

Practice of Green Tara

Teachings by

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Transcript Maria Hündorf-Kaiser, Hamburg

For the accumulation of merit, the mind is most important, not only the thoughts, but when thoughts and heart come together. It is the same with a negative action, if we think something negative, it is like a snow-ball effect, the moment you wish something bad, for yourself or others, then you have started the 'snow-balling' of wrong action. Because once the thought comes into your mind, a negative thought, then it will slowly turn into a negative strong wish, and then that again will roll down and will become a negative strong action. In the same way, if you have one positive thought, that will again roll down, slowly become a strong positive wish, and then that could become a strong positive action. So for the whole action, the most crucial, most important part is the starting point, the mind.

Therefore, here we are exercising our mind to do positive things, not only small positive things, but big positive things, much more than we can actually do. If we want to achieve something, first we wish much bigger, make much bigger plans, so that at least this much is achieved.

In this practice of Green Tara, in this sadhana, like in all sadhanas, everything is there, all the necessary things are included. Usually when we do the practice, we may not understand them, we may not consciously pinpoint all of them. But actually all the necessary practices, whatever is needed in the Dharma, is there. So if you can go through this properly, maybe we can understand almost the

total view of the outline of vajrayana practice.

Tara is the energy, the enlightened state, the accomplishment of fearlessness. Therefore whoever does the Tara practice is supposed to get fearlessness and the accomplishment of one's wishes. That is the prayer, the aspiration of Tara. We will discuss more about this prayer and aspiration and accumulation of merit, which is a little bit complicated, and if we can find that out in the next few days, maybe that is good, maybe that is enough.

The Green Tara practice that we have been doing yesterday evening and this morning starts with prayers to the Guru. Although Green Tara is not exactly part of the actual prayer of Guru Yoga, it is part of a Guru Yoga. Guru Yoga is done in the beginning of any vajrayana practice.

Most of the time, when we talk about anything, if we do not go back to the real basic thing, then we get lots of confusion. I can tell you this from my own experience.

Once I was very interested in studying geometry. In my childhood, I was in a school called Young Lamas Home School. There were all Lamas, some were young men and some were children. We were taught arithmetic, and although I was the youngest, I was quite good in arithmetic, I used to get the best marks. So I thought that I was good at this kind of thing. Since I did not have other classes, I went to the bazaar and bought a book on geometry, and went to somebody who had done some studies and said: "Could you please tell me what this is, and teach me geometry?"

He looked into the book, and there was a diagram, a triangle, and he said: "This is a, this is b, this is c". I said: "What is this?" He said: "This is a diagram, these are the imaginary points, this is a, this b this is c". I said: "What are imaginary points?" He said: "Anything you can think of is a point." "What do the a and b and c mean?" "It does not really mean anything, it is just imaginary, it could be d and e and f" "How can a, b, c and d, e, f be the same?" "Oh, it is just imaginary." That was my last lesson.

Later, when I was older, somebody told me that these diagrams are for making buildings. If you want to make a building, and you want to know how many metres from here to here, then you say: "this is point a, this is point b". That was very easy, I could understand it immediately. But unless you know what it is about - I was completely puzzled.

Whatever we study, whatever we try to understand, the main difficulty in understanding is that we do not understand the basics of what we are talking about. If we do not understand that, then however much information we have, we will not understand clearly. But the most difficult part is to go back to that basic thing and to try to understand it. In Buddhism, there are so many books. I have read some books, and I have asked other people, and many people have asked me: "What is the most fundamental book, the easiest, most suitable for beginners?" I do not know, and neither did anybody I asked.

It is very very difficult for anybody to come down to the basics. But they are the most important thing to learn, and they are not at all easy to express, to talk about, to know, to get the point. Unless you know the basics, all the terms we use become like jargon, just words without real meaning. We do puja, all right,

we do visualization, all right, we meditate, all right, maybe it is very beneficial, I do not know, must be, but I do not think it really gives what is needed. So I do not really know how to begin. Maybe we begin with why we do Dharma practice.

If we want to know why we practice Dharma, then I think we want to know about the problems we have because we do not practice Dharma. Otherwise there is no reason to practice Dharma. There is one word, a complicated word, but also a very simple word, used by everybody, but it should be understood very clearly, the word is samsara.

Samsara is a very tricky word. If you say `we are in samsara`, for most people it will mean `we are in this world`, and to get out of samsara would mean leaving samsara, leaving the chairs and tables and the house, and never seeing anybody else, or it means that you go out of your mind, you stop thinking. Generally most people call samsara the things we have around us, so everything around us, the world, the people, that is samsara.

But if we go deeper, samsara does not mean exactly that. It means the state of mind. If we talk about the samsaric state of mind, it is the state of mind where we have lots of suffering, problems. The image that is given for samsara, we say in Tibetan *korwa*, that means `turning around`, like the watermill, the water runs and the mill turns, it never stops turning, day and night, on and on. In this way, if our mind is always running, running, running away from something, running after something, all the time there is confusion, there is tension, there is fear, there is expectation, we are not satisfied, not peaceful, we don't have complete freedom. Whether we are in samsara or not depends on whether we are in that kind of state or not. If we have complete peace, if we have full satisfaction, if we are contented and very happy all the time, then we are not in samsara. But it is not like that, we are always in some tension. There is this legendary story about a lady who was very unhappy when she stayed with her parents, because she always remembered and wanted to go to her husband. And when she was with her husband, she was always very unhappy, because she wanted to see her parents. It is because of the way of seeing things, the way of reacting, that we are always in a way unhappy, or unsatisfied. We are looking forward to something very intensely, so that we cannot really be satisfied or happy or joyful.

This way we develop our constant fear and expectation. With these two, aversion and attachment, we are all the time very intensely, very strongly, desperately trying to get something, running after something or running away from something. In this kind of state we are always busy. And therefore we are running in a circle, and we are not getting anywhere, like the prayerflag, which always runs, always blows. We are running all the time, but we are not getting anywhere. This state of mind that we have now, where we have all these problems, where we do this and it is a problem, and we do that and it is also a problem, whatever we do there is a problem. That is why it is called samsara. You think: "If I do this thing, if I achieve this, then I will be very happy", so you try to do that. And when you have finished that, you are still the same as before. And again you try another thing, and you get another thing, and even then you are the same. That is the problem, we think that if we have this or this or this, then we will be very happy, all our problems will be finished. But when we get this and this and this, we are the same. So then we think that we need

to get a different this and this and this, we try all our best, work very hard, are very anxious, do not sleep, get up very early, and get this and this, and still I am the same.

It is not because this and this and this is not the real kind, but whatever I get, my problem, my dissatisfaction, my unhappiness, my feelings of insecurity is not out there, but here inside me. If I do not understand that, then whatever I do, it won't work. We have to understand that this is the situation in which my mind is now, this is the samsaric state of mind. That does not mean that I have to give up this and this and this, that I have to throw all this away to get out of the samsaric state. This and this and this is there, it is very nice, no problem. But this is not the solution of my problem. In order to get out of this state of mind, the only way is to change my state of mind. There is no other solution. The best example I get from this Zen-story. There was a lady in China, and she always cried, whether it was rain or sunlight. People called her the wailing lady. People asked her: "Why are you crying so much?", and she answered: "I have two daughters, one is selling paper umbrellas, and the other one is selling rainboots." So when it was raining, she was crying because she was thinking of the daughter who was selling the paper umbrellas, because she would not sell any paper umbrellas. When it was very sunny, she was crying because she was thinking of the other daughter, who could not sell rainboots now.

Then someone went to her and said: "You should not cry!" "Why should I not cry? It is so pathetic, if the sun shines, one girl is not selling anything, and when it is raining, my other girl is not doing any business. That is very bad, I am very sad about it." Then the man said: "You need not think like that, you can think the opposite." "How can I think the opposite?" "When it is raining, why are you not thinking about the girl who is selling the boots? She will be selling lots of boots, and you must be happy about that. And when it is sunshine, you must think about the girl who is selling the paper umbrellas." She thought about it, and then she said: "That is true." Since then she never cried, she always laughed.

That is what needs to happen when we practice Dharma. We think in a little bit different way, and then we are always happy. In the samsaric state of mind, there is so much suffering, so many problems, but actually, if you can turn the mind a little bit, reacting in a different way, then all these problems might not be felt as that much of a problem. Even in this samsaric state of mind, if two people encounter the same situation, the same problems, because they react differently, they feel the problem differently. One person might get very much affected, very sad, very disturbed, but the other person may not get that disturbed, may take it very lightly. It does not mean that there will be no problems at all. But whatever the situation, our way of reacting would determine how much we are affected, and how much we can work with the problem, with any kind of problem.

If we say that by practicing Dharma, we try to solve our problems, that does not mean that when you practice Dharma, there will be no more problems. Of course we will have problems, everybody has. But the way we react to them, if we can change or transform or understand a little bit how we react, then the way we face the problem also changes.

The main Dharma practice is an experiential understanding of how things are, and breaking our habits of useless suffering, our habit of snowballing our

problems and sufferings. When we talk about the Dharma as something that would get us out of samsaric suffering, we might think that this is something too big, or too far away. That it only happens when we get nirvana. But it is not like that, it is more immediate. The more we can see things a little bit more clearly and openly, the more we know about how to react, the more we are affected by it and become a little bit changed.

To change does not mean that you feel that you are a different person. But the way you react to things changes a little bit, so that your state, the way you live with other people, your reaction to other people's actions changes. Your own feelings and reactions towards other people's way of doing things is changed, and so other people's reaction is also changed. Because of your reaction, it affects each other. This is what we call interdependence. Even a small change in us can change a great deal in the whole atmosphere.

When we find: "These are very bad people, nasty people around us. I am so unhappy here because of all these nasty people around me", when you feel that very strongly, that does not necessarily mean that all the people around you are really nasty. It could also mean that you yourself are rather nasty, sometimes. By my way of being, by my way of thinking and reacting, I draw out the nastiness of the others, because I have the nastiness. If there is a magnet ball, then all the iron things around are attracted, not the wooden things. If there was a wooden magnet, it would attract other things.

If you are rather nasty yourself, the nastiness of others is exited. Therefore it is a very important thing, I do not say it is the only thing, but it is very important that one tries to look at oneself and one's way of seeing things, the way of being, and then try to change it a little bit in a better way, and find a better way of reacting. That is mainly the Dharma practice.

Dharma practice is looking at yourself and changing your way of seeing things, and then the samsaric state of mind is slowly changed into a more peaceful and more enlightened, awakened state of being. That is actual Dharma practice, there is no Dharma practice anywhere else. All other things, all things we do in Dharma practice, whether it is doing puja, whether it is doing meditation, whether it is trying to read or write or listen to teachings, everything is based on that. If that change does not happen, it is not going to help.

Every time I give a talk, I tell the story about the shepherd. You know the story? No? So there are still some people who do not know the story! It is such a nice story. I have not yet found out where it comes from. Some people said it is from the Bible, some people said from somewhere else. I know it is not from Aesop's fables, neither from Arabian nights, nor from the Yataka stories.

The story is, there was a wise shepherd. He used to sit on the hill near the road and looked after his sheep. His village was down in the valley. One day a man came and asked him: "What kind of people live down there in that village?" The shepherd answered directly: "What kind of people lived in the village you came from last time?" "They were very bad people, very quarrelsome, very inhospitable, very bad people." "Well, the people down there are also bad, they are just the same, horrible, inhospitable, quarrelsome."

Then another person came just after that, and he asked the same question: "What kind of people live down there in the village?" And again the shepherd asked: "What kind of people lived in the village you came from last time?" "Oh, they were wonderful people, so nice, so friendly, so hospitable, such good

people." "Oh, the people down there are just the same, very nice, very friendly, very helpful, very hospitable."

Why is he giving these two opposite answers to people who came the same way and asked the same question about one village? Is he telling a lie?

(Answer: He was reflecting the perception. Answer: It is your attitude, your view you have of the things, of people) Yes, kind of. If you are that kind of person, wherever you go, you find that kind of person. That is very true.

If you are that kind of person, who has that kind of reaction, that way of seeing things, that way of looking at things, then you see it that way. So if you are a very nasty person, if you are selfish, and tense, and aggressive, even if somebody just looks at you, you think he means something bad. Then others will also react in that way. But if he himself is more friendly, more open, then others also react in that way. The shepherd was a very wise man, he knew human beings' nature.

This is one of the main practices in the sadhanas. We try to see things in a purer way. If we really look for something, in the end we find it. If we look for a fault in somebody, we will find it. And if we look for a good quality, we will find that. In any situation, there are lots of different people, and people who are more joyful and positive see the positive side of things, even in a bad situation. And more depressed, sad people, they see the other side, the negative, pessimistic side. As we say, the glass is half full or half empty, both is correct. But the person who says: "This is half empty" is looking at the empty part, and the person who says: "It is half full" is looking at it differently.

The main Dharma practice in this particular sadhana is that we try to focus on the purity of things, trying deliberately to bring out that side, trying to concentrate on the pure side, the good side, the positive qualities. The more we focus on the positive, good, pure side, the more of that we will see. And for us it is pure. This is an exercise, training, a deliberate development of our own positive side. That is why it is so important.

If we can get out of the way our mind turns in that tense, suffering, confused cycle, if we can see things clearly, then we can open up, feel free from fear and tension and expectation, and we stop running. If we know that there is nothing to fear, we stop running away from anything. When we stop running away from anything, there is peace. We do not need to do something, to avoid something, we do not need to race against something, and therefore we feel completely free. And when you feel free, then there is no suffering. And when there is no suffering, which is what we call liberation.

It does not mean that we do not know anything when we get what we call liberation or enlightenment or awakening. We do not become spaced out, it is not a completely different experience, which is very funny, without feelings, like a coma, it is not like that. We see things clearly, all our senses are as before, there is nothing so particular, so exciting, so different, we are just free, we are not bound, we are not afraid of anything. That is how, from the Buddhist point of view, liberation or enlightenment is seen. It is not an exciting experience, seeing lots of lights and rainbows or things like that.

