are in samsara there are also the syllables which represent the causes of the six dimensions of samsara which are A, SU, NRI, TRI, PRE, and DU. Try to learn the Tibetan letters because if you know them you can understand immediately in which dimension you find yourself in that moment. If you find it difficult to learn – Tibetans don't but westerners sometimes do – learn the essence. How? Learn the Six Lokas one by one, their names, their condition, what they represent, and when you do the practice don't visualise the letters but spheres, *thigles*, of different colours: each colour represents a Loka. Naturally you need to know which is which and what its characteristics are, you need to remember: that is why the letters are important. Then you need to learn the syllable PHAT: sometimes you need this letter and sometimes the sound. PHAT is a very important mantra which has the power of cutting through our mental confusion. It is not difficult to learn the letters of the six syllables of Samantabhadra but the main function does not depend on the letters but on the sound which you need to learn very precisely. In 'A, A, HA, SHA, SA, MA, five syllables are easy to pronounce for westerners but the sound of the first one is a bit difficult because it does not exist in western languages. The sound 'A is not like a normal A, it is weaker and lower; the sound of A is normal and the sound of HA is aspirated so these are three separate sounds and they should not sound the same. For example in the Italian language the aspirated H sound is not really used and even if you write it you pronounce it like a normal A; for all westerners the 'A sound does not exist and so the three sounds tend to sound the same. So you need to learn them well because here the sound is very important.

This practice is related to one of our collective practices called the Purification of the Six Lokas. Now I will give you the transmission of the *lung*, then some of the older practitioners can explain again how you should do the practice.

You begin this practice like in the Short Thun, with the breathing and the recital of the mantra of purification through the elements; then there is Guruyoga which we do like in the Medium Thun visualising the Tree of Refuge with the figure of Guru Padmasambhava. After doing Refuge and Bodhichitta we imagine the presence of Guru Padmasambhava as the union of all masters and all transmissions. In the three seats, at the centre of three *thigles* of the five colours we visualise a white OM, a red Ā and a blue HŪM which represent the unified state of the three Vajras of all our masters, Then, singing the mantra of Guru Padmasambhava, we remind him of his samaya and take from him one by one all the initiations or empowerments of body, voice and mind through the three lights which come from the OM Ā HŪM. When we recall his samaya we use the mudra of the Vajra and thus we can communicate and set in function his samaya. Then doing the related mudras, we receive the three empowerments one by one with KAYA SIDDHI OM, WAKKA SIDDHI Ā, CITTA SIDDHI HŪM. In the end we do the mudra of totality with JÑĀNA SIDDHI A and with SARVA SIDDHI PHALAHŪM Ā we receive together all the empowerments. Then we sing the mantra of Guru Padmasambhava imagining we are receiving infinite lights which represent all the empowerments. This is the way to go to the essence in order to receive the empowerment by using a few words only.

We have two mantras of Guru Padmasambhava: during waxing moon we use the one connected to long-life practice, after the full moon and for the period of the waning moon we use the second. Both are sung, for example seven or ten times. Then we pronounce OM Ā HŪM, the three Vajras, and we imagine that

Guru Padmasambhava dissolves into light and that his three syllables dissolve into ourselves. In this way at our three seats, in a *thigle* of five colours manifest a white OM, a red Ā and a blue HŪM which represent the unification in ourselves of the three Vajras of Guru Padmasambhava and of all the masters. This is a very important moment of the Guruyoga. Then we do the Vajra Recitation, that is to say we breathe in, we hold the breath and then we breathe out, combining this breathing with the mantra OM Ā HŪM. At this point we do the Purification of the Six Lokas, a very important practice which is considered very special in Dzogchen teaching because it purifies not just our negative karma but also the causes of all this negativity; this is why we do it frequently. When we are able we do a session of practice, when we cannot, we stay in the three Vajras OM Ā HŪM. Going even deeper into the essence we simply stay in the state of the A. This is the essence of the practice.

DECEMBER 29TH

THE IMPORTANCE OF DZOGCHEN TEACHING

If we want prosperity, peace and happiness in our dimension we need to have awareness; if we are not aware we cannot expect there to be harmony and prosperity, because in our dimension none are able like humans are to judge, think and modify things; we have this capacity so it is important that we know it and that we do our best. To do our best means, first of all, to have presence and awareness, and this is our aim in following the Dzogchen teachings and trying to understand and apply them. It is important that Dzogchen practitioners know this and take on this responsibility. Certainly there are many beings who do not have this knowledge. We can learn it through the transmission and the teaching but it is not enough to have received it, we must apply it and integrate it with our existence.

Those who feel the need to change society and their condition may think, “What can I do by myself?” We need to understand what society is: a set of many people like us is called a society, there is no other; so a good or bad society depends on the individuals in it. Society is made up of many individuals, so if we want peace and happiness in our country we must understand that there must come about a kind of evolution within us. The condition of society is like that of numbers. The word ‘number’ refers to a set, a collectivity, so where do you start counting? You start with one: if there is no one, there is no two, three, hundred or thousand. So I am like a number one in society, and even if I cannot influence or change or govern the entire society, the society in which I live is connected to me. So I must understand the state of my condition and how I can modify or

develop it. If I have this knowledge and this awareness, naturally my friends, my family, my village, my people can all have it; so gradually knowledge and awareness can develop and in the end the whole country can benefit.

This is why in Dzogchen teaching we speak first of all about presence and awareness. To put it simply, following Dzogchen teachings means learning to become aware; and when we are, we discover how charged up and wound up we are, how many tensions, emotions and problems we have and then we can start to overcome them. If we do not observe ourselves we will not discover this and so talking about peace between nations and in the world will remain merely a nice idea. It is really important to know what the root is. In particular we Dzogchen practitioners have the responsibility to learn and apply this principle. Naturally it is not enough for just one person to have this knowledge but if I have got it, if I am integrated in this knowledge, I can become a good example for others even without having to teach them anything or without applying any particular teaching.

For example in 1960 when I arrived in Italy, no one talked about Dzogchen teaching and there were very few people who knew about Buddhism. Some professors knew a bit about Buddhism, in particular about Zen, and when I talked about Dzogchen they asked me if it was Zen. This is an example, I arrived in Italy alone but after a few years I began to explain about Buddhism at University as well, to my students. I did not teach Buddhism, I taught Tibetan language and literature, but in Tibetan literature there is Buddhism and there is also Dzogchen teaching. I organised various courses and seminars at the University, and so many people got to know that there existed a teaching called Dzogchen, which is different from Tantra and Sutra. Later not only my university students but also other people began to be seriously interested in Buddhist teaching and they began to ask me to teach them. If someone is really interested I am able to

help them and so I did not just explain the history of Buddhism. I took myself as an example, and this is part of the Buddha's teaching. Buddha said, "Taking your own experience as an example you do no harm to others". Indeed seeing the problems we have helps us to understand what it is like for others, and so we can help them and we can collaborate with them.

I entered a monastery when I was almost five years old and I began by receiving all the usual education; when I was nine I went to college and I began to study Buddhist philosophy, and so I got to know Buddhism, Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen teachings which I received from many masters. I felt I was a scholar and that I knew all the Buddhist teachings. So at 16 I finished college and thought I knew Buddhism very well, indeed I felt it very seriously; but later when I was seventeen I met my master Changchub Dorje and I discovered that, in reality, I did not know what was the essence of the practice to obtain enlightenment. Certainly I had been interested in the subject ever since going to college and I believed I did know, but when I met my master I realised that I had not yet entered into the knowledge. From him I received the Dzogchen teachings and transmission in a more concrete fashion and from that time on more or less I have had the knowledge of the Dzogchen teachings. So the three aspects of my existence, body, voice and mind are more integrated in this knowledge which in this way has not just remained a mere idea. I know that the teaching is very important and in particular Dzogchen teaching which I received from my master Changchub Dorje, and as I discovered, this teaching is the principal path to obtain enlightenment. This is the reason why, when I began teaching, I communicated it to my students from the very beginning.

In general we know what our condition is in this century, and particularly in the western world: people who are interested in the teaching do not have many possibilities. In the olden days in

Tibet it was not like that: anyone who was interested in following a master who lived on a mountain and wanted to dedicate themselves totally to the teaching could do that, because someone would always help them, they did not have to worry about earning money to live on; if he had the courage to go off to a mountain to live as Milarepa did, he could easily subsist because all the local inhabitants of the area, as soon as they discovered him, would spread the word and in a few weeks food would be brought for his survival; in the olden days it was like that in Tibet. But today even Tibet has moved into modern society.

In the West, anyone who is interested and wants to dedicate themselves to the teaching needs to survive. In the West one has to think about how to earn money and this becomes the main aim of life. Some people say, “You think too much about money, you are too materialistic!” But in the West if you don’t think about money you cannot survive. How is one to maintain a family, a house or a car? If you have a house you know how many bills come in at the end of the month and if you have no money then how can you manage? This is life and you have to understand what your concrete condition really is.

For example if we learn or get to know a complicated practice, perhaps we try to do it until we are tired, but we cannot carry on for too long because many practices are connected with external conditions: you need a suitable place, enough time, and various other specific conditions and it is not easy to find them because our lives are full of duties. This is why Dzogchen teaching can be very important in today’s society.

I will give you a precise example. In the Sutra when it speaks about how long this teaching will last on Earth, Buddha gives a list of three kinds of teaching and says that the teaching of *lung* – which is basically that which was explained by the Buddha, that is the rules of the Vinaya – will develop for one thousand five hundred years; after this a more inner knowledge would develop,

like Bodhichitta, and then there will be a teaching reduced to form only, so limited to vestments, rituals, Pujas, doing something without understanding its real sense. When the Chinese gave people a bit more freedom to cross the border, I went to Tibet and in the monasteries this is indeed what I found. During the cultural revolution all the monasteries were destroyed, but then most were rebuilt and everything seemed to be the same as before. If you go to visit a monastery it does seem that there are many monks, and the monks are young, they are well dressed, they look very good and do the rituals of offering, playing the instruments and it all seems very serious.

When I went to my monastery in Eastern Tibet there were thirty or forty monks: only two were old, all the others were young and well dressed and they knew how to do the Puja of Mahakala and Ekajati and in the morning they also did Puja to Tara. In fact the two old monks had taught them but the young monks only knew these and nothing else and they did not really understand the significance. Later they invited monks from other monasteries and gradually they managed to learn other Pujas. But when I arrived I felt really sad, because the young monks were full of good intentions and really wanted to learn something but there was no-one able to teach them. I stayed just about twenty days and I could not teach them much. This is the example of one monastery to which I am linked but for the others it is just the same: from what you can see this kind of teaching is mere form. Today this is the trend in most places. Buddha said that even this teaching will not remain for long. This is why a precise time limit was assigned to the existence of the teachings of the Buddha which deal with the Sutra; perhaps the Tantra will last a bit longer but they say that the Tantra teachings will not last much longer either.

In Dzogchen teaching there is a very important tantra called *Dra Thalgyur*, in which it is explained that this teaching will last

until the destruction of the world. Why should it last longer than the others? Because it is not linked to anything external, it is pure knowledge, inner understanding, and in order to apply and practice it there is no need to change anything. Dzogchen will never tell you what your conduct should be or that you should be in a certain way, it asks that you integrate it with your situation and your circumstances; this is the reason why Dzogchen practitioners are very various and come from many different traditions. For example in the Sutra, the majority of practitioners are monks and nuns, laypeople have only a kind of faith, they receive teachings but they do not hold the knowledge or have responsibility. In Dzogchen there are people of all kinds, monks, laypersons, ordinary people; there are enlightened practitioners who live in retreat on mountains, there are many living in cities, or in the countryside like peasants, or in monasteries like monks and nuns; there are no limitations.

For example in my village there was a Mahasiddha called Tsangpa Drubchen. One of my uncles went to visit him because he was very famous and people thought he was a very special master. My uncle travelled for months with a group of people and arrived in an area of Eastern Tibet where the nomads live near the famous mountain Anye Machen, which recently has been discovered by scientists to be higher than Everest. The Mahasiddha lived in a region very close to that mountain and so it was not easy to reach him. My uncle and his group travelled for ages and when they arrived in the neighbourhood they asked the nomads where they could find Tsangpa Drubchen. *Drubchen* means Great Mahasiddha but the people did not know of any great Mahasiddha. In the end after many enquiries they discovered that the people called him Tsangpa. When they arrived they found that Tsangpa Drubchen and his family lived like nomads in an ordinary tent. But even though they lived in a very ordinary way, Tsangpa Drubchen had great knowledge. His wife, son, daughter,

ter all tended animals like ordinary nomads, sometimes on particular days the whole family would gather and do a Ganapuja, and every so often Tsangpa Drubchen would give teachings. This is one example: there is no need to show any particular exterior. This means being integrated with the situation. But when a master is well integrated many do not recognise him because when people think of a master they have the idea that he has particular clothes or a particular appearance. This is the way ordinary people look at it.

I remember many years ago we did a retreat in North Italy and there was a restaurant where all our people used to go to eat. So one day the owner said he wanted to invite the master and someone told me and so I accepted the invitation for the next Sunday. So I went to the restaurant with four or five people, and with us was Barrie Simmons, a very big American man who that day was wearing a long robe. The restaurant owner thought Barrie was the master and went to welcome him but Barrie laughed and said, "I am sorry, but it is not me – it's him!" This is an example. Sometimes when we are too integrated people do not understand. When I encountered my master Changchub Dorje, at the beginning I did not feel at ease because before I had been to many masters and had followed many teachings by many different Rinpoches, Lamas, and monks dressed in elegant vestments and who all looked very fine; but my Master was dressed like a peasant of the area; he did not look like a master, the only difference was that he had long hair tied in a knot on the top of his head and a shell earring to distinguish him from other people. I felt a bit ill at ease but I had great faith in him. I had gone to him not just because I had heard talk about him but because a year before I had had a dream, in which I went there and since I remembered it all very well – the place, the house, the master – I had searched around and I had found him. So I knew he was a special teacher; but it is not always like that.

For example once we held a retreat in Sardinia. I went two days before and I met a couple of Greeks who had already followed other Lamas and other teachings and perhaps they had read some of my books, the fact is that they were interested and they had come and so we talked. But when they saw me they were very surprised, because perhaps they thought they were going to meet a teacher who was very serious while I was joking with people; I talked but I behaved normally. Later people told me that they had not known that a teacher could be like that. But when we began the retreat they disappeared and I never saw them again. This is an example, sometimes one does need a bit of form. Perhaps this is why many Tibetan Lamas, even if they are not monks, they dress like monks and say, “These are the clothes of the Dharma”. Perhaps there is a reason. But I have never liked this and so Dzogchen is fine for me and I don’t care if people do not consider me to be a teacher. This is what is meant by integration.

Among the practitioners of Dzogchen there are people like the 5th Dalai Lama; some are surprised because he was a brilliant man in politics and he had a very elevated position and so people asked how he could be a Dzogchen practitioner. But in Dzogchen we respect the situation as it is, we do not escape from our condition, we integrate with it. If there are reasons to change, naturally we change. We can change, modify and we do our best but not because of the teaching or the knowledge. So this teaching is very important for the future too; maybe there are no problems today but in the future who knows? We live in time and time is impermanent.

THE THREE STATEMENTS OF GARAB DORJE

So then it is very important to maintain the teaching as it was taught by Garab Dorje. Anyone who teaches Dzogchen, or who applies it, or who is learning it must act on the basis of the principles of the three statements of Garab Dorje. When he manifested the Body of Light, Garab Dorje left to his disciples, in particular to Mañjushrimitra, three testaments which are considered to be the essence of all his teaching. With these three statements one can learn the Dzogchen teaching and one should also apply it.

The first statement says, “Introduce directly”. This is direct introduction. What is it that we are introducing? Our true condition, our true nature. And how are we to introduce it? Many followers of the Sutra, for example, deny that introduction exists because that would imply that there is something to introduce. In the *Hridaya Sutra* of the Prajñāparamita, Buddha explains that there is no way, there is no fruit, there is no realisation, there is nothing and if there is nothing then how can there be something to introduce. It is a contradiction. For Dzogchen too there is nothing, nothing can be confirmed; even our true nature is beyond all explanation and introduction, so that there is nothing that exists. But if it is really like that then why are there teachings? How can we have realisation? How can we have knowledge? It seems that everything has no aim, that we are doing something useless. But this cannot be so, because Buddha taught, people followed his teaching and many became enlightened.

How can there be realisation if there is nothing? Even if there is nothing conceptually, it is possible to obtain knowledge. The way of obtaining it is very important and this explanation exists only in Dzogchen teachings, in no other tradition. In Dzogchen teachings it is possible for the master to introduce the student to knowledge; this does not mean that the master gives some power

or shows something, that is relative, but you may have experiences. In life we have infinite experiences; all that we know, we have learned through experience. We know that sugar is sweet, that fire is hot; we know the characteristics and functions of things. Why? Because we have had experience: we have eaten sugar and so we know what sweet taste is. If in life we had never had the experience of sweet taste how could we understand what it is like? Even if someone wanted to explain it to us it would be impossible. They could say, “Sweet is not salty or spicy,” and so on, but there are so many other possibilities we would never manage to understand what sweet is. You don’t need much sugar to understand, even a pinch is enough, and as soon as the sugar has come into contact with your tongue you learn what it is. This is what is called experience.

If everything can be discovered through experience why should not this be true of our real condition? So among the methods of Dzogchen teaching there is introduction, which does not lie only in explaining or showing something nor in doing magic. The explanations are relative and form part of oral transmission, which is necessary but not sufficient. We have body, voice and mind and oral transmission is related to the voice; symbolic transmission, which uses symbols like the mirror, the crystal and so on is related to the body, to the material level; direct transmission is on the level of the mind and in this case we use the experience and discover our true condition. So even as far as methods are concerned, we have to take into consideration the three existences of body, voice and mind and the respective characteristic experiences.

The experience of sensation is linked mainly to the physical body. If someone hits you, you feel pain, if you have sexual contact you feel a joyous sensation etc., and these experiences are related to the physical body like the majority of the experiences we usually have. I have already said that to understand what a

sweet taste is you need a bit of sugar to come in contact with your tongue: this is what is meant by the physical level. Then we can have experiences related mainly with the level of energy which are the experiences of clarity. In general our senses enter into contact with objects. This is related to clarity but with respect to clarity we also have the aspects of pure and impure vision which are always related to experiences linked to the level of energy. For example in the practices of the Higher Tantra we transform our dimension into a mandala and our being into deities: all our diverse functions, like the five aggregates, the five elements etc., manifest as personified deities. All this has to do with the level of energy, with clarity, and by using this experience we can obtain realisation.

Then there are the experiences of the mind. For example when we do Shine practice, or the calm state, what happens? What happens is that in the end we can stay in a calm state for a long time. What does this calm state represent? It represents the experience of emptiness. But when we are in emptiness thoughts come up. What does this represent? The manifestation of clarity. These manifestations are relative to the experiences of the mind. For example in the Sutra teachings, it is considered that emptiness is the absolute truth. How can one arrive at this state? By applying Shine and Lhagthong. So gradually one enters into the experience of emptiness and when we have greater capacity, through emptiness we can enter into the state of instant presence and really stay in the state of contemplation. So in Dzogchen teachings direct introduction also depends on the way of working with different experiences.

A famous Dzogchen master, Patrul Rinpoche, wrote a commentary to the three statements of Garab Dorje and to give an example of the first, Direct Introduction, he explained a Semdzin practice. In Dzogchen teachings there are many practices called Semdzins. *Sem* means mind; the mind represents thoughts,

thoughts represent our confusion; we think and we judge continuously and so we have a lot of confusion; *dzin* means to hold, this means when we have so many thoughts we do not follow them, we stay with our presence, and so we understand the condition of the mind; going beyond thoughts we see our true nature, so we discover what is the difference. These practices are called Semdzins.

There are twenty-one Semdzins that we use most of all and of these there are seven in particular of which one is called ‘Semdzin with the syllable PHAT’. PHAT is like a mantra, it is considered to be a very important syllable which has great power and that we use all the time, for example when we are doing the Chöd practice, because *chöd* means to cut, to cut away our ego. We always have a problem with our ego, and to go beyond it we use the sound PHAT, so that instantly we can enter into that state. This sound is used in many Dzogchen practices. During the practice thoughts arise which cause confusion. So even if at the beginning we find ourselves in instant presence after a bit we become distracted, and in this case we shout PHAT which frees us from confusion. So the sound PHAT is very important. This does not mean that you can use it all over the place. Some practitioners, every time they are in confusion and have thoughts shout PHAT, sometimes even going along the road or while they are doing something; they have understood the function and that it can be used for this aim, but they are not aware that it cannot be used in any circumstances.

There is a Tibetan saying which says that an evil spirit sleeping – while it is asleep a spirit can create no problems to anyone – can be awakened by the sound of PHAT, a mantra with the potentiality to communicate. You might not be able to awaken the spirit just by shouting, but the sound of PHAT has the power to communicate; so immediately the evil spirit wakes up and thinks, “Who is it? Who is calling me?” And so it turns up and says,

“You called, what you want?” But you don’t realise that it is a spirit communicating with you so it gets furious and can send you provocations. This is why we say that you shouldn’t use PHAT lightly, to avoid awakening the evil spirits. This is something very concrete, if you shout PHAT you can really communicate with the Eight Classes, with spirits, with local guardians and you can provoke them. For example when we do the Chöd practice we call on the Eight Classes, the spirits, all kinds of beings and then we shout PHAT and say, “Come! I am doing a Ganapuja! Enjoy! I am not afraid, I have no ego and so I offer myself!” In this way we train our minds but we do not really offer our bodies to anyone, we can’t unless we are Bodhisattvas or realised beings.

So in Tantrism and in Dzogchen teaching we say that we should be aware of our condition and we should respect it. If you think, “I am a Chöd practitioner, I have no ego, I want to offer my body to a tiger like a Bodhisattva,” you will have many problems. Your ego is related to the body but above all to the mind, and so it is very important to train yourself with your mind and think, “Now I will transfer, I will become like the Dakini Sinhamukha”. When you transfer, what happens to your body? It is no longer you but it is Sinhamukha, your consciousness is separated from your body. Now you think, “I am now offering my body to all”, so you transform yourself, empower the offering, and invite all the guests saying, “Please, enjoy”. This is a mental training, not a concrete thing. All these practices are linked to the level of the mind. So with the power of PHAT we can do anything. In Dzogchen many masters use the PHAT also to do direct introduction. Patrul Rinpoche explained this with reference to the first statement of Garab Dorje.

What is the second statement? When you receive direct introduction you might have the experience of instant presence or you might not, it is not always easy. But if you really do have the experience then it means you have this knowledge, so every time

you do Guruyoga you will find yourself in the state, then you sing the Song of the Vajra and integrate your whole existence in the state. This is the main practice and the most important in Dzogchen teaching. If you do this practice even without doing any other it is fine, there is no problem, but sometimes people need different practices because we live in society and in circumstances of the moment in which there exist many possibilities. But even if you do other practices do not forget the main point otherwise there is no sense in it.