Sometimes people say: "Oh, I had a very strong experience, I saw all these lights", many people come and tell me: "I see something around your head, a halo" or "I see light coming from you and entering into my head" or "I have seen your face in three different kinds, what is that." Maybe a little bit

(gesture).

Maybe you feel something different, you have some great experience. Sometimes people, when they meditate, they have experiences that are sometimes very wonderful and sometimes very nasty, different kinds of experiences. That is not the main thing. All these experiences, they come and go. That is why, when you ask any Lama, they would say: "It is neither good nor bad." That is the standard answer. It is an experience like anything else. Like if you drink wine, you have one experience, if you drink tea, another experience. You cannot say, this is very good, very nice, or this is very bad. The real purpose of Dharma practice is to get another way of seeing things, to get out of the samsaric state of mind, even a little bit. That is the real practice of Dharma. Even a little bit is nearer to what we call 'awakening'. What we call 'ignorance', that is confusion, and the less confusion we have, the less problems we can see, the less of a negative way of reacting we have, the more clearly we see everything, the more open we become, and the nearer we come to seeing the truth. Therefore the whole Dharma practice is to go deeply into the truth, to see things, see yourself, see everything around you exactly as it really is. The only word you may be able to use is 'truth'.

How we go about it is very gradual. First you see things a little bit the way they are, you see how you get these sufferings and problems through your strong aversion and attachment, how your mind is always engaged in aversion and attachment. And then you see that you get all the tension, fears, anxiety, worry, suffering because your mind is always engaged in aversion and attachment. If you see just that, it is the start. When you see where your sufferings come from, then you have started on the actual, real, genuine Dharma path. Then you can see it in a slightly different way, you can react in a slightly different way, without as much aversion to things, without as much attachment. If you do not say: "This is something I really do not want, this is very bad", you also do not say: "This is very good, I want it", because it is a comparison. If you do not reject something completely, you do not try to run away from it, then you also do not try to run after something.

When you are afraid of something, you think that there must be something that is not like that, that is opposite to that, so you try to run after that. This way of reacting through aversion and attachment, these two things, if you are totally involved in that, that is the samsaric state of mind. That is the source of all suffering. So that is the very basic Buddhist understanding.

I do not say it is easy. As you all know, when you study the Dharma and spiritual things, it is not like studying other academic subjects. In other academic subjects, you have to go from the centre, or from the base, you learn more and more, and you go wider and wider, and you have more and more information, and then you become more and more expert if you go into the branches.

But here in the spiritual practice, it is not like that. You go back to the same thing, and you go around and around. You just concentrate on this only, you go back again and again, because this is something you do not fully understand, so you go back from here and here and here. It is a totally different way of studying. In the other studies, when you have a little bit of understanding of the basics, you go this way and this way. But here, in the spiritual understanding, you try to come back from all sides. It is actually only one thing, knowing your

mind, knowing how things are. The real understanding is the experience of yourself. Therefore it is coming to the centre again and again, from different sides, peeling off the cabbage-leaves.

It is not easy to understand right from the beginning, maybe. The deeper you go, the more you understand deeply - sometimes you do not understand at all. You may understand something intellectually, and you think that you have understood it, but then something happens, and then you see "Oh, it is really that". It is not about many things, but about one thing.

Why we pray to the Guru, or do the Guru-yoga in the beginning, ...maybe I will not go into it now, and stop here. It is a very important subject. If you have any question, you can ask.

Q: A question about practicing Green Tara, doing so, you go through a process of identification with Green Tara ...

A: I will be coming to that, but the other practices are also included in the vajrayana practice, as a part, actually as the main understanding, the core of it. The mahayana practice, the basic Buddhist practice which you may call hinayana or Theravada, these are the foundations of vajrayana practice. Vajrayana practice is not different from them. In the vajrayana practice there are all the different meditations, all the understandings, other things are also there. But the special approach of vajrayana is using the result as the path. In the sutrayana, we use the cause as a path.

When we first begin, on the sutrayana-level, we try to find out what the causes are for solving the problem, what are the causes for an awakened being, the causes for becoming enlightened or awakened or free. Then you try to work on those causes, and then, slowly, slowly, that develops into the result. That is the approach given in the sutrayana.

But in the tantrayana, the vajrayana, the approach is to use the result, to use the finished product as the path. How do you do that? One way is the Tara-sadhana, so you are taking the principle, the result, Tara, an enlightened being, completely awakened being, with all the qualities, as the practice. You deliberately, forcefully, intentionally, almost a little bit artificially become Tara, with the understanding that basically there is no difference. Tara was a lady who had the courage and the understanding of being able to bring out the great fearlessness and the great enlightened state that was in her.

Now, taking that as an example, as the principle, we try to bring that out, too. The medium of doing that is, that we take Tara as a being, even though she is in a way a principle, an experience. We take her as what we want to become. We try to understand, we know, we hear, we read about what Tara is, what Tara looks like, not really looks like in form, but more like how it feels, what it means to be a Tara, what it means to be an enlightened being, an awakened being, a Buddha.

Because in essence, there is no difference, we just become one, we try to experience that state right now, we learn, we practice to be like that. It is the same principle as we usually do when we want to become, say, a soldier. Before you get the training, you think: "When I am a soldier, I will walk like this, or I will look like this." You have an image of a soldier. If you do not have that image, you cannot become like that, you would never be walking the way a soldier does. The training mainly begins with your mind, and slowly, slowly, you

do walk like this. You become a soldier, because you think that you are a soldier. Even if you are not fighting at that moment, you have become a soldier. Even though soldiers are supposed to be fighting, not all soldiers fight all the time.

In the same way, everything we want to become, usually we do it like that. Whether we want to become a lawyer or a doctor, before we become that, we make an image of it, how it would be, and how I would look, how I would act and walk, and then you would become that.

That is what we are trying to do. We want to become an enlightened being, like Tara, and then we try to do that, we imagine ourselves in that direction. I do not know exactly how Tara would walk.

XE "teaching 3"

Let us start with the proper Bodhicitta aspiration.

In the morning I tried to give a basic understanding, a basic description of why we practice Dharma. I know it was not good enough, because I have never been able to give it good enough, but maybe it will do.

The Tara practice, like any practice of vajrayana Buddhism, is what we call the result-path, the practice is very much result-oriented. It does not mean to say that we are looking for a result, expecting something to happen all the time. That is not the path. But we are taking more of the experience that is in the result. We can call it result, because it might happen if we properly discover it. But what it actually means is not the result, but the base. Actually, from a Buddhist point of view, the foundation or base or essence and the result are the same. We try to rediscover our own true state, the awakened state, the enlightened state, the state where the confusions, the veils, the obstacles, the obscurations, whatever is obstructing us, is gone, where we have the direct experience of our real essence, our true nature.

So the result is no different from our base, from our essence. We are not looking for some result up there, at the end, but we are trying to go back to our essence, to our nature. We try to be more in our real nature. Therefore taking the result as a path is not really taking some end-product as the path, but we are trying to go back to our real nature.

When we go through the sadhana, first we do the Guru-yoga, or the prayers to the Guru. In vajrayana Buddhism, devotion is taken as a very strong and important method with which we go back to our basic true nature. Devotion is an emotion or sensation which is the most suitable emotion for the experience of our fundamental true nature. Because when we have strong devotion, it is not an emotion which has aversion or attachment. There is no aversion in it, there is no attachment in it, it is a very clear emotion, it is a very vivid emotion, and it is very open.

So when someone feels devotion, then the person becomes very pure. Devotion is not clinging, it is very open, it does not have any exclusiveness, no holding on or closing up. Also it is not dull, feeling nothing. It is very strong and vivid, vibrating. If you can be in that kind of a state, then it is more natural, you have the experience of the true nature, what we call the true state of our being, the nature of our mind, the Buddha-nature, the enlightened essence, the pure state of our mind. That is very near to coming out, to blossoming.

Therefore devotion is very much cultivated in the vajrayana tradition. It is deliberately cultivated, efforts are made to bring out this devotion, in order for you to have the basic circumstances, the environment, a very suitable preparation, a suitable background.

Because in devotion, another very important thing is, when you have devotion, you have no concepts, you do not think, you do not intellectualize. Therefore it is a very suitable condition.

And devotion is not something that we do not have. Most people all over the world have some kind of devotion, some have it in their God, some have it in different things, everybody has it in their being. So that is taken as a path. Here, towards whomever we have the greatest respect, the greatest devotion, the greatest faith, like in the Three Kayas as the Guru, or in Guru Padmasambhava, or in the Buddha or the Bodhisattvas, if you have certain connections, certain untainted respect or faith or trust, whatever can inspire that kind of devotion, we try to address the prayer to them.

And when you say this prayer, it is actually a way of opening. The main reason for doing Guru-yoga or prayers to the Guru is to try to open ourselves up and to relax, to completely feel free. That is something very important. I am not sure whether all of you can feel this devotion, some people have naturally more feelings of this kind, some have less, because of our habitual tendencies. This side is developed more in some persons than in others. But the most important thing is that this kind of prayer of devotion is found in every religion, on every religious path. That gives us freedom.

This summer I had a very strong transmission. The transmission of swimming. I tried this a few times earlier, but I never succeeded. Whenever I went into the water, I went in like this (gesture), head first. Some said: "You have to breathe in and make yourself full of air", it did not matter. Some said: "You have to move your hands and feet", it did not matter. Whatever I did, I just went down to the bottom of the sea.

This summer I was in Barcelona, and you know Barcelona in the summer. So we went to the beach, a very nice beach, and then they showed me how to swim. But I did not float. So one thing they said was: "You just do not bother, you just give up. Relax yourself completely. We will take you if you sink." So I said: "All right", and for a moment, I just completely relaxed - and I found to my greatest surprise that I was floating! Well, half of my body went in, a little bit of the ears also, but I floated. You do not have to do anything, not breathe in, not pump full of air. If you open yourself up and relax and let it happen, then you float. But the moment you get scared, the moment you go to a deeper place, and you think that maybe you cannot touch the ground, and you panic, then you sink.

Earlier, people had told me that, many people told me: "You have to relax", but when you learn, you can hear the words all the time, but it does not get in somehow. And only when you really get it, then you can do it.

Most of the time, when we are listening to the teachings or reading the books, we are actually thinking it out most of the time, we think: "What should I say? That is right! That is not right! What questions should I ask". You have already made your own concept. And on top of that, you are so busy with these thoughts that you do not really take it in completely, you are not open enough to understand what the person is saying.

The swimming-instructors had always been saying: "Be relaxed", but I thought: "Well, I am relaxed". They said: "You should not be afraid of the water", and I said: "I am not afraid of the water", but still you sink. You did not understand, you did not understand fully. That is how it happens.

I always used to say that our mind is like a box, each of us has a different shape of box, and a different size maybe, some are triangular, and some square and some round. Our mind is already made in a concept, so whatever we get, from books, from what people say, we put that inside, and when it fits, we say: "Oh, that is very nice, I understand it well, it is very good, it is wonderful", and when it does not fit in, then I have two choices, one is to cut it or fold it to the size, and then put it in. Or it does not go in: "This is beyond me, I do not understand, it is rubbish". That is how we usually do it. We have already made up our mind on everything. We arrange everything according to our preconceived ideas. We do not take what comes, we just make it up. Only when we have already agreed to something, then we say: "I understand".

Therefore, in the Guru-yoga, the opening up means to trade off that box. You do not need to put things in that special shape, you completely open it. So anything that comes, it just goes in there. Through devotion, through opening up, you make yourself spacious, so that anything can come in. It is not necessary that you have to agree with everything that comes in. But you can accept everything without making it up, without having to add to it, without doing any work on it, you just can see whatever is coming. Then only can we really open up.

The opening up is fundamental, one of the first things that is recommended, that is very much put into practice in the beginning. To make prayers, to offer prayers to the Guru, to mix yourself with the Guru. Your own identity is merged into the Guru, into the Dharmakaya. So you do not have the strong sense, the strong requirement to protect yourself. That is how we usually react, we make a protection wall, so that our identity, our views, our concepts are intact.

Whatever comes from outside, we say: "This is the limit".

But when we really open ourselves up, when we make ourselves spacious, we cannot do that. If we open up completely, then our own habits, our own acquired tendencies will be destroyed, will dissolve. That is why we do not let it happen, why we try to protect it, so that our habits, our tendencies, our concepts remain intact, and we go on in that usual samsaric state of mind. That is why, to counteract that, to work on that, you need to open up. The Guru-yoga in the first place is one of the main instruments, weapons, towards that kind of problem.

One form of prayer is to the Three Kayas, to the aspects of Buddhanature. We say this prayer to awaken these qualities in us, we take these three aspects as an example of enlightenment. When we trust these aspects and show respect, then we can open up. Through trusting the guidance of the Gurus, we awaken the Three Kayas in us. The Three Kayas are a description of the same state of being through three aspects, through three ways, because it is something which cannot be explained in just one sentence or just one word. To give a description of a bell, you say that there is a head, and then there is this thing, the shape is like this, and the colour is like this, the sound is like this, you describe it from different angles. In the same way, when you describe the Three Kayas, it is like that, from its true nature it is like this, but how it appears it is like this.

When we do this prayer, we try to feel devotion to our Guru, to the Lineage, to the Buddhas, and then we try to open up and do what I did when I swam, try to be completely relaxed and open and without fear. Then the rest of the practice can be done without making too many concepts out of it, like: "Should I do it this way or that way? Maybe this is wrong, this is right? Maybe everything is wrong?"

It does not mean that you should not think at all. One has to first examine the Guru, see whether he is trustworthy or not. And the practice, first one has to understand a little bit, see whether it is good for me or not. But when you are actually doing the practice, it is not the best thing to think too much, to make too many concepts, and too much intellectualizing. With this preparation, the openness, you go into the practice.

Dün gyi nam khar djetsun ma ngön ssum shug par gyur

When you say this, you feel that Tara and the retinue of the mandala of Tara is actually in front of you.