When I say that in Dzogchen we can integrate anything I do not mean that we put everything together and create a great mess: if you have not discovered your true nature you have no base on which to integrate. Putting things together does not mean integrating but mixing up and the only benefit to be obtained is confusion. In society there is already a lot of confusion and there is no need to create more. So it is important to integrate, not to mix up. If then we discover that our knowledge is not precise, we can use other methods, above all those of the Dzogchen Longde because your understanding or knowledge is not 100% sure. You cannot decide to have obtained true knowledge because the decisions are always linked to the mind and to intellectual knowledge, today you can decide on a hundred things, but in future discover they are not true because you have not really discovered them. So you need to discover your true condition, you do not have to decide or believe something. Many people say, “You must have devotion for the master and the teaching, you must believe what the master says and apply it”. This means following blindly but it is not correct. If you discover really your own nature there is no need to force yourself to construct a credo and a faith in any intellectual way. Faith and devotion arise automatically with knowledge and you cannot change this faith, there is nothing to change.

For example I can show you this cup: now you have seen it, you know what it is because you have had direct contact, you

have discovered it through direct experience. If I now ask you to forget what you have seen and to change your mind thinking that it was a telephone, how can you change? You can't. And the same goes for faith and devotion, there is nothing to change or to create, they are things which are linked to our true knowledge. Until you have had true knowledge everything is unstable. Many people, when they are following a teaching, follow first one tradition then another and keep changing continually. Thinking there is something to change means not yet having the knowledge. Until one has true knowledge one has to learn, to follow teachings. In Dzogchen when we explain how a student following a teaching should behave, we say that at the beginning the student should behave like a bee which in the summer goes from flower to flower without being conditioned by the colours and without limiting itself to just one flower, trying and taking nectar from each one. We should follow the teaching in the same way.

I have already told you that I followed many masters for years until I encountered my master Changchub Dorje. After him I had no more need for other masters. Sometimes when there is a tantric initiation or some transmission connected with a particular lineage it may be interesting to receive it; or if there is some new method then we can learn it, but we do not look for the essence of the teaching because we already have it. Until we have discovered our true condition we must follow all teachings without limits, but once we have discovered it, we have no more need, then we are not limiting ourselves, if you feel free there is no need for limits, but why carry on searching when there is no more need?

On retreats we are not just trying to discover our true nature because we might have already discovered it, we are also learning how to integrate better, how we can become realised. For this there are many methods. From the times of Garab Dorje down to today, you can imagine how many years have passed

and how many beings have become realised along this path. The masters have handed down to the students their teachings and their experiences and so there are many things to learn, and many can be useful in order to obtain enlightenment more quickly. We do retreats for this reason not just for transmitting an introduction to new students. In order to make our knowledge sure we have Dzogchen Longde; this does not mean we practice Longde for the rest of our life but we practice until our knowledge is 100% sure. Why is Longde special in this way? Because its methods use all three experiences at the same time and this allows us to enter into 100% knowledge.

And then there is the third statement of Garab Dorje. Once we have become familiar enough with true knowledge, what we need is to integrate in this state and first of all we need to integrate while doing practice. When we do Guruyoga we sing the Song of the Vajra in that moment we integrate everything. But our life is not just singing the Song of the Vajra: after singing we get up, perhaps we go to the bar, to the toilet, to eat, we do many actions; so each moment try to be aware and to integrate in that state. It is not easy but it is not really difficult either and it is much easier than doing complicated practices every day. We don't need a particular place or time, we can integrate in any place or time; if we do not remain indifferent there is always this chance.

If you have not yet had perfect knowledge of your true nature it is a bit difficult to integrate but you can at least try not to get distracted in your daily life. There are two types of presence. One is linked to your attention. You think, "I must not be distracted, I must stay present". You combine every action with this attention: this is ordinary presence. The other is when you discover instant presence. We say instant because it is beyond judgement and ordinary time.

When we have discovered it we can repeat this experience and find it often, in particular when we do Guruyoga. We visual-

ise the white A and the *thigle* and then we relax in this presence (relaxing means no longer thinking about the A and the *thigle* but simply having them stay present). If we have knowledge of instant presence, at that moment we are in instant presence; if we have not, at least we are not distracted and we remain in ordinary presence. Then we sing the Song of the Vajra. This song has great power: in a Tantra it says that if we don't manage to get into instant presence we should relax and sing the Song of the Vajra. The Song of the Vajra helps us to discover or to enter into instant presence because it works on the level of energy; it is linked to the potentiality of all our chakras and has the power of mantra: so singing it can help us enter into the state. These are the methods for entering into instant presence.

In Dzogchen 'direct introduction' means to introduce the way of discovering instant presence. This is the main transmission of Guruyoga: after receiving it you can do Guruyoga seriously and find yourself in the state of contemplation. The root of the transmission of the majority of the practices or methods of Dzogchen such as the Semdzin or Rushen (*rushen* means to separate the mind from the nature of the mind) is direct introduction. When people ask if they can do Semdzin or Rushen practices I say, "If you have received the transmission of Guruyoga, then yes". Indeed the transmission of Guruyoga is the main point of Dzogchen. In order to follow this teaching you do not need to receive any kind of initiation; but if you practice Tantrism you do need initiations because initiations are the principle of the tantric system.

So what do you need in Dzogchen? If you have never received any transmission can you just read books and do the practices? No. It is not enough, you must receive transmission. Receiving transmission means receiving direct introduction, which in turn means first of all connecting your knowledge, your true condition to the energy of the lineage of the Dzogchen masters.

With the power of transmission you can reawaken your potentialities, your knowledge and your understanding, everything. Let us take as an example electric light. If we want light we have to hook up to the electrical system otherwise we don't get light. In the same way the lineage and transmission are essential. The teaching must be alive inside us, the knowledge we get just by reading books has no life, it is not enough to obtain realisation. Naturally you can read and study to prepare yourself to receive transmission and do practice, if you are interested there is nothing wrong in it but the main thing is direct introduction. When we do a retreat we always do direct introduction but there are many ways to do it, that is working with the experience of clarity, working on a physical level or working with the experience of emptiness. As is explained in the commentary by Patrul Rinpoche to the first statement of Garab Dorje, using the syllable PHAT we can experience emptiness.

DECEMBER 30TH

THE SIX LOKAS AND THE SOUND PHAT

Today we will continue the teaching that we began. We were saying that the three Vajras are the essence of everything. Here follow explanations about the three Vajras.

All the Tathagata and all realised beings are the mandala of the state of the body represented by the sound OM, which is then the manifestation of the Vajra of the Body. So when we do the DzogchenAti practice, the primordial state, we know that in the state of the OM are perfected all the aspects of the Vajra of the body. In the same way the essence of the mandala of the Vajra of the voice of all the Tathagatas of the three times manifests the syllable Ā; thus integrating in the sound of the long Ā is the state of the Vajra of the voice. Equally the essence of the state of the mind is represented by the sound HŪM so if we are in the sound HŪM of the primordial state we are in the state of the mind.

The three states of the Vajra of all enlightened beings are perfected in these three syllables: this means that in Atiyoga all the self-perfections, all the qualifications are contemporaneously in the same state of the three Vajras. Then we are in the state of the three Vajras. *Kadag* and *lhundrub* are the primordial purity and its potentiality: in the state of Samantabhadra both these conditions are perfected, so the state is beyond even concepts of vision and emptiness. Our infinite potentialities manifest aspects like the *thigle* which, while it is a manifestation, is beyond all concepts. Usually in the teaching of Guru Padmasambhav it says *thigle chenpo tazur medpa*: *tazur medpa* means without corners or angles. Angles represent limitations. For example three angles make a triangle, four a square, the absence of angles means being beyond all limitations.

The state of *Ati* or of primordial knowledge manifests the six syllables 'AA HA SHA SA MA. I have already explained that through the six syllables of Samantabhadra it is possible to liberate the Six Lokas produced by our emotions. These syllables are the essence of the universe and represent from the beginning the pure condition. What is this condition of our true base like? It is like a great space inside which, in the presence of secondary causes, something might manifest. And thus the *dang* or energy of our primordial state becomes manifest. This means that our true condition does not become a vision or a limited object, but when we are in dualism we have this vision. The manifestation of *dang* energy is like the apparition of colours in a crystal sphere. The crystal sphere, which represents the primordial state, is really colourless but when we look at it we can see various aspects because we are looking in a dualistic way, that is to say, "I am here and the sphere is there and I am looking at it." In this case if we put the crystal sphere on a red cloth then we will see it as red, on a blue cloth we will see it as blue and on a coloured cloth we will see the colours of the rainbow but its condition has never changed, it appears like this just because of our dualistic way of seeing. This is called *rig dang shar*, 'how everything manifests'.

Then there is 'A MA SA SHA HAA. There is a normal sequence of the six syllables but when we do the practice of purification of the Six Lokas we reverse it and the new sequence begins with the syllable of the Loka that we are purifying. This means that whichever Loka we find ourselves in, it is an illusion, a karmic vision. What needs to be done? We should not go in that direction because otherwise samsara will never end, we must go in the opposite direction. Going in the opposite direction means discovering the source, the origin, and when we are in the state of the origin we are in enlightenment. For this reason the six syllables follow an inverted order and so we purify our condition.

When we do the practice we first of all purify the cause of the Loka of the Devas. There are two types of Deva: one is made

up of the enlightened beings who have manifested the Sambhogakaya form for the benefit of all sentient beings. In fact enlightened beings have no form, but in the presence of secondary causes they manifest in a corresponding shape; this manifestation is called a Deva but it is a Deva beyond worldly condition and thus also beyond a dualistic condition. This kind of Deva is the path and on the basis of the way in which we apply the transformation we can obtain realisation. Another type of Deva is that of the Six Lokas.

There are three upper Lokas and three lower. The beings of the upper three Lokas have superior capacities and possibilities: these are the Devas, the Asuras and Human Beings. In these three conditions there are masters and teachings and so it is possible to apply teachings and obtain enlightenment. Then the lower Lokas are those of the Animals, the Pretas and the Infernal Beings and they have neither masters nor teachings because those beings do not have the capacity to follow them. In the teachings, above all in Dzogchen they do say that there is a manifestation of the Buddha of the Six Lokas – and so also a Buddha of the Animals, the Pretas and the Infernal Beings – but this doesn't mean that these Buddhas teach or that these creatures can have enlightenment. The Buddhas try to help the people who have relationships with the Dharma and with spiritual practices but in these conditions it is not easy to create a path and to obtain realisation.

The Six Lokas cannot be located in a geographical sense because they are not a physical dimension, they are relative to the potentiality of karma. We all have the potentialities of the Six Lokas. For example we all in daily life have the chance to get angry and so we accumulate rage which is the infernal cause. Then we feel attachment: the great majority of people are distracted by attachment and create so many problems, and if we accumulate a lot of this cause one day in the presence of sec-

ondary causes we might have the vision of a Preta. If today we try to see where Pretas are or where the Infernal Beings are, we never find them and so we can say that they do not exist but the primary cause exists and when the primary cause combines with the secondary causes that dimension can easily manifest.

We believe firmly in our human vision because now we are humans; but after death we will not be humans any more and will be in the state of *bardo* and in the state of *bardo* all the sentient beings are the same. At the moment you are thinking, “I am a human being and humans are more developed than animals.” This is true, because you know how to follow teaching, you know how to practice, you know many things while your dog does not have this capacity; but this is the condition of now whereas after death when we are in the state of *bardo* this will end. For example a cock will crow in the morning and always will do it at the same time without needing a clock because it has that kind of knowledge. And cows in the pasture eat grass and find the taste of grass good but if we try to imitate the cow and eat grass we do not like the taste. In the state of *bardo* however, all animals lose their relative capacities and there is no longer any difference between them; it is simply that as humans it means perhaps we have had a greater accumulation of positive karma than animals and in the state of *bardo* we will find it easier than animals to find secondary cause in order to improve. This is the only difference.

So it is important that we understand what is meant by ‘human vision’. We have infinite potentiality of this type and there is no rule about what we will become when we die. Many believe that after we die we become kings or princes: you might have this cause but you also have the cause to become a dog. Perhaps the cause for becoming an animal is inferior to that of humans because now you are human beings but we do not know what type of secondary cause will manifest. Even in our daily life we do not know what causes will manifest and what problems

will come up. For example yesterday morning I had no problems, I felt really well and at midday I went to the swimming pool but in the afternoon I began to feel not too well, and in the evening when we came here for the practice it was very damp and so when I got back home I had a cold. In the night I took some medicines but I have got worse. Who would have thought yesterday that I would have got a cold? So we don't know what secondary causes we may encounter and even less in the state of *bardo*. Now we are human and we know that secondary causes exist and as a consequence we attempt to be aware and to be careful but in the state of *bardo* if you are not good practitioners you are not free but like a feather in the wind have no guarantee about whether you will be blown left or right, up or down. Our accumulation of the causes of the Six Lokas is infinite and this is why in Dzogchen teachings the purification of the Six Lokas is considered to be very important. There are many different ways of doing it. Here we will be explaining one which is related to the practice we do normally. In the *terma* explained by Changchub Dorje there are three or four types of practice and I myself have received two or three different ones through dreams. So this is a very important practice.

'A MA SA SHA HA A. We visualise these syllables of yellow light which represents the Ratna family and with the energy of that manifestation we purify the accumulation of the passion of pride which causes reincarnation as a Deva. This condition is not subject to great suffering as the others are, it is a condition of enjoyment, but in the long term of their existence the accumulation of positive karma is exhausted: since there is only enjoyment and no problems the Deva feel no need to practice and do not even recognise suffering, so they spend their time enjoying them-

selves for thousands and thousands of year because their lives are not short like that of human beings. But even if they lived for ten thousand years – which is a great deal to us – with every day that passes there are no longer ten thousand: when time has a limit, time passes somehow and one day the death arrives and enjoyment is at an end. In general the Devas have a good amount of clarity and so about a week before they die, they get to know that their enjoyment is at an end and at that point they also discover that they have used up all their positive karma; now they are left with just the negative karma and so when they die and are in the state of *bardo* it is very difficult for them to be reborn into the condition of Devas or Human Beings. So when Devas discover through their clarity that they will die in a week they discover that they will be reborn into the three lower reigns and then they experience great and acute suffering. This is the suffering of the Devas: to know that in a week they will die and will fall into the three lower states. And it is not just a presentiment, they will fall and there will suffer for a time that seems infinite. The reign of the Devas is still samsara and even if they seem like divinities Devas can only be divinities for a limited time even though this is a really long time. In the end they are still in samsara and they have enormous problems. Indeed we never ask to be reborn as Devas.

A similar kingdom is that of the Asuras: they too have the chance to have contact with masters and with teachings and transmission but they are distracted too. Devas just enjoy themselves and feel no desire to practise; Asuras on the other hand are the products of jealousy, they feel a great jealousy of the Devas because they feel they are superior and they want to be on their level, they struggle and fight in continuation, they create problems and have no time for practice.

Here it says that we can also become Devas but obviously we should not go in that direction we should rather practise in

order to overturn things: changing direction we purify one of the five aggregates, that of sensations, and in that way the state of our true nature manifests Ratnasambhava. The infinite quantity and quality wisdom which corresponds to it is called the ‘wisdom of equanimity’. In relation to our five elements we purify the Earth element and find ourselves in a pure dimension.

A ’A MA SA SHA HA. We begin with the syllable A which is related to the Asuras. The action is relative to the manifestation of the Karma family. True knowledge is always a part of our qualification, there is nothing mistaken but when we do not have presence and knowledge the emotion of jealousy manifests and the result is that we fight and struggle: this is the kind of beings that are called Asuras. When we overturn this condition purifying it through knowledge and understanding, the aggregate of action that Tibetans call *dujed* (*dujed* means to act but not directly; it is the condition of going in the direction of action) is manifesting the family Tönyöd Druppa with Amoghasiddhi, one of the five Dhyani Buddhas. The wisdom is that of perfect action and the purified element is that of air. This should give you the idea of how this practice is linked to the five aggregates and the five elements, the five wisdoms and the five Dhyani Buddhas and so on. You do not have to proceed in a too intellectual way learning all the words by heart, they are pretty relative; but knowing that we have five aggregates and five elements we also know that once these have been purified the Five Dhyani Buddhas and the five wisdoms can manifest. Here it is explained how all this is connected.

HA A ’A MA SA SHA. When you begin with HA this means purifying the human dimension. Some people don’t like to purify away the possibility of being reborn among humans because they like this condition and consider it to be a good one. If you are

free to be reborn into the human condition this is fine. Indeed if you have this capacity you have no problems even if you will to be reborn as Deva or Asura. But if this reincarnation comes from the potentiality of your karma then it makes no difference if you are born as Human, Deva or Asura you are still in samsara and suffering. The human condition is not always negative because it also contains positive aspects which we enjoy, but the nature of the human condition is suffering. The suffering of human beings consists above all with birth then illnesses, the problems of old age and of death. These are all natural problems, then there are many non natural problems. For example you are all taken with the idea of having a house and finally manage to build one in Tashigar but even if this seems a happy moment in which all is going well then you discover that there are many problems among yourselves and with the local inhabitants. And it's not just houses but anything can cause problems. For example when you are young you may meet a boy or a girl and in the beginning you feel like you are in heaven, you want to be together all the time; you want to sit on the same chair together even if it might break. You want always to be in a single dimension but this does not correspond to reality. In fact if there are two people there are two dimensions always, but at the beginning you are blinded by passion and you cannot see things the way they are; then as time passes after two or three years you want to eat sitting on separate chairs; after some time even one bed is not enough and in the end even one house is not right and you want to separate saying, "We have different ways of looking at things and different habits, we are too different so we have lots of problems; now I have discovered what the problem is I won't make the same mistake again". Then you fall in love again and fall into passion, "This time the situation is perfect, please master, marry us!" "OK, but remember that you are two separate dimensions. If you create a relationship of true love from the beginning it

means that you know you have separate dimensions and you respect each other; you are aware that you want to be together and spend your life together collaborating and respecting each other. In this case there is the possibility of creating a fine family. But if you just follow the emotions and become slaves to them it will not last”.

At the beginning all seems to go well and everything is pleasant, but in the end you discover suffering. Some young people in modern society are so much in love that when something is going wrong they commit suicide. This is suffering not joy; but it is only an example of our condition, human beings have so many problems. If you have nothing you have the suffering of having nothing, others have things and you try to have something. But when you have possessions you still have problems. This is why the great teacher Patrul Rinpoche said, “If you have a goat then you have goat problems, if you have a box of tea then you have tea problems”. If you have a lot of money then naturally your problems will be greater. So in fact anything will present you with problems and from problems come suffering not joy. For this reason unless you return freely to the human condition it is better that you purify it.

Most of the time we are in our dualistic vision but if we do not fall into this dualistic vision we can have the state of self-liberation and this state of knowledge is Samantabhadra. We can have the quality and quantity wisdom and manifest the pure dimension of the five elements. These are the three upper states. When we do the purification practice, in general we purify the three lower states double or triple the amount we purify the other three because they bring a harder suffering.

SHAHAA’AMA SA. The seed syllable SHA is used to liberate the Animal Kingdom and the six syllables appear blue. The pure dimension of light of all the Tathagatas is self-perfected

in the quality but the absence of this knowledge becomes ignorance. The consequence of ignorance is reincarnation in the Animal world. If we overturn this condition the dimension is purified, the aggregate of the form is self-liberated, the state of the pure dimension manifests as Vairochana and the wisdom of the Dharmadhātu manifests in the dimension of the element space. And so we realise that state.

SA SHA HAA 'A MA. Now the initial seed syllable is SA and the six spaces of Samantabhadra manifest in a red colour which represents the self-perfected energy of the Padma family; when we do not have this knowledge we fall into attachment and the consequence is reincarnation among the Pretas. When we overturn this there is a recognition, whatever we see we have that understanding which is represented by Amitabha, and the manifestation of wisdom is discriminating wisdom. The element of fire is purified and we remain in that purified dimension.

MA SA SHA HAA 'A. Here MA represents the purification of the Infernal Condition. The six syllables manifest the colour white, symbol of the energy of the state of self-perfection of the Vajra family. When we do not have this knowledge we are in ignorance and as a consequence we produce the infernal conditions of heat and cold. When we overturn this into knowledge and understanding, the condition of our conscience, our true state, becomes Vajrasattva, the wisdom manifests as mirror-like wisdom and we find ourselves in the pure dimension of the element of water.

This is the explanation of the relationship between the Six Lokas, six wisdoms etc. When you have the translation of this text the practice is very easy and there is no need to remember everything by heart. When you do the practice you do not need

to think of all of this all the time, you just need to have the presence of the three Vajras are the seed-syllables of the Six Lokas, and at the end to stay in the presence of the purified dimension of the Six Lokas.

The six syllables of Samantabhadra 'A A H A S H A S A M A are pure dimensions from the very beginning but when we do not have this understanding we are in the Six Lokas. It is not the six syllables of Samantabhadra that create these problems, it is our emotions, but the two things are related because through this knowledge we realise the six states of Samantabhadra. When we do *ru log*, that is to say we overturn, and we know how to get into the state of Samantabhadra we sing the six lines one by one. At the end of each line while we are in the state of contemplation we shout PHAT and in this way we can discover instant presence. This is a kind of direct introduction carried out by ourselves. Naturally, if we purify the cause of the Six Lokas we will always have more clarity and so a greater chance of entering into instant presence. *Kechig rangdrol* means that we can enter the state of self-liberation instantly. *Emaho* means wonderful. We do not need lots of time, effort and complicated practices, each time we sound PHAT we enter into instant presence, and this is fantastic because instant presence is the state of Samantabhadra and represents also the state of the master, the true state of Guruyoga. This is why we say *Emaho*. In the *Tsigsum Nedeg*, written by Patrul Rinpoche, it says that when one shouts PHAT there is the state of *hedewa* and immediately after that the state of naked *rigpa*: this is the state of Dharmakaya, now you have encountered the state of Dharmakaya and this is wonderful. *Chökui rigpa emaho*: “the instant of pure presence of the Dharmakaya is fantastic”. This is the exact translation. But someone in Hong Kong translated into Chinese that the state of *hedewa* is the state of Dharmakaya. This is wrong. *Hedewa* is a state of emptiness, it is not the state of *rigpa*, only after the state of

hedewa do you get the state of *rigpa* which is the state of Dharma-kaya and is wonderful. So they translated it badly and what is more at the end they have translated “this is the state of Dharmakaya, you must say *emaho*”. Why did they mistranslate? Because there are many invocations to Padmasambhava which begin with *emaho* so they thought this was a kind of special prayer and said that you should repeat it three times but in the book it does not say that. This is an example of the fact that it is very important to know the meaning of the words.

The sound PHAT is a secret sound, it is like a weapon to cut dualistic vision. For example in the Mañjushri tantra it says *yeshe tsöncha*, which means ‘the weapon of wisdom’. Mañjushri holds a sword which symbolizes the cutting of ignorance. Certainly one cannot cut ignorance with a blade but this is no ordinary blade, it is the blade of wisdom, and it means that we are in instant presence and with this weapon anything can be cut.