From the legend, Tara was a princess, and many many years ago, maybe millions of years ago, not in this particular world, maybe in another world, another kalpa, there was a Buddha called Amoghasiddhi. During the time of the Buddha Amoghasiddhi, the princess, whose name was Yeshe Palmo, became a Bodhisattva.

A Bodhisattva is somebody who makes a strong commitment: "I would like to help not only myself, but all other beings who are like myself. I would like to help them not only a little bit, but to help them get the best possible thing, best possible attainment, where there is no more problem at all, no more suffering, and all the good qualities." If somebody has that intention, that aspiration very genuinely, that person is called a Bodhisattva.

So a Bodhisattva is not necessarily a Buddhist. Usually we say that somebody who says: "I want to become a Buddha, and I want all the sentient beings to become a Buddha", that is a Bodhisattva. But that is a way of saying the same thing. A Buddha is somebody who is awakened, who has attained the highest kind of realisation, highest state of being, so that there is nothing more. He has ended all suffering, has all the qualities, and has the power and the wisdom to lead others to that state. When somebody does not know the word Buddha, or the concept of Buddha, but if one has the very strong feeling and understanding to help other beings, then one is called a Bodhisattva.

When the princess became a Bodhisattva, she had this very courageous nature, she was very fearless, and she promised herself: "From now onwards, I will not only become a Bodhisattva, but I make myself powerful, so highly attained, that I will be able to help a hundred thousand beings every day". That was her strong conviction, her strong confidence. She did not only want to become a nice smiling lady with good intentions, but she also wanted to go and help, completely.

Because of her very strong conviction and great courage and fearlessness, she soon became a very highly attained, enlightened Bodhisattva. Whatever she did, whatever help she gave others, whatever positive actions she did, that was the effect of this promise, this strong conviction and confidence.

When she attained the different bhūmis and became a great Bodhisattva, the

influence of her promise, of her prayer - the actual translation of the Tibetan is 'prayer', I do not know whether that is the correct word - her very strong wish, from her heart of hearts, was so strong, that she became enlightened in that state of complete fearlessness. She made a dedication of all her positive deeds, that "whoever gets connected to me, in any way, whoever gets into my mandala, may they be able to have as swift a progress, as swift an action as I have, may my swift action affect them." That is the spirit, that is the principle of action, the commitment of action, to benefit all beings, so quickly and so many at a time.

One thing that she always promised to be is that throughout her Bodhisattvahood and throughout her enlightened state, she would appear in the form of a female, and all her actions will thereby be more sharp and swift. All beings, who have the inspiration of that active involvement, this active aspiration to help others, and to have very swift, very strong, quick actions, and also fearlessness, all of these beings got into this Tara mandala, this Tara principle, and they practiced Tara.

When we talk about Tara practice, it is not just a person. It started with a person maybe, but it is a principle, the whole being, the atmosphere, the state of being. So anybody can become a Tara, because the basic true nature, the Buddha nature, is exactly the same for all beings, whether they are enlightened or not.

That is the first thing, that is something we very much need to discuss here. Since it is like that, since all beings have the same fundamental nature, if your inspiration, your commitment, your courage is strong, and if you are focussing your attention, your whole way, your whole path, towards that kind of action, then you become that kind of enlightened being. That aspect of your natural capacity, natural potential blossoms.

Devotion towards Tara means that you admire her, you want to develop that side. Usually when you admire somebody, then naturally you try, consciously or unconsciously, to become like that. If you admire a film-star, who has his hair in this particular style, you try to do that, and if he is shaved, you try to shave as well. When you admire that state of Tara, then you also try to become like that. Because you have the capacity, you have the potential nature, you develop in that way. To become a part of the mandala means to try to develop in that way, to become connected with that.

If you contribute towards something, like building a house or a stupa, if you work there or contribute something else, then whatever you do later on, your contribution is there, you have become a part of it, something of you is there, you cannot withdraw it, you have become a part of that thing.

In the same way, when you do the practice of Tara, or when you join the mandala of Tara, you are contributing towards that, so that you become part of it, so that your connection with that principle is established, so that you are giving and receiving. Whatever good things you give, the same type of things you receive. That is the main principle, if you give love, then you receive love, if you give hatred, then you receive hatred. In the same way, if you are giving Tara energy, you are receiving Tara energy. That is how we practice Tara, we join the Tara mandala, we are included, we become involved, almost inseparable from the activities of that principle.

(Q: you said Tara is not only a person, but more a - what?)

Maybe the philosophical part is not really necessary. What we do, we think of Tara, the whole mandala of Tara, in front of us, and we think that they are really there, so that we can make the connection with Tara. That is how we do it in our real actual practice. The activity of the Buddhas, the activity of the enlightened beings, is spontaneous.

By spontaneity we mean that the action, the blessing, the help of the enlightened beings is there all the time, it is not necessary that the enlightened being has to think: "Now I am going to help that person, and after that I am going to help that person, and after that then I will see whether I have time or not". It is not that way. The actions can appear simultaneously, to everybody who has the right karma, the right circumstances.

The best example is the sun. When the sun shines, it shines, the rays go everywhere, wherever it is not covered. If you cover yourself and go into your room and lock up and draw the curtain, then it is a different matter. Otherwise, wherever you are, you have the sun. The sun does not have to think: "Now I am going to light up Halscheid, and after that I go to Köln and Düsseldorf", not like that. It goes everywhere at one time, unless there are clouds.

In the same way, the action or activity of enlightened beings is simultaneous. So if you can create the circumstances, then they are there, and their action is also there. With that understanding, if I think, if I can feel the presence of Tara in front of me, at that moment she is there, that activity, that energy is there. That energy, that blessing is not determined, not controlled by place or space or time, it is beyond the control of space and time. Space and time, from a Buddhist point of view, are very relative, it is more a restriction that we have made ourselves, it is not absolute. So if we have the confidence of seeing Tara in front of us now, she is there.

If we can feel the presence of the mandala of Tara in front of us, then it has to be there, because then all the three main causes for the presence of Tara, the enlightened mandala, the activity, are accomplished.

What are the three important causes, the three conditions?

First the nature of the enlightened being, the enlightened action, the nirmanakaya, is that there is no limitation, no constriction of time and space. Therefore it is all the time there, spontaneous. But that is not the only condition. If that was the only condition, everybody should see it, but you do not see it, because the other conditions are not there.

The next condition is that not only the compassion, the activity of the enlightened being is spontaneous, but that that enlightened being, those enlightened principles, has made the prayer of aspiration, that it may be available to anybody who has the right sense, the right way of seeing the purity, who can positively, purely look at things.

Thirdly, the condition is that we have the openness, we have opened our mind, we have developed the ability to look in a pure way.

When these three conditions get together, it has to be there, it is there. It is not that because of this and this, that something comes from there and then it is there, but it is the main Buddhist principle, that if the right conditions come together, then it happens, whether you like it or not.

For example, there are these very beautiful blue flowers, with yellow on it. But you do not see this in the bulb, when you put the seed or the bulb, then there is no blue or yellow. But the bulb itself, even if you put it into the ground, it

may or may not become a flower. But when the bulb is there and the manure is there and the water and the sun and all these things are there, then you cannot do anything, then the flower comes, and the flower is blue. When all the circumstances, all the conditions come together, then it happens. The Tibetan word for that is *tendel*, it is almost impossible to translate. But when the *tendel* is there, the right conditions are there, then things happen.

When we can really see, can believe, can feel, that the Tara mandala is there, it is as good as there. The more confidence we have, the more true it becomes. The confidence is very important here, as in everything else.

In front of this mandala of Tara - which is also the mandala of the Guru, which is also the mandala of the Buddhas, because that is one and the same thing - in front of that you do the Refuge and Bodhicitta:

Namo könchog kün ngö djetsun mar
dag ssog dro kün kyap ssu tschi
djang tschub mön pä ssem kye nä
sab mö lam la djug par gyi,

This is translated as "I and all beings go for refuge to the Jetsunma, truly all the Jewels. Having developed the mind that aspires to enlightenment, we will enter onto the deep path."

Now we take refuge in this Tara mandala. The Tara mandala is the same as the Refuge Tree. The Refuge Tree, the representation of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, can be in many different forms. Here, when we do the Tara practice, the Tara mandala is the Refuge Tree. And within the form of Tara is the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, because the Buddha is the enlightened state, the enlightened mind of Tara, and the Dharma is the teachings, the experience of that, and the Sangha is Tara herself, the form, and the mandala. With that understanding, we go for refuge in the Jetsunma, in Tara.

Tara is enough, we are talking about the mandala, but we do not need to have lots of things. We can think of twenty-one Taras, we can think of the lineage, but it is not necessary if we do not have the capacity, or the ability, or the liking to visualize lots of things. Even if we cannot visualize very clearly, it is alright. Many people have problems with visualizing clearly, and they think that if you cannot visualize like seeing a movie, then it is not good enough. But that is not really the point. Of course, if you can see very clearly, that is even better, but the point is the feeling, our own feeling. It has not very much to do with it being there or not, but with what you feel. When we see something good or bad, it is our way of reacting, our way of seeing which is the important part. When we think of the Tara mandala, and take refuge in that, it means that we trust in that, we want to have confidence in that, and we want to develop ourselves in that way.

Having the understanding of the Tara principle and Tara's actions, that she has developed this great aspiration for helping all sentient beings, and then attained

that kind of state, inspired by that we do our own Bodhicitta practice, that are the second two lines, "having developed the mind that aspires to enlightenment, we'll enter onto the deep path".

We are generating our positive mind, our positive aspiration: "For the sake of all sentient beings, Tara promised to work for her enlightenment and then to help all other beings to get to the highest and most ultimate realisation. So I also would like to do the same. All sentient beings, who are like myself, do not want unhappiness or suffering. As I wish myself to get all the good things, happiness and joy, so all others also wish the same. Therefore I would like to get the wisdom and the ability to help all other beings to get to that state as well. I very much wish and really pray and I aspire to do that."

This enlightened aspiration or Bodhicitta is very important in all Buddhist practices. We are really making ourselves develop the positive side of ourselves. We are opening up, we are becoming compassionate, we are becoming more beneficial, more helping, when we have this Bodhicitta. When we have this intention, this attitude, of not wishing any harm, of wishing only good, then all our negative things go away. If I really wish everybody well, I cannot have pride, I cannot say: "I should be the only one to have this". If you wish everybody well, you cannot have jealousy, you cannot have hatred, you cannot have too much attachment, you are open, you are giving.

When you are very open, you will have the understanding of your basic true nature, the positive side. Ignorance in the sense of being self-centered, "this is me and this is others, I want only for myself", that egocentricity is also no longer there. If you really have the Bodhicitta aspiration, the causes for having negative emotions are more or less cut off.

This Bodhicitta, this Bodhisattva's attitude is regarded as the most supreme intention. It is an intention, an aspiration, a wish for the best, for the most. There cannot be anything better than that wish. You are wishing for every being to become enlightened, to get completely out of all their problems and sufferings, and not only that, but to get all the wisdom and compassion. The highest, most profound achievement one can have is total enlightenment, and you wish for that, the best, you cannot wish for anything more than that. And you are not making this wish just for one or two persons, but you are wishing for everybody, for all beings, as far as space goes, any number of beings you can imagine. When you have this wish, it is the strongest, the best, the most supreme wish.

We try to generate this wish, in the beginning maybe we do it more artificially. If it comes naturally, that is very good. But if it is not coming naturally, we try to reason with ourselves, we say: "Let us think it anyway", it does not matter even if you do not really wish it. The more we generate it, the stronger it becomes. That is the usual way. All our negative things also, from the Buddhist point of view, are like that, it is just the repetition, the habit that we formed, and then it becomes stronger and stronger.

Whatever we exercise, will become stronger. If we exercise one hand only, that muscle will grow. If you do not exercise any of them, then they will not grow. So if we exercise to be angry, then we become angry. If we exercise to be unhappy and depressed, then we become unhappy and depressed and sad. And if we exercise to be more joyful, we become that. Whatever we exercise more, that becomes stronger in us. It is a great potential in all beings, especially in

human beings, that whatever we try to develop becomes very strong. If we try to develop our Bodhicitta, our good intentions, then that also becomes big. It does not mean that you do not need to do anything else, just have the intention. But when the intention is strong, then naturally we do things.

Because every action we do is inspired by our intention.

I have heard this saying in the West: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" - what do you think that means? (A: You mean well, but you do not really do it.) I was thinking it meant - usually people say: "I am doing this for a very good intention, and I am doing that for a very good intention", and everybody is saying that, but not actually feeling that. So all those who say that they are doing it for the sake of others, are actually not doing that, so they are going to hell.

If you really had the good intentions, you could not do anything else. If you really want to do something good, how can you do a bad thing? You cannot. Your intention, whatever you intend, makes you do things. If you intend to go, then you go. If your intention is not to go, then you do not go. All your actions are controlled by your intentions. No? (A: For example, if you are very poor, and you do have the intention to help others and give them money, if you never get rich, you cannot realise your good intention.) Well, even then, if you have the intention to give lots of wealth to all beings, even if you do not have wealth, maybe you do not give them wealth, but you do not rob them. If you just say you have the intention, that is a different matter. But if you really have the intention of helping all the poor people, then even if you do not have a great amount of wealth to distribute among them, but whatever you have, maybe you would give that. And even if you do not have anything, why should you go to the hell? (A: It is an example for wishes that cannot be realised.) If you have a good wish, even if you cannot realise it, you did not do anything bad, you did good.

(A: This quote is from the philosopher Sartre. He wanted to say that the situation becomes hell for you, because you have really good intentions, but at the same time you do not have the wisdom, and you act in an unwise way, which causes the situation to become worse). Maybe. Could you think of an example?

(A: There was a situation in Wales, where a coal-mine slipped and fell and buried the school with all the children in it, which was very very sad, and the whole valley and village was united in their grief, and lots of people gave lots of money. And then they started quarreling, fighting, jealousy, and now they are at each other's throats. The intention to give the money was good, maybe a bit silly, because money cannot bring back their children.)