The shining weapon of wisdom is the non duality of method and prajña. This means that the sound PHAT is the non duality of *thab* and *sherab*, which represent also the aspect of solar and lunar energy. Solar energy is the condition of emptiness, lunar energy is the method, a more concrete manifestation, more material. When we read a letter in Sanskrit we say it is a ‘letter with life’. For example in the West *c* and *a* make a complete sound pronounced *ca*, while *c* is not a complete sound because it has no vowel, it lacks life. So a complete sound represents lunar energy or the method, something concrete. A letter without life, that is without a vowel, represents solar energy, or prajña, or emptiness. When we say PHAT, first there is PHA which is a complete word, and then T which is not complete. We do not pronounce it *phat* but *phet* because of the final T; and it is not pronounced *phata* because there is no final vowel. This is an example of non duality in dualistic vision. The same goes for HIC, a sound we use when doing the Phowa practice. All of

these sounds are aspirated: an aspirated sound is already strong and even more so without the final vowel. This is the meaning.

All becomes integrated into this non dual sound which thus signifies instant presence. *Thigle nyagchig emaho*: this is the unique *thigle*, that means our own only state, our real condition. Fantastic, we find ourselves in that state!

Then we have different experiences: the experience of sensation, linked to the physical body; the experience of clarity linked to the aspect of energy; the experience of *mitogpa* or emptiness related to the mind. There are infinite experiences but their nature is not dual, it is not different, and we do not just say this on a philosophical level thinking, “Their nature is the same,” but we discover it when we are in the instant presence. All these experiences are non dual in the one state of instant presence, there is no separation or diversity. This knowledge is the supreme knowledge of the state of Samantabhadra. *Samaya gya gya*: this means that we should keep this teaching secret and we should practice it.

DECEMBER 31ST

THE THREE VAJRAS

I have given you the teaching called *Ati Gongpa Gojed, The Opening of the Primordial State*. In this teaching it is important to understand the meaning of the Vajras which represent the state of all enlightened beings and also our true nature, our true state. Even though our true nature is represented by the three syllables of the Vajra, when we go to the essence we just have A, so it is very important to know how to develop and how to get back to the essence. Being in the A means being in the essence; by developing things a bit, from the A we get OM Ā HŪM; by continuing to develop we have 'AA HA SHA SA MA, the six syllables of Samantabhadra, and developing yet further we get to the Song of the Vajra. All this represents our true nature and our potentiality, so it is very important to know the true sense of the three Vajras. At the same time this teaching explains in detail what the five aggregates, the five Dhyani Buddhas and so on all represent. You have listened to this text and perhaps you cannot remember everything but this is not the main thing, the important thing is to understand the general sense. Later, since I have transmitted this teaching, you can have the translation so you will know how to do these things in a precise way. So remember the main thing is A and OM Ā HŪM, this is the essence.

Even if I give many teachings you have to understand the essence. A tree has a trunk so first of all you need to have very clear what is the trunk; then when you have some time, the possibility and the desire to enter into detail of the branches, leaves, blossoms, seeds etc. you can do so, because you already have the trunk. If you think that the blossom is the main part and you

dedicate yourself only to that you cannot understand the general situation: you can learn what the flower is like but you do not have a global knowledge and thus you do not enter into the true sense. For this reason I always tell you to learn the sense of the Guruyoga with the white A. Doing practice means finding yourself in that state even only for a few seconds, this is always Guruyoga, then if you want to develop it with OM Ā HŪM, with 'A A H A S H A S A M A and with the Song of the Vajra there is always the possibility of doing that.

After giving me this teaching in a dream my master Changchub Dorje was seated in position staring into space and he said, "Now we are in the state of the three Vajras"; then he sounded OM Ā and HŪM. This means that we too can practice in this way. Sounding OM we imagine at the forehead in a *thigle* of five colours a white OM appears which represents the state of unification of the body of all the enlightened beings and masters, and we relax into the state in instant presence; this means that we are also integrating in that state. Then we sound Ā and visualise a red Ā at our throat, with the presence that this represents the state of unification with the voice of all masters and all enlightened beings. If you have received many teachings from various masters belonging to different traditions, when you do the OM Ā HŪM practice you can unify the three Vajras of all your masters. There is no problem in unifying, in fact when you unify and you are in the state it means that you maintain the samaya of all the teachings received by the various masters. Keeping the samaya means that all these teachings for you become positive so as to achieve realisation.

Usually in a teaching, particularly in the tantric style, we receive many initiations. The initiation consists of the fact that a master presents to you the way to achieve realisation and then does an empowerment so as to give you this possibility. Just think for a bit: why does the master introduce the way to you?

Why does he do the empowerment so that you can have that function? Because in this way you can apply and become enlightened; in this case naturally you have the commitment to maintain the samaya. Many people believe that an initiation is like a blessing and today many masters give initiations in this way but it is not serious. If you have received initiations from many masters but do no practice it means you are not maintaining the samaya and so what benefit can there be? You are merely creating obstacles to your enlightenment. In that case does the blessing work? If you follow Dzogchen teachings you must be aware. This does not mean that you have to do all the practices, that is impossible, but you know that the teaching, the transmission and the initiation are all linked to the master. For example if you have received the Kalachakra initiation who did you get it from? Certainly not from Kalachakra, because you can neither see or meet Kalachakra; the concrete contact you got through your master. So it is very important to unify with the three states of your masters. If you do this going right to the root you can have no problems and you will maintain the samaya. Otherwise you would have to do all the practices that you have received.

If you receive a Kalachakra or Hevajra initiation from a master who is not Dzogchen and you ask him if it is enough to do the practice of Guruyoga in the Dzogchen way, that is by unifying all the masters, rather than doing the Kalachakra practice or the Hevajra practice, that master, since he is not a Dzogchen teacher will answer no and will tell you that you have to do that specific practice. Dzogchen is rather more open and has a different point of view. Perhaps some of you have already had this experience: some master tells you to do the practice in a pure way, he is not pleased that you are following Dzogchen teaching because Dzogchen is more open and does not correspond to his way of seeing things. So it is important that you understand the situation: in Dzogchen we always say to work with circumstances. What is

more you should not tell another master what I teach you according to the Dzogchen method; if you want to do so with a Dzogchen master there is no problem but other masters are limited and you can get into a great confusion.

In summary, the unification of all masters in the state of the three Vajras is a Dzogchen method which does not exist in other traditions. We do Guruyoga in order to obtain enlightenment, then we unify the state of all Gurus in order that all the transmissions become positive for the development of our knowledge. We do our best to obtain enlightenment without limits. But other traditions do not have this point of view, they teach Guruyoga in the way that is specific to their tradition. If you follow the Gelugpa tradition for example they teach Guruyoga with Tsongkhapa, who was their founder, and with the lineage of the *Hevajra* and *Guhyasamaja* tantras. There are many tantras in the Gelugpa tradition but *Guhyasamaja* is considered to be one of the most important, so only this lineage, which has passed from one Gelugpa master to another is considered to be the lineage of the masters and of the Guruyoga, and it has nothing to do with the Nyingmapa, Kagyüpa and Sakyapa traditions.

The Dalai Lama is more open in his teaching and in his practices and does not like sectarianism, and you see how many problems he encounters today in relation to the guardians called Gyalpo. Some Gelugpas are fixated with these guardians because they believe that they should protect only the Gelugpa tradition and control the other traditions, stopping them from growing and developing. This is their way of looking at things. So you should understand how things are and avoid discussing with other traditions; if you are really convinced by Dzogchen, follow this teachings and do your best. If you try to convince Gelugpas or other traditions you will never succeed but you will create many problems. People who have followed other traditions, when they meet Dzogchen teachings show themselves to be very limited:

for example when I explain that we do the Guruyoga unifying all masters, they say that according to their master one cannot mix the various traditions because it can create problems. And they do not just say it but they really believe it; it is as if they were the followers of a sort of political party in which only their group counts and in which the only true way of seeing things is their own.

We have to understand our condition. If we think of a master we must understand him to be an enlightened being, otherwise like Padmasambhava said, anyone who considers his master to be a dog will be realised like a dog. It does not matter that the master be fully enlightened or not, you should have that pure vision, and so you will get something. If you consider the master to be a realised being, knowing that he is realised beyond all conflicts and problems, how can there be any conflicts between schools and traditions among the enlightened?

So we need to really train ourselves with pure vision and do our best. Unifying all the three Vajras in OM Ā HŪM we maintain the samaya. This practice has no need for complicated rituals, you can do it in any circumstances. For example, today you go to the park and you sit in a nice place enjoying this pleasant circumstance. If you have the sensation that it is a pleasant circumstance you can do something nice, for example you can pronounce separately OM Ā and HŪM doing the visualisation and unifying the state of all your masters; then you relax completely and sing the Song of the Vajra. If you have not got such a possibility you can sing 'A A HA SHA SAMA or even OM Ā HŪM. Singing means you integrate your vibrations, your feelings, everything goes into instant presence. So it is a very simple practice. The most important thing to do in everyday life is always to do the Guruyoga with the white A.

We can pronounce the sounds OM Ā HŪM separately or even unifying them. In the Medium and Long Thun at the mo-

ment of Guruyoga we sound OM which transforms into Ā which transforms into HŪM and dissolve them into our three seats: in this way we integrate them with the instant presence and continue in this state. If you have some visions – which can be in real life or through dreams – or if you feel this is a very important moment, the best thing you can do is Guruyoga both in the short form with A or in a slightly longer way with OM Ā HŪM: integrate unifying everything and remaining in the state is the most important thing. For example you might think, “This is a fantastic vision, this is a pure vision, there is Padmasambhava! Padmasambhava help me, please help me, I want to become enlightened in this life but if I don’t manage to when I am in the *bardo* please come and help me!” Many people complicate things in this way, falling into a dualistic vision without knowing that the true condition of Guru Padmasambhava is in the three Vajras. At that moment the important thing is to unify the three Vajras and not to remain in a dualistic vision. This is the essential way to do this practice.

In the dream related to this text my master Changchub Dorje said that this is a teaching of Guru Padmasambhava, that the essence of the practice are the three Vajras and that in the knowledge of the six syllables of Samantabhadra everything is included. All this is unifying in the state of the A, and doing the A practice is everything. This is why I always insist with my students to do Guruyoga with the white A because it is the essence.

When I asked why the six syllables of Samantabhadra are in a different order my master replied that this represents the overturning of samara. I had other things to ask but owing to secondary circumstances for some reason I woke up. As soon as I woke the dream came back into my mind and I tried to understand if I remembered the verses: and since I remembered them as if I had learnt them by heart, I wrote them down immediately and later I used them myself as a main practice.

THE ESSENCE OF THE TEACHINGS

I have received many teachings like this one which goes to the essence. In the teaching the main thing is not to do some kind of Puja. Many people love receiving initiations, doing Pujas with lots of preparations and so on, because then they feel they are doing something wonderful but nobody can become totally enlightened merely by doing Pujas, because Pujas are secondary. However some people who do not know the teaching or who have no possibility of freely following a path, in participating in a Puja they have the sensation that something wonderful is involved. In particular in the West a majority are fixated on certain sensations and feel 'vibrations' thinking that the master who gives them is amazing; but there are many fine masters and many valid teachers who do not give out 'vibrations'. Sometimes when there is an initiation in tantric style 'vibrations' might also be used as a secondary cause to increase that type of knowledge and for this reason there are many very precise explanations about the preparations for some rituals. For the master it is necessary to prepare an elegant throne, fine vestments, and an elegant hat. So in front of a master seated on an elegant throne with elegant clothes and an elegant hat people feel that he is a fantastic master. But the same effect can be obtained with a stupid master; put on a decorated throne in that way he can seem fantastic, and just the same people can feel 'vibrations'. But this is not the main point; sometimes vibrations have an aim like in tantric teachings, but even in this case it is not the main point.

Today modern society follows a modern style. For example there used in the old days to be only small mandalas, perhaps painted and they were kept in a *samatog*, a small basket. The masters who transmitted the teachings needed the mandalas for the images of the divinities. For example to explain the form of Kalachakra is not easy, so first there is an explanation as an

introduction and then a picture, “Look, this is the figure of Kala-chakra; the dimension of this manifestation is not impure, it is pure and it is called a mandala; look this is a mandala”. So in this way you can enter into that knowledge and by applying it in this way you can have that pure vision. The images of the divinities and mandalas, and vajras, bells, malas, kapalas, all of these used to be kept in a *samatog*, a personal basket not opened by anyone else. So the practitioners, and above all the Dzogchen masters, kept these objects hidden. If you look at an image of Garab Dorje, of Mañjuśrimitra, Sri Simha, Vimalamitra, near them you will always find a *samatog* which contained the secret objects, and when a student was interested in receiving the path of transformation, the master brought them out and showed them to give the introduction and the empowerment, so the student received the teaching and entered into that knowledge. Everything was secret not public.

But later in Tibet the Lower Tantra became much developed in which there are mainly the Namnang Ngöndchang, Dorje Tsemo and Palchog practices which demand very rich mandalas, so when the rite is carried out the mandala is constructed with sand or it is painted – there are various ways of doing it. In Yoga Tantra and the Lower Tantra great use is made of all these preparations to create atmosphere. So in Tibet, Yoga Tantra became much developed and one of the last kings of Tibet, much involved with the Dharma, encouraged the development of tantric teaching but made a new law saying that the Lower Tantra could be taught publicly since it was very similar to the Sutra teachings, while the Upper Tantra could not be taught publicly. For example the majority of Tara Pujas is connected to the system of the Lower Tantra so when those rites are carried out one should not eat meat, garlic or such things, and everything needs to be very clean and so on; this way is very similar to the Sutra system.

In the Upper Tantra such limits are broken. For example when we do a Ganapuja we use alcohol and meat and also ornaments

made of bones, kapalas and so on, which does not correspond to Sutra principles. So Tibetans follow the law which lasted after the king died because it is linked to spiritual teachings. Gradually the masters made changes, dressing up the Upper Tantra with the clothes of the Lower Tantra and began to put statues of gold and silver in the temples of Kalachakra and Hevajra and even built mandalas as big as temples. And today even if people do not do the practices, groups of monks go around constructing mandalas in theatres or in some public places as if it were some kind of show. People are curious about such things but they do not correspond to the teachings, the same goes for many other Pujas belonging to Tantrism which should really be done in a very serious way and in proper places in order to carry out the transformations. But today they are held in theatres with instruments and chanting as if it were a spectacle. Many monasteries do this so as to get money and to survive but if we think seriously about the teachings it is not right. The maintaining of monasteries does not reflect the aims of the Dharma: the monasteries can develop today but tomorrow they may be destroyed, as happened in Tibet for Sera, Galden, or Drepung which in the past had thousands of monks. The monastery of Drepung had over ten thousand but over a few days everything disappeared. This is not the true teaching which rather involves understanding and knowledge, and this knowledge should grow in those interested.

As I told you yesterday Buddha prophesised that in the end his teachings would be reduced to mere exterior form: the monasteries seem to be monasteries and the monks to be monks but serious teaching is not there. These are the signs of Kaliyuga, and they are by no means good signs. But sometimes there are particular circumstances, such as when a monastery does not have the money to support itself and so it is not easy to decide. Once Dorzong Rinpoche asked my opinion about sending around a group of monks to do demonstrations. My reply was negative

and they did not do it. To some people I cannot say anything because I do not have the right to. But when there are problems regarding the Dzogchen teachings I am quick to criticise any master who is doing something really negative. Indeed it is most important to maintain the teachings not just for ourselves but also for the future generations. This is not easy because there are so many traditions in Buddhism, even in Tibet. Last year we celebrated Vesak in Merigar. Vesak is an important Buddhist feast, called that way by the Hinayana school which always carries out this ceremony, and in Italy many Buddhists celebrate it. On that occasion we saw how many traditions there were. One day we organised a Puja in which all the various traditions took part and for most of the time I felt like a foreigner because I saw many things I had never seen before in my life and they seemed strange to me. So it is not easy to know everything, in Buddhism there are so many traditions.

THE RIGHT WAY TO PRACTISE

But when we become Dzogchen practitioners, first of all we try to have that knowledge and then we integrate with the knowledge itself or rather we integrate our life in the practice so that practice and daily life do not stay two separate things. If they stay separate we cannot obtain benefits from the teachings. When we are integrated, we also feel responsible for maintaining the teachings and the transmission because we are not alone, there are also the future generations: and even if you do not have children, humanity continues. So if you understand the importance of the teachings you should conserve them. For this reason we need the collaboration of all the practitioners of the Community. There is no need to form groups or struggle against each other. Community means finding ourselves with the same spirit, in the

same knowledge, in the same understanding and travelling together; if you travel together you have to collaborate.

Say we are travelling in a large boat, from here to Japan, for example, it takes a long time. There are hundreds of us in the boat and at the beginning we don't know each other then gradually we get to know each other and in our life aboard many problems arise. In this case we cannot just think the problems concern others because the problems can cause us harm too and so we have to collaborate. We respectfully ask those who have the greatest capacity to help us and if I have capacities I use them. This is called collaboration, and it is very important until we reach where we are going. Usually a community is a group of people who practice more or less the same principle, for example Buddhism. The Dzogchen Community involves all those people who are interested in the teaching and who are travelling on this path, and we consider it to be very important. So we collaborate and increase our knowledge and our capacities. Perhaps we have selfish ideas but if we observe ourselves and face the situation we can overcome the problems. If we do not think of the general interest and overall situation we stay closed in our personal convictions and in our individual interest. This is egoism. It is like being in a concrete pipe. And how does it feel in there? You can only see a tiny bit of sky above your head, everything around is made of cement, so you can't be very happy. In much the same way when we limit ourselves too much and remain isolated in our egoism it is an unhappy condition. The root of all this is our limits and what we have to do is free ourselves. Freeing ourselves means getting out of the concrete pipe and being on a mountain top in the fine weather. See how much difference there is between the two conditions. Limiting oneself is not a happy condition but we do not understand that when we are in it. So in Dzogchen teaching we always say the first thing to do is to free ourselves.

Sometimes you feel free but you think that you have to do this and that, you think the master said to do this or that practice. But the master said to try to be aware and when you are aware you can also relax, you can enjoy life and all pleasant situations. If you are always wound up and too concentrated on your tensions, even if there is something nice you don't even notice, everything is black, everything against you. I had that experience when I was in Sikkim. My brother and a monk in my service had returned to Lhasa but on their arrival they were seized by the Chinese authorities and put in prison because I was in India and they were convinced I was plotting against the Chinese authorities. In that period there were groups of Tibetans who were fighting against the Chinese. I was doing nothing but the Chinese also seized my father and put him in prison. I listened to the news about the situation in Tibet and each day they were worse and worse.

Finally I decided to return because I was innocent, I had not done anything and I thought that if I went back they would let my father go. So I got to the Tibetan border where I met some Tibetans who were working in the Chinese offices. I knew one family very well and so I stayed with them. These friends told me that if I wanted they could help me to organise the return journey to Tibet, they would find me a car, but they thought that since the situation was so confused it was better for me not to go back since they might put me in prison too. So I decided to wait a week for further news which kept on getting worse. I lived with this family and did lots of Tara Pujas but each night I had many negative dreams which indicated that if I returned to Tibet I would have serious problems. So in the end I stayed in Sikkim. My neighbour belonged to a noble Tibetan family, his wife and his children were in Lhasa too and when there were rumours that she too had been imprisoned he was mad with anxiety. I was worried because if he went mad then it could happen to me too:

at night I was unable to sleep, everything seemed to be weighing on me, to be against me; so I would get up but obviously there was nothing. In sleep I had the same sensations and so I thought this was the beginning of madness. Using my awareness I began to practice Yantra Yoga so day by day I practised and I overcame the problem.

This is an example: when people are wound up and when there are lots of secondary causes, certainly one's own situation deteriorates. So knowing that everything is relative, it is very important to remain aware; perhaps we start giving too much importance to some things but this is just our consideration because in reality nothing is important. For example someone says he cannot come to the teaching today because he has an important appointment and perhaps for him it is important. So he goes but on the way he has an accident which stops him from getting there, so an ambulance comes and takes him off to the hospital with its sirens wailing. In this case he cannot say, "I've got an important appointment I can't come to hospital". If it was really important he would have to go instead of going to hospital. You see everything is just our consideration so do not give too much importance to things, everything is relative.

Buddha said in his teaching that everything is an illusion, everything is unreal, like one great dream. When we have a long and terrible dream we feel very agitated but when we wake up we find it was just a dream and we are pleased. In the same way when we arrive in the state of *bardo* we find that our whole life has been one long dream. If we can discover it through our practice we will not be afraid and will not have great attachments and problems. All problems are relative to our ideas, to the fact of giving too much importance to something. For example some people have great attachment to their bodies, they are always worried about illness or physical problems, and this means they are not relaxed. If you are like that as soon as a secondary cause

presents itself, even a minimal one, you can have problems. A simple example, you do not notice that while you were asleep something has stung you and when you wake up you start thinking, “Aargh what is it? I got some illness, I must rush to the doctor!” So the doctor prescribes a medicine, or some cream of some kind, you try one then another and so on and perhaps in the end the small sting became a big serious problem.

The same holds for the relationships between people, if you have tensions with a particular person, as soon as you see him you think he is looking at you in a weird way and immediately because of your tension you look at him strangely. Obviously he notices and when you meet again he has the same idea and so gets wound up. So you can develop your tension and then at a certain point you start to exchange insults. From nothing you can create so many serious problems; these are all manifestations of our tension. So it is important to train ourselves to stay with presence. If we are present these tensions dissolve because we notice as soon as they come up. Usually we don’t notice because we do not observe ourselves. This is the way to practice. Practice, particularly in Dzogchen teaching, consists of being present in our daily life.

Sometimes people get wound up about practice and then they get tensions. Many do not know how to practise in a relaxed way. Particularly the practices of tantric transformations, but it is really important to be relaxed about it. In Dzogchen teaching we advise those who don’t feel like practising not to, whereas in the Sutra it is described as a sort of laziness and if you don’t fight it the laziness will win and take over your life. This is the point of view of Buddhism in general, but in Dzogchen we teach in a different way; if you really don’t feel like practising – and here we are talking in particular about formal practices – don’t do it, it is not a problem but be aware. Not practising and being distracted by every little thing is negative; so don’t practise, but be

present. It doesn't matter if you don't practise today; if you don't feel like it this means there must be a reason, and until you discover it you will not overcome the problem. So don't practise but relax and perhaps you will discover why you don't want to practise, and so perhaps tomorrow or the next day you will get over it. You should never force yourself to practise, you should always respect yourself.

In the Sutra it says we should practise as if our hair was on fire; if our hair is on fire we cannot think of putting out the fire slowly, we intervene immediately. But doing this in Dzogchen means forcing it and if we force ourselves we will never reach the essence of the teaching. If we are practising and during the reciting of a mantra, for example, we think, "I have to recite this mantra ten thousand times in two days," then we cannot waste time and if we force ourselves it doesn't matter, because our aim is just that of getting through the ten thousand mantras. But in Dzogchen teaching it doesn't work like that. Our aim is that of total realisation and this means finding our true nature: but we can only get to our true nature if we are relaxed. If there is a cistern and the water is agitated we cannot see what there is and perhaps we use the water for washing or drinking. But if we let the impurities deposit for a bit then the water becomes clear. If you now look into the cistern you can see what is there, it might be an old shoe or some dead frogs and you can think, "I have used this water for drinking and washing how awful!" So you see when you are agitated how much dualistic vision there can be and how many problems can be created. When we relax we discover it and this way we can even reach enlightenment. If we are not relaxed we cannot obtain enlightenment in any way. For this reason it is very important to respect our dimension; we need not only to respect the dimension of others but also our own, because we and others are interdependent. Everything is relative, so it is fundamental that we have presence.