If you had the intention to give lots of money to everybody, maybe you get lots of good results. But if you really had money, and you were distributing it around, maybe it would not be so good. Maybe the intention to do it is better than actually doing it.

From the Buddhist point of view, if you really have the good intention, that is good enough. If inspired by that intention you do something, whether the action that comes out of the intention really benefits, or how much it benefits, or whether it even harms, that depends on many other circumstances. So if you give lots of money to the people in the village, and they fight among themselves, it is not your fault. You did not ask them to fight, they chose to

fight. If they choose to throw the money into the river, that is their business. You did it with a good intention. From the Buddhist point of view you get your hundred percent good result, and they get their hundred percent bad result. There is a little difference between the attitude in the East and in the West. In the West you think of doing something in the sense of achieving something, doing something positive means that you have the intention to help someone, and then you give money or whatever, and if they actually get the benefit, only then have you done a good action. Otherwise you have not really done a good action. But from the Buddhist point of view, the moment you think good, you have already done a good action. And if you do more, it is an even better action. All the way is paved with good intention.

(Q: But if you know that the result would be bad?)

Well, if you knew that the result would be bad, if you had good intentions, you would not do it. If you did something with good intention, it means that you do it with the understanding that it would be good.

(Q: What about ignorance? Maybe I cannot see the whole situation. So I really think it is good, but I am ignorant about certain things.)

You cannot see everything anyway, you cannot see everything in the future. So you usually do what you think is the right thing to do and will benefit others. For instance if you build a house for a school, and maybe a hundred years later, it falls down and kills lots of people, you cannot say: "I will not build a house, because in a hundred years it might fall down". When you are doing something, you do it with good intention. And when you do it with good intention, that is good enough. It is not completely in your hand, it is not in one person's hand, due to many different reasons, it may go in a nice way, it might go in not such a nice way. That is not in your hands. If you think that it is, you cannot do anything. You cannot do anything positive, because anything you do might turn out not to be so positive after all.

(Q: This morning you explained to us how our mind is functioning, that there is attachment, that there are things we try to avoid, so there is always movement. We try to find a more peaceful state of mind. But when we generate this aspiration, there is another kind of dynamic, is that not a contradiction to this peaceful state?)

No. I was talking about the samsaric state of mind, where there is lots of tension and fear and suffering because we are always running away from something or trying to run after something. When we try to get rid of that state of mind, we have to know what is the real reason for doing that? The real cause for that is our attachment and aversion, we are very attached to things, this is something we want, so we must have it, and these are things that we must avoid. These two things are the main cause of that struggle.

If we have more and more of the understanding, the real feeling of Bodhicitta, wishing the best for all beings, then that is completely against that state of aversion and attachment. We wish the best, not only for ourselves, but for all others. Therefore we are not just attached to ourselves, but we are very open, we want it for everybody. We do not only want it for one particular group of people, or just for ourselves. We are going against the pattern of our usual samsaric state of mind, that I want it and nobody else should have it.

When you want all beings to have the best, including yourself of course, then you are not only wishing it, but you are also committing yourself to help with

that. Then you are prepared to face all the problems that might come, the difficulties, you are prepared to work for that. Therefore you are not running away.

Our usual samsaric attitude is, that you want to run away from anything that is difficult, that is negative, anything you do not like. But here it is the opposite, you are not preparing to run, but you are prepared to face it and work with it. There is no aversion. Aversion is the same as fear. Here you are very courageous, you have courage and self-confidence. You have so much confidence, that you almost commit yourself to doing all the great things single-handedly. The more this kind of mind, this intention is developed, the more you are out of the samsaric state of mind. It is a totally different attitude, different way.

XE "teaching 4"

Yesterday we talked about the refuge and Bodhicitta part that is done first, and the lineage prayer or the prayer to the Guru.

Now we come to the next part of the practice. As you all know, there are many different practices of Tara. There is something called Tara tantra, quite a big tantra, actually there are many tantras, and these Tara tantras were taught by the Buddha himself. They belong to the Kriya Yoga.

The whole tantric Buddhism is divided into four tantras, first the Kriyatantra, second the Charyatantra, sometimes called Uppaya, third is Yogatantra, and the fourth is called Annutarayogatantra. These four different tantras are meant for different types of persons, different communities, different casts that lived in India.

This tantra belongs to the Kriyayogatantra, which is the first tantra after Mahayana. The Mahayana teachings merge into the Kriyatantra, it is the boundary. In the Kriyayogatantra all your actions have to be very pure. It was based on the daily life of the rishis or brahmins.

In India there are usually four casts, they live in very different lifestyles. The brahmins are the priests, everything they do is very clean, they do things correctly and cleanly, they observe lots of rituals, they do them with lots of purity. Here in the Kriyayoga, the eating of meat is prohibited, also drinking alcohol and things like that. The recommendation is to live a very clean and pure life.

When the Tibetans do the Tara puja, they do it in the morning, maybe before breakfast, if they eat meat for breakfast. Even in Europe this influence has been kept, in Samye-Ling or other places, they do Tara in the morning, as if they could not do it any other time.

The Tara tantra is very very common. There are other practices from the Annutarayogatantra in Tibetan Buddhism, some are practiced very much, by certain sections and others by other schools. But Tara is commonly practiced by at least all Tibetan Buddhist traditions. The Tara tantra is one of the most well accepted, most uncontroversial, it is so well accepted, that there is no school, no monastery, no place, where the Tara practice is not done. It was the same in India, even before Buddhism came to Tibet, Tara was the tantra practice which was very open, very common among most of the Mahayana and tantrayana practices.

Yesterday we had a small story about the origin of Tara. About the present forms, the green and white Tara, there is also another story. The story is that Avalokiteshvara, Chenrezig, made this great promise, the great promise that he would liberate all sentient beings, and then only would he become enlightened himself, not before. That was his very strong and great promise. Then he worked for the sake of all the other sentient beings for centuries and kalpas. At one time he thought: "I have done so much benefit, I have helped so many, maybe samsara is almost finished now". And he was looking down, and he found that it was almost as before. He was shocked, "I cannot do it anymore, it is impossible, it cannot happen", he started losing his commitment, his conviction, and his head split into many pieces. The Buddha Amithaba knew about it, he appeared to him and said: "You are childish, you cannot do such a thing in a short time, you must be more courageous. You need more hands and more eyes". Then he made his split head into eleven heads, and he gave him a thousand arms and eyes, so that he could work more strongly. And out of two tears, the green and the white Tara emanated, to help him in his work in a quick and swift way. This is why the action of Tara is connected to Chenrezig. I remember a story, which has actually nothing to do with this, but with having many arms. Once there was a weaver, he was weaving by himself, he was very poor. Once he went into the forest to cut wood for his fire. He saw a tree, and he thought: "This tree is too good, too young, too straight", so he did not cut it. He went to the next tree, and he thought: "This is also too good, I cannot cut it". This way he went on and on until he came out of the forest. The tree god - or goddess, I do not remember - became so happy with him, she appeared before him and said: "You are such a good person, you did not cut any of the trees out of your good intentions, I will give you something, just say what you want".

This weaver was not very clever, so he said: "I do not know what I want. I will go back and ask my friend and then come back tomorrow. Is that alright?" He went back and consulted his friend, what he should ask for. The friend said: "Why not ask for four hands? Then you could weave much more." The weaver said: "That is a very good idea".

The next day he went back into the forest, he prayed, and again the goddess came and asked: "What do you want?" "I want four hands, so that I can weave very well." "Are you sure you want four hands? Alright, there you have them". And he had them.

He went back. When people saw him, everybody ran away. He said: "Please do not run away! I am the same person!" The next day he came to another village, and he said: "I can do much more work than anybody else, because I have four hands!" But nobody went near him, and some people threw stones at him and some shouted: "You go away! You must be something terrible!" He did not get any work. He had to go back into the forest to ask the goddess to make the hands disappear.

You knew this story? I do not know where it comes from.

Of course Avalokiteshvara's, Chenrezig's arms are not like that.

This particular Tara practice is a terma one, terma means treasure-finding.

There are two types of teachings, karma and terma. Karma are the teachings that come from the oral tradition right from the Buddha's time, or whoever taught it, from there it comes from person to person, and from India to Tibet,

being translated. The lineage continues until now. The karma teachings are in the kangyur, that is the collection of the teachings of the Buddha, and tengyur, that are the commentaries.

This text is a terma, which is a different transmission, a different lineage. The terma teachings were composed mainly by Guru Padmasambhava, and also others, and they were buried at that time in different ways, and then later on found through different means, rediscovered by different people. Terma means 'treasure finding', they were buried somewhere.

These terma teachings are said to be more suitable to the time, because when Guru Rinpoche buried them, he buried them with the prayer, with the prophecy, that this would be rediscovered when there was a great need for this teaching, when the power of this teaching was most intense. When this practice was most suitable for the people of that time, then the teaching should be rediscovered. With this intention, with this blessing, with these prayers the teachings were buried. So when they are rediscovered, they are supposed to be the most suitable teaching of that time.

There are mainly three different ways of discovering these terma teachings. The first is satir, somebody gets a certain kind of intuition or inspiration or prediction, that such-and-such a teaching is buried in such-and-such a place. The person then goes to that particular place and digs it up, sometimes under the earth, sometimes in the rock, sometimes under the water, sometimes even in old shrine-rooms or temples or buildings or pillars. Satir means earth-treasure, because it comes out of the physical world.

Sometimes these kinds of teachings come out as real books, written by Yeshe Tsogyal or somebody of that time, you can just read it. But most of the time it comes in chog sir, what we call yellow paper, the paper got so old that it became yellow. There will be a kind of code language, some small things, the whole text of a volume will be maybe in one page. When the tertön sees it, if he is a proper tertön, then he can read it.

Another one is the gung tir, the mind treasure, mind terma. It comes into the mind of the tertön spontaneously, and the tertön has got to write it down. The strongest example of a gung tir was a tertön called Minjur Dorje, his teachings were called namchö. He only lived thirteen years, and his gung tir are about thirty or forty volumes. He could not write it down, somebody else wrote it down for him.

The third one is the tar nang, the pure vision treasure finding. To the person who is the tertön, in pure vision some Lamas of the past or certain deities or dakinis appear and give him the teachings. Sometimes in real vision in daylight, sometimes in the dream state. Then he remembers and writes them down. This particular teaching is described as the mind-terma of Choling, Chogyur Lingpa. He was one of the most famous tertöns in the 19th century, he was born 1829 and died in 1870. This was one of his terma teachings, and it was given first to Jamgon Kongtrul the Great, and Jamgon Kongtrul and Chogyur Lingpa put it into writing together, and Jamgon Kongtrul put it in the right form, he was very learned, more so than Chogyur.

All teachings, but the terma teachings especially, have a great blessing in them, because they are written by a really enlightened person, and are rediscovered by a great enlightened person, and discovered at a time when it is most appropriate. And between the tertön and the present there is very little time, so

the lineage is short, and the lineage is strong. In a long lineage, we do not know what happened in between, but in a short lineage, there is not much pollution in between.

This particular practice is done by all Nyingmapas and all Kagyupas as well. This practice has two sections, the first section is the general sadhana, the general prayers to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and second is a particular sadhana of Tara.

Now we are in the first stage. We just did the Refuge and Bodhicitta, and now we come to the Seven-branch-prayer.

The Seven-branch-prayer is very important, it is designed in such a way that it incorporates all the positive actions, and it deals with all the negative actions and emotions as well.

One most common way of dealing with our negative emotions is to develop, to strengthen, to cultivate the positive side. Take hatred as an example, it is the most heinous, the worst negative emotion, you cannot say that it has anything good in it. The logic is, that in order to get out of the hatred, for the hatred to get smaller until it disappears, the opposite, compassion, has to increase more and more. Any person sometimes has anger or hatred and sometimes doesn't. And when you feel compassion, you do not feel hatred, and when you feel hatred, you do not feel compassion. If this is the case, that you can sometimes feel it and sometimes feel the opposite, there is no reason why you cannot feel the positive side, say compassion, all the time, and no longer feel hatred at all. Because there are already times when you do not feel hatred - you have compassion, and when you have compassion, you cannot have hatred. So that is a very good, very strong indication, a strong sign, that you can do that.

The Seven-branch-prayer is not just a prayer, it is a practice, it is an exercise. Now we come to the first thing, that is the prostrations.

You may ask: "Why do prostrations?" What is involved in doing prostrations? It involves making yourself more humble, giving respect to somebody, giving homage. To give prostrations means that you are considering the person above you, you are submitting yourself to that person. This is exactly the opposite of pride. When you are proud, it usually means: "I am the best, I do not bow down to anybody. Maybe equal." Here you are humbling yourself down, not a little bit, but completely, you are touching your head to the ground, with your hands and knees and everything, what more humble could you do than going flat on the ground? This is the exact opposite of pride, the direct antidote to pride. You cannot prostrate and have pride at the same time - if you are really doing it. If you are doing it just as an exercise, it is a different matter. It is meant to be done more with the mind.

Here we are doing the exercise within the mandala of Tara, we say :

Jetsun pha ma drol ma tang

I pray to the Jetsun Pama Drolma. `Jetsun´ is a Tibetan word, a very respectful word for the ladies, it is something like `Noble lady´, but a little bit more than that. phag ma is in Sanskrit Arya. It is not the Arian, which the Germans believe they are from, this Arya shows the spiritual progress. So chu chewo is when one is an ordinary being, one is in the samsaric state of mind, I do not know what would be the English word, maybe it is yet to come. When you get out of that,

when you are above that, when you have seen the truth, when you have had the real experience of the true nature of things for the first time, from then onwards you are a phag pa, an Arya.

We also call it the first bhumi. There are ten bhumis, the ten levels or eleven levels. Once you reach the first bhumi you are a phag pa, an Arya. It is the same as the 'seeing stage' in the five stages in the Buddhist path. First is the 'Accumulation stage', then the 'Junction stage', then the 'seeing stage', then the 'Meditation stage', and then the 'No more meditation stage'. Out of those five, when you got the tong lam or the 'seeing stage', that is the same as the first bhumi from the Bodhisattvayana, and that is the same as the Arya. When you say 'Arya Tara', that means Tara who has gotten the enlightenment, above the first bhumi. Tara must be more than the eighth bhumi.

Maybe I did not explain the word Tara. Tara is a Sanskrit word, it means: to liberate, and it has a second meaning: to cross. It is the same in Tibetan, dolma, dol means to liberate or to cross. The name was given to this Bodhisattva, because she promised to liberate a hundred thousand beings a day, therefore she was called the liberator, the Tara.

'All the victors and their sons' means 'all the Buddhas', 'victor' is a direct, literal translation of jalwa, and se means the sons, here it means the Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas are sometimes called the fathers of the Buddhas, and sometimes the sons of the Buddhas. When they are called the fathers of the Buddhas, it means that without a Bodhisattva, you cannot have a Buddha. Sometimes they are the sons of the Buddhas, because they are the direct heirs - this is one of the most difficult words for me, I just learned to pronounce it this year, I used to say hire or hair, and people asked "what do you mean by this?" - they are like the princes, when the king passes away, the son becomes the king. In the same way, when a Buddha passes away, a Bodhisattva will become a Buddha.

Here it means, to all the Buddhas and all the Bodhisattvas, and also to other great beings, the Arhats and others, that reside in the ten directions and the three times, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that have ever been in the past, all of this time and this moment in all the places as far as there is space, and all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that might happen in the future, that means all the beings who are ordinary beings now, but will become Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the future. To all of them, that means actually to everybody, and in all ten directions, not just one direction, but in the East, the West, the North, the South, in the Southeast and Northeast and Southwest and Northwest, and above and below, in all these ten directions, however many there are, in all the three times, to all of them I make prostrations - like this .. whether they see it or not.

There is a silly story, it is not really necessary to tell . . . well, once I was going to the king of Sikkim, to give a katha for his birthday, everybody went at that time. Then the queen mother was coming down, far away. I was there, and my uncle, and many others. Uncle was showing his respect by(shows it), and I said "you are wasting your time, she will not see you, and even if she sees you, she would not recognize you, why are you doing this?", and I went like this ... (shows it). And she noticed it! And the next day, she phoned my boss, and she said: "This young Lama, who is so arrogant, he must be expelled from Sikkim".

He came to me and said: "What did you do?" I said: "I do not know. I did not do anything." "You have annoyed her Majesty the Queen Mother!" "But I never met her, I never talked to her" "You must have done something, she is very angry with you!" I was very puzzled. And later I found out, that she had noticed that I was not bowing. So you should do it, whether somebody sees you or does not see you.

So it is very important to pay respect not only to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past and the present, but also the future, which is even more important here. Usually when we become arrogant or proud, it is because we see somebody who seems to be worse than us, lower than us, and we think: "I am better than this person". When we try to see all other beings, even the lowest, foolish, most stupid beings, as future Buddhas and future Bodhisattvas, then you cannot really look down on anybody. When you exercise to give your prostrations to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past, present and also of the future, then you cannot have any arrogance, which I have.

The way you do this practice sometimes is that you multiply your body into hundreds of thousands of bodies, and then do the prostrations. That makes them even more effective.

That is the first thing, making prostrations, paying homage.

Then the second thing is making offerings,

me tog dug pö mar me dri
chäl sä röl mo la sog pa
ngö djor yi kyi trul nä bul
phag me tsog kyi che ssu ssol

"I offer actual possessions and manifestations of the mind: flowers, incense, lights, perfumes, food, music and so on. I pray to the multitudes of the Arya to accept them." Making offerings is the direct antidote to stinginess, to miserliness, to your attachment to your things. Therefore you make offerings of anything that you can actually offer, like flowers or incense or lamps or perfume or food or music and things like that, but not only that, but anything that you can manifest with your mind.

Attachment is within your mind. Sometimes people think that if you do not have anything, then you do not have any attachment. But I think that that is totally wrong. You can have nothing, but you can have lots of attachment, sometimes you even have more attachment. If I have the necessary clothes, if I do not feel cold, then I do not have that much attachment to clothes, I do not think of them too much. But if I am feeling cold, I am thinking of a really warm coat all the time. So even if you do not have anything, you can have attachment, and even if you have a lot, you can have no attachment. But it does not mean that if you do not have anything, you necessarily have attachment, that is also not true.

So you are making offerings of all you have as well as of those things that you do not have, but would like to have, the things that you think are very nice, very good, very wonderful. Anything you wish to have you imagine and you offer it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the mandala of Tara, in all directions and all time.

We can do it in what we call the `imaginary offering of Samathabhadrá´.

Bodhisattva Samanthabhadra must have been a very, very creative person, his way of imagination was very vast and great. He was creating a light from his heart, and on top of that all the offering goddesses and offering gods, holding all different kinds of offerings. And from each of them, another set would emerge, and it was multiplied and multiplied and multiplied and multiplied, so the whole universe, the whole of space was filled with people holding offerings, all different kinds of things. They were offering them to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from the past, present and future, even on one speck of dust he was imagining as many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as there are in all of space, and then he was making offerings to all of them, making it very very immense, limitless.

Making this kind of offering is to make our mind more open, more spacious, more giving. This is an exercise for our mind. All the exercises, all the training happens within the mind. If our mind, or our heart you can call it, is opening up, is big enough, then the actual giving, the actual things come naturally. Otherwise, to try to give something, without being really able to do it, that is not very much encouraged from the Bodhisattva's practice point of view. If you do something, if you offer something, give something, for which you feel regret afterwards, that is not a good offering, it is not the right kind of offering. If you make an offering, you should have no regret at all. When we try to train in this, we train in the mind first, because the mind is the most important thing.

There is a story about this, maybe you all know it.

During the Buddha's time, one of his greatest patrons, greatest donors, was a person called Anāpindika. He was a very very rich person, almost the richest in that region, but he was a stingy, a tight-fisted person. He used to come to the Buddha's teachings quite often. Sometimes the Buddha talked about the importance of generosity and things like that, and one day he went to the Buddha and said: "Well, I come to your teachings sometimes, and I like your teachings very much, but one thing I cannot do is giving. It gives me the most pain to even give something small. That I cannot do." The Buddha answered: "That you can exercise". "How can I do that? I do not like it." "Well, can you give to yourself?" "Of course I can do that." "Alright, so you take something in the right hand, and then you give it to the left hand, and you say: "Take this". And then again you give it to the right hand, and say: "Take it". Can you do that?" "Oh yes, that I can do!"

So he went back, took a big lump of gold in his hand, and he said: "Take it!", and gave it to the left hand, and then: "Take it!" and gave it to his right hand. He kept doing this, it was rather amusing. And slowly, slowly, after quite a long time, he started to become more open and generous, and started to give things. And after a while he started hosting the Buddha and his monks, he bought a big grove and offered it to the Buddha as a residence, and he started making homes for travellers and pilgrims and their cattle. He gave so much that he was called Anāpindika, anata means the protectorless, pindika means the giver of food, he was called the giver of food to those who have no protection, he became famous. I met a person in India who said that he is a descendant from this person.

Q: I understand that the translations we have of the Tibetan texts are not as accurate as the Tibetan texts themselves, does that mean that we have to

always recite them in Tibetan?

A: It is like this: it was not in Tibetan originally, it was in Sanskrit most probably, and then it was translated into Tibetan, and they recited in Tibetan. Before it was translated into Tibetan properly, they must have been reciting in Sanskrit, although the Tibetans have a very bad pronunciation of Sanskrit. At this moment it is in the same stage, a very early stage in the West, some of the translations are better than others, but not one of them is perfect. Some places do already recite in English or whatever, but most do recite in Tibetan, although they have the translation, like here.

For example, if you read here 'the victors and their sons', what do you get? In Tibetan, when you read this part, you can understand it.

Q: It is more poetic?

A: Not only more poetic. It is much more poetic, of course, but it also gives a certain feeling. Do you feel something when you say 'victors and their sons'?

Q: We understand the words.

A: After explanation, you understand more or less. But we have not yet found the correct - not the correct, the accepted terminology. Each translator is translating in a different way. So which is the one you would do? This is a transition stage. Of course, ultimately you have to do it in your own language. But until that right, perfect translation happens, maybe it is better - well, I am not involved in who does this or does not do this, but the tradition so far is kept in the Tibetan mode. Maybe some translations are quite good, but there is no complete consensus. And unless that is there, it would become rather unruly.

Q: I heard that there is more blessing in the Tibetan.

A: Yes, there is blessing in the Tibetan text, that is true. But you can have the blessing in the English text, when there is a realised person who has the authority to bless the text, then it is the same blessing, whether it is English or German, whoever comes first, I do not know.

Q: A good thing with the Tibetan text is, wherever you go in Europe, you can have your own Tara text with you, and everybody together says the same, French, German, English, Dutch, all these languages, we can come together when it is in Tibetan.

A: Yes, otherwise you cannot, four or five shrinerooms, Naroparoom for the Dutch, Marparoom for the English ...

Q: In this Seven-branch-prayer, you are always talking about prostrations. I do not find that in the text, I only find 'homage'. Do you prostrate or not?

A: In Tibetan kun ne means 'very much', tang wa is 'clear, pure', with great devotion, great clarity of mind, cha is the homage, the prostration, ji o means 'I do', I do the prostration.

Q: So in English as well as in German we have the wrong translation?

A: Is there a lot of difference between 'homage' and 'prostration'?

Q: Oh yes, 'homage' is to honour someone.

Q: Well, if we pay homage to somebody, we might as well prostrate, because we are humble to that person.

A: cha is prostration. There are different kinds of prostration, it is not necessarily like this ... (shows) .

Q: Prostration in an inner way?

A: Inner, outer, whatever, that does not matter.

Q: In an exclusive inner way, to do homage - huldigen in deutsch - it is from a

deep feeling inside, but it would not, in our culture, include prostration.
Q: Homage is in the mind, prostration is what the body does, it does not exclude it.

XE "teaching 5"

We are going through the Seven-branch-prayer, or Seven-branch-practices, and we discussed the first two, that is the prostrations and the offerings. Homage and prostration, maybe homage is the innermost kind of prostration, there is not much difference after all. The physical prostration is the expression of the mental homage.

Now we come to the third branch, that is the purification.

Sometimes they call it confession, but I do not think that is the right word. (Q: regret?) Regret is part of it. shapar is to purify, although that also does not really give the meaning. (Q: Sogyal Rinpoche said it was the same as healing) Well, kind of, but you cannot translate it like that. (Q: acknowledge?) It is actually purification. Let us read the English translation first, no need to read the Tibetan, because nobody understands. "I confess all the negative actions of the mind under the power of the kleshas: The ten non-positive and the five limitless actions since beginninglessness until the present."

You can read the German version, maybe it is the same, maybe it is different. The confession and regret is part of it, if you have done some negative deeds, or you had negative thoughts, the first thing to do in order to purify it, to make it correct, is to realise that it was not good. When you talk about regret from that point of view, you mean to say: "I realise the negative things that I did, that was not right, that was not good." To understand, to acknowledge, that is the regret.

When you understand that, and you express that it was wrong, and then you make a commitment: "I do not want to do it again", that is the second or third part of the process of the purification. And then, if you do something positive in order to get out of that, to counteract that, that is the fourth stage.

So the first was to acknowledge that the negative deed is negative. Second, to express, to confess, to articulate, "I have done that negative action and it is not good". Thirdly, because it is not good, I will not do it again, I will try not to do it again. And fourthly, to do something positive, something which is totally opposite to that negative deed. This four stage process is what we call the purification process. Then it is gone, finished, nothing left.

When you do this, it is not necessary that you first try to remember all the negativities you have done, and brood on them, how negative that was, how bad it was, that is not necessary. You say: "Whatever bad things I did in the past, those I remember and those I do not remember, what was not good, I do not want to keep them, I want to take them out. Whatever bad actions, whatever bad feelings I have, ill-will, hatred, all the things I have been keeping, I am letting them go, I am forgiving them, I am finished with them." You are not keeping the effects, the conditions, the habits, the patterns that you have acquired through all your past.

This purification is for the negative emotions, the practice for hatred, anger, ill feelings, to get out of that, to work on that. If somebody has done something bad to you, and you want to do something bad in return, these are negative

deeds, negative emotions, especially hatred. Therefore all these things, I do not want to keep them, it does neither good to me nor to others, it makes me sick, makes me suffer, because as long as I have that, the more I have that, in one way or another, I express it to others, if I have a grudge against somebody, then he or she is going to have a problem. Not only the persons towards whom I have ill feelings, but also others who are around me. If I have lots of ill feelings, lots of hatred, lots of grudges, then I will always be occupied, I will be closed and withdrawn. I will not be open and joyful. So anybody who is around me will also be affected, will not be happy. So it is neither helping myself nor helping anybody else. Therefore I would like to give it up, I would like not to keep it.

When you do that, when you have no bad feeling against anybody, then of course your compassion comes very easily, if you have no negative feelings, compassion and joy come up in us. The important thing is not to hold on to negative feelings. This does not mean that no negative feelings should come up in us, it is natural that negative feelings come up. But not to hold on, like if somebody did something bad to you, you do not say ten years later: "Oh, this person did something bad to me, now I will pay him back!" Forgiving is important. And when we forgive, we should not feel proud, it is not that you are very kind, and therefore you are forgiving it, "I am very good, so I forgive everything", not that, because by knowing that this is neither good for myself nor for anybody, therefore, why should I keep it? If there is something that is neither good for myself nor good for anybody else, I would not keep it, if I knew it. It is a natural process. I would not become very proud that I have forgiven everybody. If I am not completely foolish, I would simply do that. What it says here is: "I confess all the negative actions of the mind under the power of the kleshas". The kleshas are the negative mind-poisons, like hatred, arrogance, pride, jealousy, strong attachment, ignorance, all these are kleshas. Because of the power of the kleshas, because of these negative things in my mind - mind-poison is a very good translation - because of the mind-poisons, I have done these negative actions.