Then in daily life it is important to know that we are human beings and that as a consequence we have a physical body. Some people when they follow Dzogchen teaching say that Dzogchen is beyond all limits and then they do all sorts of things because they do feel they are beyond all limits. This does not correspond to reality because as long as we have our physical body we should respect it. The physical body is relative to the five elements: we must also understand that our five elements are linked to the elements of our dimension. For this reason in the Thun Book we have the mantra of the purification of the elements: to purify and reinforce our energy. A lot of people ask me what is the best protection practice. If we know that we are being provoked we can use specific practices. For example if we are struck down by certain illnesses, like a paralysis, this can come from a provocation which is related to the Za class: in such cases what should we do? The best protection practice is that of Vajrapani because Vajrapani manifested as the guardian Rahula to control the Za class, so do this practice particularly in the evening, the best time is at sunset; do it just before sunset and you will see the effects.

Illnesses which involve cancer have links with the Naga and Tsen classes and so one must do practice for controlling the power of their provocations because they do not cause ordinary illnesses: ordinary illnesses can be cured by medicines but when illnesses are linked to negative provocations we have to discover what the provocation is and which is the practice to keep them under control. In the case of cancer we should do Garuda practice so that the illness is blocked and does not spread and in this way we can gain time; then if we carry on with the practice the illness will regress and medicines will begin to work. There are the Eight Classes who all do different kinds of provocation and so we need to recognise them and this is part of our awareness.

The best protection in general consists in coordinating and reinforcing our energy: this is much better than asking someone

for protection from the outside. We have five elements with all their different functions but when our five elements are not in harmony and in perfect condition because of an imbalance or the loss of some function then illnesses and problems arise. In Tibetan medicine we speak of the three humours whose natural condition is linked to the three main emotions; if our three humours are harmonised and in perfect condition we will not have illnesses but if not then we will. The same is true of the five elements. So it is very important to know this and to practise in order to reinforce our energy in order to rebalance if it has become unbalanced or to develop if there is a function lacking. All these practices are the best protection.

Practitioners have no need to ask others or to beg masters to give them a protection. Tibetans do that because the majority of people from the countryside are ignorant, they do not know the path, and they just have a great deal of faith and devotion to the teaching. So when Tibetans meet a Lama who is considered important they immediately offer something and ask for a protection and even when they don't ask the Lama automatically gives them one and have many little cords ready even for Westerners. Some Westerners when they go to India or Nepal come back loaded with cords around their neck and arm. If I ask them what they are they tell me they are protections and I ask, "But are you a practitioner?" "Oh yes." "Then why don't you use practice to protect yourself, you aren't a goat a dog or a yak". Animals don't know how to protect themselves and so we use a thin cord and we give them to children too, who don't know how to practise. But a practitioner who has a whole load of cords round his neck is ridiculous: it means he has gone all the way to India or Nepal to receive teachings but has received a stupid teaching. You should understand that receiving a teaching means receiving a path, not a little cord. So it is very important that you know how to protect yourselves.

In life, protection is relatively very important. Relatively we live in samsara where there is always positive and negative, and since we are in that dimension we can receive various influences. In that case we have to protect ourselves and the best thing is that of integrating in the state of the three Vajras and to use the mantra of purification of the elements. If you feel you have had some specific negative provocation you must use a specific practice. But if you think that any problem, even the least one, is a provocation then that is not good. Not everything is a negative provocation, we live all the time in the midst of negativity so it is natural that there should be some negative manifestation. If you are aware and you are not distracted you will have fewer problems and even when there are problems you will overcome them more easily. Sometimes we have many problems and even if we try to do our best everything goes wrong; at other times even if we are not practising or doing something specific everything goes really well. In these cases usually we say we are lucky or unlucky. In fact it isn't a matter of being lucky or not. It depends on our condition on whether our energy and our elements are perfect or not. If you have problems try to be aware; don't panic thinking, "Oh, I've got a problem and there's nothing I can do about it!" You can always do something, above all you can always do some practice. And most of all try to relax, don't get wound up immediately, otherwise everything will really become a problem. I think this is really important in daily life.

JANUARY 1ST

PRACTICE IN DAILY LIFE

Today is the last day of our retreat so it is important for me to explain how to do practice in daily life. Even if we learn lots of practices and lots of methods we cannot apply them all every day, so it is essential to integrate practice into our life. This doesn't mean dedicating half an hour, an hour or two hours a day, this is fine but in a day there are a lot of hours left and we have to integrate them all into our practice. If we don't have this principle we cannot be enlightened because we live in dualistic vision, we are always distracted and we are continually doing actions which produce negative karma. So even if we do three or four hours practice a day we can't counterbalance the rest of the time that we are distracted and accumulate negativity. What is more we have already accumulated so much negative karma that it is not easy to purify. The most important thing then is to integrate practice into daily life.

First of all we have to think of the meaning of the word 'practice', we need a precise idea. Many claim that practice means reciting mantras or sitting down somewhere doing a ritual; these are practices but they are not fundamental. The main practice first of all is discovering instant presence and secondly integrating in that state at all times. It is not always easy to find oneself in the state of instant presence but we try to do it; we try not to be distracted and to be aware of the life and circumstances in which we find ourselves. These are the fundamental practices. If we are aware and we know how the circumstances are we will have fewer problems and our practice will become more concrete.

Being aware means knowing what our possibilities are; some have the intention of dedicating all their life to practice which is a good idea but it is not so easy. In particular some people think of escaping from society or from their condition which means they are not training themselves to integrate their practice with their life and they think the samsaric situation is too heavy. But escaping is not the solution, you can escape from a certain situation but when you are in another circumstance you will recreate the same situation even without wanting to. Perhaps you think you will just be a practitioner, go off to live in a cave on a mountain, but first of all in modern society this is not so easy. In reality you have a physical body and so you depend on food and the circumstances in which you live. But even if you do get the chance to go and live in a cave, if you think you have found peace you have got it wrong, because if you can't find peace within you cannot find it outside yourself. You might not have problems here but once in your cave on the mountain you will begin to have them.

When I was thirteen I received a very important teaching from my Dzogchen masters. When the teaching was over I went to do a Ngöndzog Gyälpo retreat, linked to the Dzogchen Longde, in a very beautiful place in the forest where under a rock there was a little house which belonged to a relation of mine. Since it was a sacred place they had invited me to stay there. There was someone there to assist me and every three days they brought me food. The first day I found it wonderful, there was a great silence, it was beautiful, but when night fell I began to be afraid because a wolf pack arrived and gathered, howling and making lots of noise on the rock. When I was small I used to be scared of that sound so I no longer felt the peace. The day after, the howling stopped but a whole load of monkeys arrived while I was peacefully practising, they would gather round the window and try to break in. All the time I spent there I never found real peace, by day and by night there were always problems. In that

period I did not know what it meant to integrate so I kept feeling my practice was being disturbed. Later when I met my master Changchub Dorje and Dzogchen teaching I understood that the solution is not that of escaping but of integrating because if we feel disturbed it is mainly because of our tensions.

For example if I am sitting here practising and someone outside is making a noise I think, “Here I am all peaceful and there he is out there making a noise, he is not respecting me or my practice, he is disturbing me!” This situation is due to tension. If I am tense today then tomorrow I will be even more so and I will think, “There he is, still there making a noise!” So day by day tension develops and in the end I rush out and quarrel with the person or I run away somewhere else. As you can see the root of the problem is linked to my tension. If we are really integrating and we are in instant presence then there is no difference between being up on a peaceful mountain or in a big railway station because movement and noise are part of our energy; if we do not set ourselves up in a dualistic way, if we integrate, our tensions disappear. This is the method for integrating practice in our daily life. In Dzogchen teaching this is very important; our life is movement and not just quiet but when we know that movement is a great part of our energy we do not remain in dualism thinking, “I am here, there is movement, movement is causing me problems.” If we do not fall into dualism the movement will not create any problems.

For example, when you are in a plane you can hear a continuous background noise, but if you start thinking, “This plane is noisy, it’s disturbing me,” you will feel even more disturbed. Whereas if you integrate you won’t hear it. The noise of the plane is like an A or a HŪM: if you are in the plane you are in that sound, you don’t need to sound A or HŪM and so the plane can help you and if you are integrated in that state instead of having problems you will have benefit. This example shows

that in life we can always integrate something, there is no need to change anything, we don't need to change clothes, attitude or the way we are, we stay as we are, take life as it is. Take for example people such as businessmen, they may have a shop, they have spent a lifetime earning money and now they say they are interested in practice and in the teaching and they don't want to carry on working because work is an obstacle to practice. This is not true, you should live in society. Up to now you have done that work which gave you the chance to earn money; naturally if you find something better you can change, but that is your condition, there is nothing negative. In this way you can integrate your work in practice. You can integrate any kind of work; perhaps we can't recite mantras or things like that but we can always work with awareness and we can always be present instead of being distracted and this is the practice of integration. If we work with awareness without being distracted the work goes better. When tensions arise we notice it and don't give them any importance; in this way your work will not become too heavy. This is an example, there is always the possibility of integrating. So first of all we need to be aware of the condition of our life.

We live in society so we should all do something, otherwise we don't earn any money and we cannot live. So we integrate our work with all types of practice. For example what do we do in the early morning? We wake up and immediately think of breakfast. And then? We go to the shop, to school or to the office and we work without stopping. At midday perhaps we have a short break, we have lunch and then we start working again. In the evening we go home and we feel tired; sometimes even if we haven't got much energy we watch the news and then we go to bed. And next day what do we do? Exactly what we did the day before. This way of going on is called samsara.

Then in modern society there is the weekend that we all look forward to eagerly and when it comes we are happy but in fact

what it means is that another seven days of our life have passed and we have seven fewer days to live, and so there is not much to be happy about. But we are happy because we think that finally we have a bit of free time to do things. We think that we have the weekend free to practice but then there's someone's birthday or we have to go to a wedding, there's some important appointment or we have to go somewhere; and so the best part of the weekend is occupied and it is difficult to practise. And at the end of the weekend what do we do? We repeat it all, all over again for another week, and we look forward to the weekend and we are happy when it arrives, but then fourteen days of our existence have gone by. And so it goes on for months and years until life ends. It is not enough to have good intentions, the important thing is to let practice into daily life.

How are we to do this? Immediately as soon as we wake up we remember Guruyoga, we remember the white A in the *thigle*. If possible, if we sleep alone, we sound A because with the sound the visualisation becomes more present; if we do sleep with someone, a husband or wife etc. we cannot sound it because perhaps the other person is sleeping and we should respect them. So it is enough to breathe out with the presence of the A; relax in this presence and try to stay in instant presence; even if you are in it for only a couple of seconds, this is Guruyoga.