If I am hurt, if I have problems with others, then they have done the negative actions under the power of the kleshas. So whoever has done any negative thing to me, that is done because that person is under the power of negative emotions. And if I did something, I also did it under the power of negative emotions. It did not happen because of a very clever, a very clear mind, intelligently, wisely, but it happened without understanding properly, unwisely. Since that is the case, I do not want to cling to that, I want to give it up, I want to completely purify those things. These actions are produced by the mind-poisons, any of those actions, like the ten negative deeds. These ten non-positive, these ten negative deeds, maybe you all know them? Three of the body, four of the speech, and three of the mind. The three of the body are first killing, second stealing, third sexual misbehavior.

Then the four of speech are first telling a lie. Second slandering, creating discord between people, going to one person saying: "He is saying so many bad things about you", and then going to the other, saying: "He is saying so many things about you", either making friends into enemies, or making enemies into even worse enemies. Third is harsh words, if the way you speak or what you say is hurting others, unnecessarily hurting them by the way you speak or the

words you use, callously, hurting people here and there. Fourth is gossip, speech that does not give any meaning, no purpose, but which would give rise to negative thoughts, negative emotions in other people, either people get angry, or jealous.

Of the three non-positive or negative deeds of the mind, first is envy or covetousness, you see anything good that anybody has, and you think: "That person should not have it, I should have it". The second one is ill-will, hatred. The third one is wrong view, you have a completely opposite idea of what the things should be, than what they actually are. An extreme example would be if you say: "If I kill all these people, it is the best thing to happen to them". You have a completely wrong view, at different degrees, what is beneficial to people you think is not beneficial, and what is bad or negative or harming, you think is very helpful. If you have that kind of a mind, everything goes wrong. You are very confused.

The opposite of these ten negative deeds are the ten positive deeds, instead of killing to save lives, instead of telling lies, telling the truth.

The five limitless negative actions, the worst negative actions, are killing your father, killing your mother, killing enlightened beings, injuring a Buddha and splitting the sangha.

The main thing here is exercising to get rid of these negative feelings, especially the hatred. When we talk about dealing with the five negative emotions, the purification is meant mainly for hatred, ill-will, these kind of feelings.

Most people think about this quite a lot. Some people come and say that they have a great hatred in them, it seems almost like a solid round ball inside their heart. They say: "I have had this since my childhood, it is because something happened with my parents", these are the problems, because you don't know how to give up, how to forgive, how to let go. This is something very important to learn, how to get out of all these feelings of hurt. Once you feel hurt, you keep it very strongly, and sometimes people even make that as an identification. "I have this strong hurt feeling, that is me".

Once you have this and keep it as a central point, then it becomes worse and worse. Usually, if you have something very strongly negative, that grows, like a snowball. And if there is a little positive thing, that also grows. It is very important to let these strong negative feelings go as soon as possible.

Otherwise it can become a real problem, a source of constant suffering. If it becomes too big, it becomes more difficult to get out of it and give it up.

Therefore it is very important to work on this as much as possible.

Now we go to the next point, which is rejoicing.

This is to work with jealousy. It says here in English: "I rejoice in the merit of whatever good karma has been accumulated in the three times, by Shravakas, Patrekyabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, by ordinary beings and all others."

What it means to say is, instead of becoming envious or jealous about the good things that some other people have attained, accumulated, or achieved, instead of becoming angry or unhappy, you rejoice, you become happy, you appreciate that such-and-such people have done such-and-such. So if you see somebody having something or getting something good, even better than yourself, instead of saying: "Why should he or she have more than me?" you say: "That is very good, even if I could not have it, he has it, he or she is my friend, so very good, I appreciate it." From the spiritual point of view this is regarded as one of the

most important things.

Actually, jealousy is a very very bad, strong negative thing. So many good friendships are broken because of jealousy, so many families are broken because of jealousy. It does not give any good result to you. You are feeling bad, you are always suspicious, you are looking in a doubtful way, in a bad way. Even in a very simple, ordinary competition, it is not a good way of doing things. If you are just looking how this person is doing, how she is doing, how he is doing, even if you become a little bit better than these two people, you are wasting most of the time to see how the others are doing.

But if you are competing in a good sense, then you compete for the best. You try to achieve whatever you can, you try to do the best, so you do not have to look here and there. You save the time of sneaking after these people. You could become a hundred times better than this one or this one. And if you are not successful, if you cannot do that much, even then you do not have a bad feeling. You are not directly competing.

Most of the time it is happening in many places, in very ordinary working places everywhere, people in a company, people in a school, in the East and in the West, what we do is, we fight among ourselves, "My neighbour is doing this, he should not get these things." Even if I get a little pay-rise, say fifty pounds, and my neighbour gets one hundred pounds, I go to the boss and complain and say: "Why does he get a hundred and I get fifty? Either you give me also a hundred, or you give nothing to both of us".

Instead of getting happier by getting fifty pounds more, I become very unhappy, because the neighbour got more. This kind of thing will give us lots of stress and lots of hard feelings. If I am happy to get fifty pounds and also happy that he got one hundred pounds, maybe I will get more afterwards. Maybe he is paid one hundred, because he has some other qualities that I do not have. Or maybe he is the - in India we say the chamcha, that is the spoon - how do you call it? A yes-man, who is buttering up.

Anyway, this is the rejoicing with what others have, the complete opposite to being jealous. I want to be happy, others want to be happy. If you do it like that in one community, in one group, and if you look more broadly, and you work together, then there is space. They say there is always space at the top. The Buddha said that if you rejoice at somebody doing a very positive deed, you can get exactly the same amount of good karma, sometimes even more. There is a story, a very very traditional story. During the Buddha's time, there was this prince, who was hosting the teaching of the Buddha, and all the Sangha was invited to one place through the whole summer, and all the people were given food and drink, whatever they needed, it was a very big event. When it was finished, as it was the tradition at the time, the person went to the Buddha and asked him to dedicate these good deeds.

So after it was finished, he went to the Buddha and asked him to dedicate the good deeds, he said: "All this merit that has been performed, all the good deeds, please dedicate them". So the Buddha asked him: "In whose name should I do the dedication? Should I do it in the name of the person who sponsored it, or should I do the dedication in the name of the person who has accumulated the most merit through it?" The prince answered: "Of course for the person who has the most accumulation of merit, who got the best karma out of it."

Then the Buddha gave the name of an old beggar woman, who was sitting at the gate. And he said: "Whatever great deeds have been done by her, I dedicate". Everybody was very puzzled, they thought: "The Buddha is not a foolish person, but this time he is going out of his mind!" Maybe they thought that he was going senile or something like that.

Then Ananda, his attendant, stood up. He was usually the person who asked all the questions, because when he became the attendant to the Buddha, he gave a few conditions, and one of the conditions was that whatever questions he asked, the Buddha must answer. So anybody who had any question, they would go to Ananda and ask him.

So Ananda stood up and asked: "Why are you dedicating in her name? This lady did not do anything but beg at the gate." Then the Buddha said: "I know that this whole event was organized and financed by the prince. But this lady was completely rejoicing, she was very very happy that this person was doing such a good thing, wishing she could do the same, rejoicing genuinely and completely, without any negative feelings. Therefore she got exactly the same amount of good karma. But the prince had a little bit of pride, 'I am the one who is doing all this, nobody could possibly do such a big thing.' Therefore he came a little bit lower, and hers was even more." So if you really rejoice in an action that somebody else has done or is doing, you get the same good result.

Here, in this prayer or practice, we are doing this rejoicing, we think of the good deeds, the good thoughts, the good accumulations or attainments that have been achieved by all the Shravakas or Pratyekabuddhas or Bodhisattvas or Buddhas or all other beings of the past, all people now, and even those in the future. We rejoice, we are very happy, we appreciate the good things done by other people.

Actually the appreciation of the good deeds done by others is a very, very important thing, even in a society. How good a society becomes, how good a community becomes, depends on how much you rejoice, how much you appreciate the good things done by other people. If you really appreciate the good things, then that kind of action is encouraged, that kind of action becomes a fashion and everybody does it. If negative actions are rejoiced at, then that would become the fashion. When everybody appreciates the good things, then even those who do not really want to do that will pretend to do that.

Like establishing peace, not having wars, if it is appreciated by everybody, then it would become the most important thing, and those people who want to make a little bit of war would talk about peace. So the appreciation of the good deeds of others is the basic condition for that kind of action, the strength of that action comes out of the appreciation of the people. Of course, from the Buddhist point of view, all practices are more or less personal, if I appreciate, it is good for me, for my own progress. But if more and more people appreciate the good things, then it is good for the whole community. Therefore it is one of the main positive deeds.

Now we come to the next point, asking for, requesting the Dharma teachings, requesting what is called 'turning the wheel of Dharma'. Turning the wheel of Dharma people say is rather funny in English, it does not make much sense, but to me it makes a lot of sense. What it means to say is, we are requesting the great beings, the enlightened beings, to give those experiences, those teachings to us.

This is to work with our ignorance. Ignorance means that we do not know, we have no understanding, we are in darkness. So we ask for the teachings, for awakened expression. When we ask for teachings, it means that we are interested, we are enthusiastic to learn. When we start asking questions, when we become interested to become more and more enlightened or wise, that is the only way we can deal with our ignorance. Therefore we start with this prayer.

At the moment when we do the practice, the sadhana, we do it more at a mental, imaginary level. But when we exercise strongly on the mental level, then the wish becomes stronger, and then we actually do these things, it turns into the beginning of working with our ignorance. Asking for the Wheel of Dharma, asking for the teachings, the great teachings, the small teachings, the great or small yana, whichever is more suitable to different kinds of people, "give these teachings not only to me, but to all the beings", that is the prayer. The next is asking the Buddhas, the enlightened beings, not to go into parinirvana, a request to remain with us, not to pass away. "I pray that you look with compassion on all beings who are drowning in the sea of suffering, and that you do not pass into nirvana until samsara is emptied". This is a request and an appreciation of the enlightened beings, we genuinely ask them or want them to be with us and to work not only for me, but for all sentient beings. This is generating compassion for others.

Then you come to the last, the seventh point, which is the dedication.

The dedication is one of the most important parts of any Buddhist practice. We have three parts of any practice, first is the aspiration, then second the main practice, and then third the dedication. When these three things are done together, you have done a complete practice, whatever practice that may be. From the Buddhist point of view, the dedication should be as vast and broad as possible, the grander the dedication, the better it is.

We believe very much in what we call the *tendel*, that is a word that is very difficult to translate, the real, literal translation is interdependence, cause and effect. It means to say that even very small, insignificant events or conditions you create can manifest in very big and grand and important things. We see this all the time, like if you put two small wires together, you have electricity. The two wires are nothing significant, maybe just copper wires, but when you put them together, the whole house becomes light, it is like magic.

In the same way, if we do a small thing with a certain intention, and if we do it in the right way and at the right moment, it has a certain effect, which becomes very big. Therefore all these things like requesting the Buddhas to live long or dedicating the merit to all sentient beings, some people think it is just daydreaming or wishful thinking, with no effect, but we believe that because it is done with a strong motivation, with a good intention, therefore, if you do it in a good way, it has certain very strong effects.

It not only transforms ourselves - of course it transforms ourselves, because what we are is how we think, so if we have a different way of thinking, a different way of reacting, then we are a different person - but also the others, in a broader way, it has a very strong effect on them. That is the main idea. Therefore the dedication has to be very big. How big your positive action becomes does not really depend on what your actual action is, but on your aspiration and on your dedication. If you do something very big, very good,

very effective, the effect of that action is finished as soon as the result comes. If you think from the karmic point of view, when that karmic result comes, it is a good thing, but when it is finished, it is finished. But if you dedicate it for a very big cause, then it does not finish, it multiplies.

If you do a small good thing, and then you dedicate it for all sentient beings, then until the result comes, the good effect of this karma is not extinguished, not finished. So the more widely you dedicate, the better it is. And it is also a method of training to make your mind very wide and unselfish and open.

So therefore here, whatever good accumulations you have made by doing the six branches of practice or prayer, and by all the other practices and good deeds that you have done in the past, all good deeds that you are doing in the present, the good deeds that you will do in the future, all of them I dedicate to all the beings. Not just to one or two beings, or to this section or that section, or this world or that world, but to all sentient beings, anybody who is there, to all of them. And not only that, but that they become enlightened beings, that each of them becomes an enlightened being, towards that end, towards that big project, the biggest project ever, I dedicate.

The word merit - Shenpen Hookham says that she does not use the word merit, she uses the original Indian word punya, because she says that `merit` does not give the meaning. I do not know. Whatever the punya, the good action, I dedicate it, so it does not get exhausted until the project is completed.

This way of dedication is very unique to the Buddhists. They always start the dedication with "May all beings..", maybe they do not always think of all beings, but they always say that. And the usual practice is, even if you are doing a practice for another purpose, say you are doing Tara practice, so that you get a good new job, even then, you do the dedication first for all sentient beings, that they get enlightenment, then you do a little bit lower than that, maybe to have peace and prosperity in this world, and then a bit lower, that Germany may have lots of good things, and then that Halscheid will have good things, and then to yourself. That is the usual Buddhist way, not just say "may I get a good job", even if that is the most important thing for you at the moment.

So this was what we call the Seven-branch-prayer, not the Seven-line-prayer, the Seven-branch-practice. It is very common, you will find it in all sadhanas, you will find no sadhana that does not have it in one way or another. And not only in the sadhanas, it is a very important practice, because the seven points include very important methods to work with your own self. It is a way to work with your negative emotions, to deal with positive things, to do positive things, so that by highlighting the positive, the negative side becomes weaker. It is a very popular practice, which is done at every stage and in every vajrayana practice.

In this particular practice, it is not done once, but twice or thrice. So we think about it and try to understand it, and when we say the prayer, or when we do the practice, it acts as a reminder. But the main thing is that we keep these things in our mind during our day-to-day life as well. Our practice, which we do in the mornings or in the evenings or sometimes or some days, could also have some effect on our usual day-to-day life. That is the main purpose of doing the practice, that we can bring the effect, the profit, the benefit of those practices into our daily life.

Somebody was asked: "What is education?", and he answered: "Education is

whatever is left behind when you have forgotten everything that you learned." So after you have done the practice and forgotten about it, if something is left behind, that is your progress in the practice, that is the real practice.

Q: I have been practicing Green Tara, and I tried to integrate all the vajrayana elements, and I was thinking that since one of the mind-poisons is jealousy, and the mind-poisons are transformed into the five wisdoms, the five Buddha Families, and one is Amoghasiddhi, the green one, the wisdom is transformed into activity, so I was wondering whether the practice of the Green Tara was for this particular mind-poison.

A: In a way, yes. But when we talk about the five negative emotions and the five wisdoms and the five Buddha Families, if you say that you transmute the five negative emotions - there are different ways of dealing with these negative emotions. One of the ways of dealing with them, as we just said, is to do the opposite, so that the negative emotions become less, and the positive emotions become more. Another way of dealing with them, a more direct way, if you know how to do it, is to transform them, to transmute them into wisdom. When you talk about the five Buddha Families, it is not actually families, but it is the Five Wisdoms, and that is not five things, but five aspects. So when jealousy is transmuted, becomes wisdom, then it is Amoghasiddhi, the Wisdom of All-accomplishment.

Sometimes people have this misunderstanding that when one becomes a Buddha, since we say that then there are no concepts, no dualistic views, all-compassion, no negativity, people have the idea that he becomes nothing, like numb, like space, like coma, completely blank, not feeling. That is wrong. It becomes very vivid, very clear. But when the spontaneous arising happens, the force of emotions is still there, but it does not manifest as an emotion, it manifests as wisdom. That force comes, but you see it so clearly, you have no necessity, you do not make anything up, you do not feel jealous at all.

When you feel jealousy, you have all these connections, "This has been done to me by so-and-so, and this did not happen, and this should have happened, and I am feeling hurt, therefore I do not like it", all this complex of "This is me, and I am different from others, up to this much is me, and then others are others, and this is something I have had", if you do not have that, then there is no jealousy. That is the enlightened state, the All-accomplished Wisdom.

When one wisdom is there, all are there. It is not possible that you have just one wisdom accomplishment and nothing else. So when we say that Tara is the deity of activity, that is the family, but not necessarily all the time. You can have it in a different way, because all is one thing. It is a way of explaining.

Q: ..Amoghasiddhi, ...Samaya Tara, the female companion ...

A: That is different, kind of different. What you call iconography, it is impossible to explain, there are too many. Some refer to Dharmakaya, some to Samboghakaya, some to Nirmanakaya, and there are all different kinds of manifestations. Even the five Buddha Families are referred to in different ways. Most of the forms are created for your meditation, the main understanding is the same. You can say Tara is the same as the consort of Amoghasiddhi, or you can say it is different. If you say it is the same, it means it is the same enlightened state, you cannot say it is totally different. But then again, you cannot say that it is exactly the same, because it is a different form. Of

Avalokiteshvara, there are more than one hundred forms, and a hundred names.

Q: It seems very complicated. But there has to be a purpose.

A: There is a little purpose, maybe. I cannot say exactly why, but they say that there is lots of purpose, maybe there is lots of purpose. But it is quite complicated, there I can sure agree with you. The main thing that this tells us is that the actual forms are not important, the different ways of doing pujas, and little things like that. If you think that Chenrezig, Avalokiteshvara, has always four hands, if you really completely think that, it is wrong, not to make it solid, not to make it fanatic.

Once there was a Khenpo in Rumtek monastery, and at that time there was no shedra, the people were only interested in the ritual, not many people were studying. So he used to go to the people who were doing rituals very strongly and said: "Suppose, when I have to do two rolmo, two cymbals, and instead I did one, what would happen?" And people were very angry.

Once in Tibet there was a person very sick and dying, and a Lama was called. The Lama said: "You must remember the pure land and Amithaba", and he answered. "I do not remember any of them, I just remember these hot sizzling sausages that are heated in the hot ash", so the Lama said: "Well, Devachen, Amithaba's land, is full of these sausages, they are actually hanging from every tree. If you just lie down and open your mouth, the sausage will fall into your mouth. And by the way, even Amithaba has this red ashy colour". So the man thought of this and peacefully died.

Q: Where do the kleshas come from?

A: I do not know. They do not seem to have to come from anywhere, they are just there. I think I know what you want to say, more or less. That is what we talk about when we were talking about the wisdom and the kleshas. There is no basic thing which is there as klesha and bad. Basically it is just wisdom. But when we do not recognize that wisdom, when we get confused, then we get into the samsaric state of mind, we get the dualistic mind, saying: "This is me and this is the other, this is what I like, this is what I do not like", then, out of that, all the other kleshas come up.

Yesterday we talked about the Seven-branch-prayer, and today we come to the blessing of the offerings. As you all know, the vajrayana practice is mainly the sherim and sogrim, the developing stage and the completion stage, these two are the main trunk of the practice, the real essence of the practice. Everything is actually included in this.

Before we go any further, we need to talk a little bit about what the generation or developing stage is, because otherwise it does not make that much sense when we go through the parts where we do the generation and visualization and things like that.

sherim and sogrim are very much interrelated, you cannot do one without the other. When we talk about sherim, it is based on the principles, on the basic understanding of sogrim. If you do not have any understanding of sogrim, then actually you cannot do sherim.

The basis of the sherim practice is the understanding that there is the Buddha

nature in us, that there is the pure essence in us. All the negative things, the impurities, the problems, the sufferings, that we have, that we see, that we are, are a temporary defilement, something that has come out of our misconception, our ignorance. If we get out of that, then all these things can go away. If we have this understanding, then we know that these impurities that we see and feel around are a temporary thing, are something that is not completely part of ourselves, but an acquired habit, which can be changed. That is the basis. We are trying to understand the true nature of things, the way things really are. They are not what we think they are. All these things are very interrelated, the way we see things, the true nature of things, how we are affected by negative things, and therefore how we can be affected by turning them into positive things.

It is in fact quite difficult to decide what to begin with, with sogram or sherim, it is so interconnected. If we really understand, if we really know how to do sherim properly and exactly, then sogram comes naturally. And if you understand sogram and can really do it, have experiences with sogram, then sherim is that, there is nothing else you need to do, the sherim is automatically there.

But of course, in trying to learn about it, trying to train ourselves, we have to do it separately. And because sogram is more difficult, since it is the very essence, we start with sherim, without discussing sogram too much, because it is too complicated right away, right now. We try to concentrate on sherim - that also serves as shine meditation, it is a training of our mind. This is the main tradition of the basic general vajrayana tradition, that you start with sherim, and then slowly slowly try to understand more and more of sogram. The training process first starts with sherim, because if you try to understand sogram in the first place, you have to go right to the depth of it, the whole thing then comes into it. You cannot give the whole thing, it is difficult to talk about everything right from the beginning. Even if you try to say something, it cannot be expressed. Usually sherim is translated as developing stage, sogram as completion stage. In certain Nyingma traditions, in dzogchen, you say sherim, sogram and dzogpa chempo. If you just divide it, categorize it into two, then dzogpa chempo, chagja chempo (mahamudra), all this can be included in sogram.

When we talk about pure perception and impure perception of the things out there, there is nothing that can be called pure or impure; purity and impurity are in our own mind. When you give a name to things, when you give a concept to things, that is how we do it. For instance, we are now sitting in the gompa, the shrine room. Are we or are we not? We call this gompa. But some people may call it conference room. Or a classroom. If you call it a classroom, and see it as a classroom, then it is a classroom. If you see it as a gompa, then we see it as a gompa. If you see it as a concentration camp - you are here for one week, getting up at six o'clock, for what? For concentration!

We cannot really say that this is nothing but a gompa. The way we see them is the main criterion for what things are. Therefore, when we say that we try to purify our perception, make our mind pure, try to train, what happens is: At the moment we are more habituated to see the impure rather than the pure, we are more inclined, find it generally easier to have a more negative perception than a positive perception. Is it not so? For most people it is easier to get into a bad habit than in a good habit. It is very easy to develop a bad habit, but quite

difficult to develop a good habit. We are more used to that. We have more habitual patterns that way.

The whole training of pure perception, *shrim*, is to reverse that, to try and see it more purely. For instance, it is not difficult for us to be unhappy, have a bad mood, not too much is necessary, a little bit can get us down. But to make us really happy, really joyful, we need lots of things. And when everything is there, we expect to be joyful, but even then we may not become really joyful. This is the defect of not having pure perception. If you have pure perception, it would be very easy to be joyful and happy, and very difficult to be unhappy. You see everything as good, so why should we feel unhappy? In a way this is a direct training to feel the joy, the happiness and all the positive things more naturally, without having to have anything.

Usually, to make ourselves joyful and happy, we do not do anything directly, we do not say: "I want to be happy now", and then we are happy. No, we say: "Maybe if I had a nice watch, I would be happy. Or maybe if I had a nice cup of coffee, I would be happy. Or maybe if I had a big car." So again we become very unhappy because we need to get this watch and this cup of coffee, "I must get this cup of coffee! How should I get it?" I do all these things very strongly and with intense emotions, and then I get this cup of coffee, and then I drink it, feeling that if I drink this, I will be really happy. But when you drink it - nothing. It is alright, a nice cup of coffee, but. . . This is just an example.

To be able to feel just like that, without having to have a cup of coffee, or a watch, or a car, when you have pure perception, then this might come almost naturally. There is no reason why that should not happen. If we can feel unhappy and miserable just like that, without having to have a watch or a cup of coffee, why should we not feel good also?

When we do this practice of pure perception, first we try to have pure perception of the environment, and then the beings, ourselves. In Buddhist terminology we talk about the outer environment and the inner environment. First we try to see the place where we are as something very pure, good, like heaven, like the abode of Tara or Amithaba or Chenrezig or Guru Rinpoche, whatever you wish, it does not matter. And also the beings there, all people around you are also pure, like deities, like gods and goddesses. This is actually a training of the mind.

And then the offerings, the mandala offering, all these are not mental creations, but seeing the things all around us as pure. This exercise not only makes us strengthen the habit, the pattern of seeing things purely, but it also trains our mind so well, that our mind can come completely under our control - not really control, but it becomes completely flexible and manageable and what we call in Tibetan *shin jang*. That happens when you do lots of *shine* meditation, the last stage of *shine* meditation is called *shin jang*, that means that your mind comes completely under your control.

Have you seen this *shine* meditation chart, with yourself and an elephant and a monkey? The elephant is lead by the monkey, and runs away, and you are far behind, running after it. The elephant is your mind, and the monkey is the distraction. The distraction takes your mind away, completely out of control, and you are trying to catch up, but you cannot, because it is too fast. But then slowly, slowly, you move up, sometimes you can put a little bit of rope or something on the elephant, and have it a little bit under control, and slowly

slowly the monkey is pushed back. And slowly slowly your elephant becomes more and more tame, and at some time you it get tamed, and the elephant is following you, because you are leading it. And at the last moment, the elephant is so tame, that wherever you sit, the elephant comes and sits down, and you are riding the elephant.

We are under the control of our mind, emotions and feelings. Whatever our mind, our emotions say, like "I am totally angry!", even if we feel that that is not the right thing to do, we get angry and fight with other people. The more we get our mind under our own control, the more powerful we become, the more manageable our emotions are. And when we are completely in control of our mind, that is called shin jang, the completely trained mind. Shin means very much, jangwa means trained, completely tamed.

That is why we have so many different kinds of visualizations, so many different kinds of deities, so many different forms. If you are very imaginative and creative - it is a matter of controlling your mind, if you want your mind to see something totally different, totally strange, totally unheard-of, you are able to see that, to create that in your mind. Usually what we do, with anything that is familiar, we say: "That is alright, that I can think". But anything that is a little bit unfamiliar, we say: "That cannot be possible".

This way our mind is already structured and limited. Only the experiences of the past, whatever understanding or learning or concepts you already have, you rely solely on that, very short-sighted, very limited, too conventional. What we try to do with the shrim meditation, is that we try to get the mind out of these limitations and boundaries, and make it limitless, make it do as we want it to do.

If we say: "See myself as a deity", alright, you can see yourself as the deity. "See this shrineroom as the whole universe", and then you see the shrineroom as the whole universe. You do not say: "No, I cannot do that", but you make you mind do whatever you like. Sometimes you make yourself as big as a mountain, and sometimes as small as a mustard seed. Sometimes you completely disappear, and then immediately you reappear with a thousand arms and a thousand eyes. Or you disappear into a syllable like HUNG.

These are exercises to train your mind, to make it completely flexible and manageable. Then slowly, when you do that, when shin jang, the complete taming of the mind develops, with the same process, we purify it, we do away with seeing things as impure, and then replace it with the pure way of seeing things. And in the end not even that, we do away with the concept of purity and impurity, which is the greatest purity.

How do we do the visualization?

Here we have nine stages. First is möpa, aspiration. When we try to practice this visualization, this development stage, of course we cannot see clearly.

Many people come and say: "I have no ability to visualize. Visualization is something that I cannot do." But actually they do visualize, they do not realise that they visualize. Because without visualization you cannot do any planning, what I will do tomorrow or this summer: "I will go for a holiday to Hawaii, and then I will swim, and have a very nice time, the sun will be shining, the sand will be very warm", that is visualization. You cannot do anything without visualization.

But people say: "I cannot visualize", because you cannot visualize anything

which you do not have already in your mind, like somebody with four hands, you cannot think of that. We do not want to do it in a totally different way, a very strange way. Like if I tell somebody to think that this is the heavenly realm of Tara, "What do you mean? Of course not!"

What you mean by the first aspiration is that you say: "I cannot see this as the pure realm of Tara, but I would like to see this as the pure realm of Tara, maybe it is, there is no reason why it should not be, because the pure realm of Tara as well as the hell realm is also the way I see it. So therefore it could be the realm of Tara, so alright, let me imagine this as the pure realm of Tara". That is *möpa*, the aspiration. I do not see it, but I kind of feel that because we do the Tara practice, because we do all these things, I try to feel in my mind, that this could be the pure realm of Tara. That is the first stage. You cannot see it, but you feel it. So when you do the Tara practice, you try to imagine this as the pure realm of Tara.