Then you go into the bathroom to wash and you enter into contact with water: now you can use the purification mantra OM E HO SHUDDHE SHUDDHE... or if you don't have much time you can just say OM BAM HO SHUDDHE SHODHANAYE SVAHA. This becomes a purification. There is no need for complicated preparations or ritual ceremonies, in a natural way when you enter into contact with one of the elements you use the corresponding mantra. For example, when there is a lot of wind use OM YAM HO SHUDDHE SHODANAYE SVAHA; in the heat of the sun or a fire use OM RAM HO

SHUDDHE SHODANAYE SVAHA. Naturally when you sing the mantra you should pay attention that there are no people around who are not practitioners, because it is not good to do weird things; mantras should be kept secret, in this way they function better, if you don't keep them secret they do not lose their function in general but they lose it for you. Naturally there is no need to keep them secret among practitioners, because they all do practice and so they know them. Using mantras or other rituals publicly, in front of non-practitioners becomes a kind of exhibitionism and is not good; first of all it is not positive for the samaya and secondly the mantra can lose its function and lastly people will think you are weird. For example if you are in a restaurant and start reciting the mantra of the Ganapuja at the top of your voice in the presence of others then they will think that you are abnormal. A practitioner should not demonstrate anything to the outside world. This is the best way to be a practitioner; exhibiting things on the outside means there is nothing inside. So it is better to cultivate this knowledge inside yourself and practice integrating.

Then at all times in our daily life it is fundamental to try not to be distracted. I have already said that this is not instant presence because being present means having a kind of attention, while instant presence is beyond attention. But if you are present with attention it is very easy to integrate in instant presence. Try to learn this in your daily life. For example sometimes you are alone in the house and you haven't got anything to do. Then observe what you are thinking, and perhaps you think, "I want to go into the kitchen and get a bottle of beer and go and sit in the sun and drink it." This is a common way of relaxing. But don't do it in a distracted way, since you are practitioners note that you are thinking of going into the kitchen and make a kind of commitment. "I don't want to be distracted until I get into the sun with my beer." So you notice every single movement, "Now I am going to go

into the kitchen,” then you get up and move, “I am walking”; “Now I am looking for the beer, where is the glass, now I’ll get it”; “Now I am coming back.” You notice everything and go out into the sun, “Now I am sitting down”; “Now I am drinking”; “Now I am enjoying it”. In this way you are continuously present. You can learn to do this, it is very easy. Obviously it is difficult for someone who had never trained themselves to do it but like anything once you have learned it is easy.

For example is it easy learning to drive? Certainly not but when we have learned then we know how to stay present when we drive. We can chat with friends, look at the view to right and left but we always have the presence that we are driving on the road and if we get distracted we will have an accident. This is a presence limited to driving a car but we should extend it to all the other things in our daily life. It is a very important practice and we don’t need a special place to do it or a particular time or specific conditions. If you are going to the shops you should have presence that “I am going to the shops”; “Now I am opening the door; I am going in; I am speaking to someone”. Notice it all, there is no need to be distracted, there is always the possibility of being present. If in daily life you are not distracted you won’t have problems. It is usually when we are wound up that we make mistakes and have problems; in fact we are totally distracted because if we were present there would be no need to be tense. What happens is that while we are preparing lunch instead of cutting the meat we cut our finger: this is the effect of distraction which is due to our tension. So it is fundamental to learn to apply presence in our daily life: this is the practice. You can’t say, “I cannot practise”.

Some people, after a retreat is over, write to me letters or emails saying, “I am really happy with this retreat, I have learnt some practices but now I can’t do them, I haven’t the possibility or the time.” I am not saying that you should practice always

sitting down crosslegged, chanting and visualising something but how can anyone say, “I cannot do the practice of being aware”? You can be aware at any moment and it is better for you. If you don’t want to do this practice or you don’t consider it a practice then that is another thing, but if you consider it a practice then you can do it at any time, in any circumstances while you are working, while you are walking, while you are sitting down, at every moment try to be aware, this is the practice. Being aware is a key for discovering the tensions and the attachments you have, and knowing that they are the root of all the problems you can free yourselves from them.

Another very important practice is the Vajra Recitation, which you have learned in the Thun Book and that we are also doing in the Practice of the Purification of the Six Lokas: you breathe in with OM, hold your breath with Ā and breathe out with HŪM. You can do this practice when you are walking, sitting, at any time. You know how important the three Vajras are and integrating them with your breathing means integrating them with your vital energy; in this way you can purify and protect your existence and have many benefits. Doing this practice also means not being distracted. So you must be aware and do it when it is possible and not in complicated situations.

Once in Poland I explained how to do the Vajra Recitation and I said this is a very important practice you can do at any time. Later when I went back to Poland a man said that he had heard me say that it is important as a protection for life but it doesn’t work. I asked him why and he said, “Because once I was doing it while I was riding my bike on a narrow road and I had an accident with car, so it doesn’t protect!” I answered that perhaps it does protect since he was still alive but that that was not the right time to be doing it and that he should have been aware of the situation because the road was narrow, cars were passing so it was not the right moment. We need always to evaluate situations with awareness.

Another action of our daily lives is that of eating. It is important to eat and drink with awareness, knowing that we eat to support our physical body and not just to enjoy it. Enjoying our food is secondary. Our body is like a car which always needs oil, water and petrol otherwise it will not work. Some foods are not right for our bodies, we have all had this experience, so we must know what does us good and eat it in the right quantities and with awareness. If we are practitioners we can empower the food like we do during a Ganapuja so we can create a good relationship with all the sentient beings connected with that food. This too is part of our awareness.

Then there is the night, which is very important because it is half of our life. Even our nights can be governed by our practice, or integrated into our practice. How can we do this? If we are practitioners we integrate our night with the state of Guruyoga. So when we go to bed we remember immediately the practice of Guruyoga, we visualise a white A in a *thigle* in the centre of our body and we relax. If we fall asleep in this way there is a continuity of presence.

Some people suffer from insomnia and so they can't do this practice. In this case they need to do something to be able to sleep normally trying to understand why they can't fall asleep. Indeed when there is a problem there is always a reason for it. The main reason is some disorder of our energy and so it has to be coordinated. It is possible to coordinate it through Yantra Yoga. Or also by observing and changing behaviour and diet. For example going to bed very late can be a reason. If it happens just once or twice it is not a problem but sometimes it becomes a habit and in this case the *lung* humour is developed. Working at night also develops the *lung* and the same happens if we eat a lot of raw vegetables, or raw food which is not substantial. These are aspects of our behaviour and our diet. In order to coordinate energy – which mainly means coordinating the *lung*

– we can also use natural medicines; all this will help us coordinate our energy and sleep normally. Until this happens, before going to sleep just observe your thoughts. Observing them does not mean following them, judging or thinking, otherwise we will not manage to sleep; it means just observing that the thoughts are there, without blocking them or multiplying or doing anything. If you relax, and just observe, the thought goes away, it disappears; then another comes up but that disappears too in the same way. And then we do the Guruyoga practice before going to bed.

If you have no problems sleeping, do the Guruyoga and then go to sleep. It is possible to have a continuity of presence but it is not easy to notice this immediately. If you read *Dream Yoga*, for example, and *The Cycle of Day and Night*² you will find explanations and you can go deeper into it. Usually there are two kinds of dream: karmic dreams which are linked to our tensions, and dreams of clarity, which are linked to presence. For example, if you dreamed yesterday of being in Tashigar and that we were doing a retreat that would be a dream of presence, while dreams about our past are karmic dreams; but we don't dream of everything which has happened to us in the past, we mostly dream about things which are linked to our tensions, something which touched us deeply. Among the dreams of clarity there are those which deal with the future, for example if we have projects, even if we have not yet achieved them, we have already got the idea and we are making some preparations; on this basis we can have dreams of clarity which can help us because they give us positive or negative signals. Through dreams of clarity we can also receive many teachings and many practices because we nourish this interest and because we are committed to applying the path. Teaching and transmission are inside us. For example

² ChRgyal Namkhai Norbu, *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light*, Snow Lion 2002; *The Cycle of Day and Night*, Shang Shung Edizioni 2004.

there is no difference in receiving a teaching ten years ago or today, transmission is always transmission, it is not old or new, and this knowledge is beyond time. So it is easy to have dreams of presence, and for a practitioner it is important.

We know many practices and many methods and in general we can't apply them easily but we can apply them more easily in a dream. In fact in a dream we have a lot more clarity than during the day because during the day the consciousness of our six senses depends on the organs of the senses while in a dream it does not. This is why people speak of a 'mental body': in a dream the mind is associated with the consciousness of the senses and not with the organs and so we have fewer limitations and more clarity. To do the night practice you must have received transmission of Guruyoga. When you have received it you can do not just this practice but also the Semdzin and the Rushen practices, you can learn all these practices and you can apply them. In the morning if there is the continuity of presence, you wake up with the spontaneous presence of the white A inside the *thigle*. On waking in the morning we immediately do the visualisation of the white A to link us with the white A that we visualised before falling asleep. Keeping the image of a white A inside a *thigle* in our bedroom helps to remind us. This is more or less the way to practise in daily life.

Then on the four particular days of the month, full moon, new moon, Guru Padmasambhava day and the day of the Dakinis, we do a collective practice. In the Dzogchen Community usually people are interested in doing Ganapuja which is very good for purification but you can also do something else. For example when there is a full moon it is really good to do a long-life practice and any kind of practice connected with growth; when there is a new moon it is very good to do the Practice of the Purification of the Six Lokas or Shitro practice, which is a very powerful purification practice. Then there is Guru Padmasambhava's day

which is called that way because when Padmasambhava manifested something important he always linked it with this day which is the tenth day of the new moon or, counting backwards, the fifth day before the full moon. The day of the Dakinis falls five days before the new moon. These two days are really good to do Ganapuja practice. People like Ganapuja because it purifies and also because there are things to eat and drink and you can be in company together.

It is generally very useful to do the collective practices. Lots of people say they prefer to practice at home alone. Perhaps this is good sometimes but if you always practise alone you can lose your enthusiasm. In today's society there are so many distractions, so your spiritual feeling can weaken. What is more, ten people have ten different capacities. There is no need to ask, "You have more capacity please help me". When we practise together we are in the same state, in the same condition, so automatically we help each other and each person's capacity increases. You know for example that practising with your master can bring benefits, because the master has a special capacity, so when our states are unified it is possible for your capacities to progress. But it is not necessary for the master always to be there, even practitioners can practise together. So it is important to take part in the collective practices. Certainly it is not always easy, people who live far away and have to travel for one or two hours to get to a collective practice use up a lot of time; in this case if there are other practitioners nearby you can organise smaller groups. In any case it is very important for practitioners to collaborate with each other.

In the collective practices, and also in the individual ones there are many secondary practices. Now listen carefully, I said 'secondary', and when we say secondary it means they are not the main ones. Sometimes in particular circumstances you need them for example to overcome obstacles, to develop clarity or to pu-

rify, there are many reasons, and when you need them use them. When you don't need them leave them aside. Secondary practices are like a raincoat or an umbrella that you use when it is raining; but if you go out with your raincoat in the height of summer in the hot sun it means you are not being aware, you do not understand the situation. So don't engage in a secondary practice thinking it is the main point. Now I will do the transmission of the *lung* so that you will have the possibility of doing these practices: if you don't have the transmission, the day you need them they wouldn't work.

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DZOGCHEN TEACHINGS

TASHIGAR SOUTH, 26th DECEMBER 2000 - 1st JANUARY 2001

Oral Commentary on the Longsal Terma "The Opening of the Gate to the State of Ati"

I received this teaching in a dream from my master Changluub Dorje, but the teaching is not his, it is from Guru Padmasambhava, and explains in a very simple way how we can enter into the knowledge of Ati.

One night I dreamed I was in the place where my master Changluub Dorje lived and in the dream I said to him, "In eastern Tibet there is a big revolution, no one can lead a normal life anymore, and now all these turmoils are breaking out in central Tibet too, so even if we want to practise we can't, and if we want to learn the teachings and practise Dharma we don't get much chance: what can we do in such a situation?"

My master replied, "I gave you an essential teaching, condensed, just right for this kind of situation; it is called Ati Gojed; *ati* means primordial state, knowledge, *go* means gate, *jed* means to open, and so it means how to open the gate of knowledge. With this teaching you can not just receive the knowledge but you can apply it".