Actually we are trying to change our feelings, to make us feel better, to make us feel pure. That is the first thing.

The second is the blessing. We evoke the blessings of the mandala of Tara, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and then we let ourselves feel, we let ourselves be influenced by the positive energies, the blessings of the deities, of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. And through that, when we feel that, we feel more reality, we feel the environment, myself and everything more purely, because we are thinking that we have received the blessings, the energies. This is the second stage, our feeling becomes more real and vivid. You are not able to see things clearly, but still we feel that it is pure, therefore our sense of purity becomes more acute, more strong, more sharp, because we feel the energy, we feel the blessings.

The third stage is that we create an image in our mind. One way of doing it is that you have a picture or a drawing, you look at the drawing, then you close your eyes and think of that and create an image in your mind. Like the nice beach on Hawaii, or even the beach in Barcelona called Belvadore.

When you can create this image in your mind, we come to the fourth stage, the vividness in emptiness. When we think of ourselves, visualize ourselves as Tara or Chenrezig, when we have created that image in our mind, we can think of ourselves as Tara, and when we do it more and more often, then the vividness becomes stronger and stronger. At that stage, sometimes we can really feel it, and we can have *vajal*, the pride of the deity.

In this process of doing the visualization, the *sadhana*, when you see yourself suddenly as the real Tara for a few minutes or a few seconds, sometimes you have this pride: "I have achieved something". At that time, thinking of emptiness is also recommended. Sometimes you can go a little bit wrong because of pride; your self-image, your self-confidence becomes too much based on your little bit of imagination. So you think of emptiness: "Although I am Tara, Tara is empty in a way, there is no substance". This way you bring down your pride, and at the same time, the vividness should last. This is quite an important stage in the development stage.

The fifth stage is called *vajra pride*. Because of the vividness of your experience, and because of your understanding of emptiness, you have this *vajra-pride*, you have a strong self-confidence, "Any moment I can visualize the deity, and I can become like the deity, and I can see the purity of things

immediately as I want". Vajra-pride is that you are getting very much strength in your control of your mind, in the way of seeing things. We can control seeing the pure side of it, we can do it whenever we like, it is not that sometimes it comes, sometimes it does not come. That is a very important stage of attainment in the shrim-practice.

When you have vajra-pride, you have quite a strong clarity, but your clarity is not complete. You can imagine yourself as the deity whenever you like, but you may not have the complete clarity. The clarity of the details still has to be improved, you concentrate on the clarity of things, and then it becomes more and more clear, and even very small, minute things become clear. The sixth stage is to establish the clarity.

Sometimes you may have a very clear view, a very clear perception of the whole thing, maybe just for a few seconds or a few minutes, and then again it becomes unclear. Maybe for a few minutes you develop a very strong clarity, but still then, we have not yet got what we call shin yang, complete control. So the seventh stage is to stabilize the clarity, by doing this again and again and by working on it and by getting more and more used to it, the clarity becomes more and more stable. The more stable it is, the more concentrated, the stronger your shin yang, your complete control of your mind is, your seeing of the pure state becomes very clear. The stability brings the next stage.

Once you have the stability - not only in this meditation, but in every meditation, even in shine meditation, even in lagtong and dzogchen and mahamudra, the first glimpse sometimes comes more quickly, and of course it has a positive effect, but it does not have the real power, the real meaning, it comes and goes. When you have the stability, then you actually have it. The eighth one is power. The more stability you have, the more the actual power of the meditation comes. Then you have the real blessings, the real powers of the visualization. You can help others, all different powers to transform things come.

That leads immediately to the ninth, which is called siddhi. We have two siddhis, the common siddhi and the supreme siddhi. The common siddhi means that you have the power to do miracles, to do healing, to do all these things that are beneficial for yourself and others. And the supreme siddhi is complete realisation of the true nature, becoming an enlightened being.

When you have reached this state, when you have this much mental control, this much purity, then it naturally comes. You see things clearly, and when you see things as they really are, without defiling your vision, defiling your perceptions, that is the enlightened state, the awakened state. And that is also the completion of pure perception. The completion of pure perception, seeing the true nature of mind and getting the enlightened state, in a way are almost the same thing.

These are the stages. This is how you try to train, and then the stages come. Some people

might have this experience sooner, some more slowly. The main thing is to be more relaxed, that is an important thing to be remembered. If you try to do this visualization, or any other practice, if you try to do it too hurriedly, "I have to do this within this time-limit, I have to achieve this", then it cannot happen. It cannot happen because what we are trying to achieve is complete relaxation, complete freedom. When you are trying to do it in a hurry, you are making your

mind more unfree, you are using completely the wrong method. Some people were talking, and they were saying: "So-and-so - maybe in America - has promised that he would be in retreat until he gets realisation. A Lama allowed him to do this." Then someone else said: "Oh, he made a mistake, he should not have allowed him to do that, he will come out after three or four years to say that there is nothing in this." Why? If you try to do it like this, with this ambition, then you cannot do it. That is what is actually preventing you from doing it, this "I must do this", all these tensions and limitations, this running after what you want.

When we do this kind of thing, we have to be in the moment. First we may think: "I will do this and this", but when you do it, you have to be completely relaxed and not be bothered whether anything is happening or not, whether anything is there or not. Patrul Rinpoche used to say: "The best meditator should be like a cow, eat, shit and sleep." If you have a strong ambition, that will restrict you, you have already created the tension, the barrier. By creating the tension, you make yourself lose. That is a big contradiction. Therefore it is very important to know how to relax, how to give in, how to let things come and let yourself be influenced, you can say possessed if you like.

Q: This might be a silly question. To find the seeds of the qualities of Tara in me, I find that very beautiful and very helpful. But to see myself as Tara - can I see myself as bright green?

A: What is wrong with bright green?

Q: Why green? The other Taras are red and blue and yellow and white. Why green?

A: Why not?

Q: A lot of people think that green is a good colour.

A: Green is as good a colour as any other colour. Why not green? Well, green is the colour of action, for swift action the green colour is used. Green Tara is the Tara of action, the Tara of activity, the Tara of accomplishment. This particular Tara is also sometimes called the Tara of the sandalwood forest.

Q: And the colour red?

A: Red is usually the colour of power. Out of the five activities, white is for purity, for purification, for long life, peaceful. Yellow is for increase, expansion, development, red is for power, control, ruling, blue for wrathful activities, subjugation, conquering, also overcoming, and green, as we said before, is for activity, achieving, realising.

Q: When we practice Tara, and we do not have the empowerment, what is the difference between practicing with or without the empowerment?

A: Usually you should have the empowerment for any vajrayana practice that you do. But this Tara practice is Kriyayoga, and therefore even if you do not have the empowerment, you can do it. But you need to have a lung at least.

Q: ...if a teacher is doing the puja, and you read the text?

A: That is not taken as a lung.

XE "teaching 7"

This morning we discussed a little bit about what sherim, the visualization or development stage is. That should be an introduction to what we will go

through now. I hope that has made it a little easier to understand or to do the following.

So now we come to the `Blessing of Offerings`.

As we said earlier, this practice has lots of offerings, four times mandala offerings and many times offerings. Offering is a major part of this particular practice.

The usual way of making any kind of offering in the vajrayana practice is to bless, to purify and to multiply the offering, these are the three things that are usually done.

Here it is done with a mantra first:

OM BENDZA AMRITA KUNDALI HANA HANA HUNG PEH.

The translation given here is `Om Vajra`, no translation for vajra, `swirling`, that is kundali, `amrita` is left as amrita, sometimes it is translated as nectar or ambrosia, `hana hana` is translated as `kill, kill`, it is actually more like `beat`, the rest is not translated. It is quite difficult to translate anyway. Some mantras have a very important meaning, some have not so much meaning, some are very much mixed up with different languages. The meaning of the words is not the important part in the mantra, the important part is the person who made it. Usually it is like this: At a certain stage of your spiritual development, your awakening, there is something called darani. Once a person has attained the power of darani, it means that he or she can bless or create any kind of mantra, or any syllable or sound, he or she can transfer his or her energy or blessings into those words. If the person who makes the mantra is very highly attained, it can be any sound, but the effect of the mantra is there.

This particular mantra is to bless, to transform everything, whatever offerings, into amrita. amrita is nectar, ambrosia, something that is very delicious, very healing, life-giving. The Indian legend is that when Mount Meru was churned by the divine beings of that time, out of that came the sun, then the moon, and then the amrita. The gods took the amrita, because the gods were more clever, so the gods became gods, and the rest became the rest. So amrita is what makes the gods immortal.

OM SOBHAWA SHUDDHA SARWA DHARMA SOBHAWA SHUDDO HANG,

these two are actually together. OM is in the beginning of all mantras, OM is taken as the origin of all sounds, and therefore the origin of everything. If you do not say any syllable, if you do not make any movement of your tongue, what kind of sound do you make? That is OM. Well, OM is a more refined form of that.

SOBHAWA means by nature, SHUDDHA is pure, SARWA DHARMA means all things. DHARMA has many different meanings, here it is everything, all phenomena. SOBHAWA SHUDDO means naturally clean, naturally clear, intrinsically, in it's basic nature it is all pure. SHUDDO HANG, it is like that, everything is naturally pure.

This mantra is to remind us that in essence there is nothing which is impure, everything is pure. Because whatever is impure, or even the concept of impure

or pure, are our own addition. There is nothing which is pure or impure. So everything is completely pure by nature, anything, including our own mind. Anything that is impure is our own addition, our own contribution. So if you take your own contribution out, then everything is pure. If you understand that, there is no difficulty in understanding pure vision.

By saying this mantra in the meditation, you think that everything, the offerings that you have displayed, or the offerings that you have in your mind, everything first dissolves, and out of that dissolution one creates offerings which are completely pure in form. With this mantra you make that happen in your meditation, in your imagination.

nä yul pemo kö pä ching
yib dang gyänn kö tsä me par
lha dzä ting dsin lä drup pä
tschö dsä ssam mi kyap par gyur

This is the creation of the pure land, or the pure offerings.

“In this place appearing as the Realm of Arranged Lotuses”, pemo kö pä is a name, Tara’s pure realm. Everything around us, the whole environment, we think has become the Realm of Arranged Lotuses, and it is arranged in immeasurable shapes and ornaments, very very beautifully, all the good things, as you wish it to be. “Within its immeasurable arrangements of shapes and adornments there appear divine substances, inconceivable offering substances, manifested from samadhi.”

In this land, which is pure, we are first visualizing the environment that we are in, not small, not just this room, but the whole world we visualize as the heavenly realm, and in that everything is perfect. From our own samadhi, from our own meditative power we manifest, we create, all the substances, all the good things that are needed to offer, very very many and very good, whatever we can imagine.

While creating this, we say this mantra:

OM BENDSA ARGAM AH HUNG / PANDAM / PÜPEH / DÜPEH / ALOKEH /
GENDEH / NEWIDEH / SHABDA.

ARGAM is water for the mouth, drinking water. PANDAM is water for washing the feet, washing water. PÜPEH is pushpa, it is the Tibetan pronunciation, which is not really correct, pushpa is flowers, all different kinds of flowers. DÜPEH is incense and all kinds of good-smelling things. ALOKEH is lights or lamps, very beautiful things that we can see. GENDEH is scented water, perfume. NEWIDEH is food, any good things to eat. SHABDA is music. All this, et cetera, all the good things are created.

When you say:

OM BENDZA SAPHARANA KAM,

then all these things are multiplied again and again and again, into inconceivable, immeasurable things. It is the mantra of multiplication. The translation is “Om vajra spreading throughout space”.

Now we have performed the blessing of the offerings, by first purifying them, then blessing them, not only blessing the things that we have, but creating an immeasurable, grand offering, and then multiplying it. That is how we have created the offerings.

Usually when you say OM BENDZA AH HUNG, that is the blessing of the offerings. When you do the mudra, you do not do like this (snap). Later, when you say TRATITSA SO HA, then you are offering, that is the actual offering, then at the end you do like this (snap). That is the difference between the blessing and the offering.

Now we do the actual offering. First we make the offering to what we call con chu shin chu, the general offering to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, not just Tara and her mandala.

tschog tschu dü chi lama gyal wa ssä dang tschä pa
tham tschä dün gyi nam khar bendsa samadsa

"All the Gurus, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas of the ten directions and the three times, please come here". With our mental message, we invite all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Gurus, all the enlightened beings of all the directions, of all the times, past, present and even future ones, nothing is excluded here, everybody is invited. And we think that they are all here around us, so we can make the offering.

ma lü ssem tchän kün gyi gön gyur tching

ma lü means everyone, without any exception, sem tchän kün gyi all beings, gön gyur tching is their protector, giving protection to all beings without any exception.

du de pung che mi ze jom dze lha

The one who conquers, who demolishes all the negative forces, all the maras. Maras - I do not know whether I should go into it. There are four kinds of maras. It is mainly anything that is an obstacle, all obstacles are called mara, maybe that is the best thing to say. An obstacle is obstructing you to see the truth, obstructing you get awakened, to get enlightenment. So the mara is more inside than outside.

The beings who have conquered the maras, who have vanquished the maras.

ngö nam ma lü dji chin khyen gyur pä

means those who have seen, ngö means things, phenomena, everything, ma lü the nature of everything, dji chin as they are, khyen gyur pä have understood, seen, realized. "Understood all things as they really are" - that is a Buddha, that is an enlightened being.

tchom dän khor tchä nä dir sheg ssu ssol

all those kind of beings, tchom dän, Bhagvans, khor tchä, with all the retinue, please come here, that is the translation, it is the same here, only a bit upside-

down, to make it nicer, I think.

PEMA KAMALYA SATOM

“Seated on your lotus-seat”. Just asking them to sit down.

Now we think of that, and then we make the actual offering with another Seven Branch Prayer. This Seven Branch Prayer is taken from a sutra called samkochöpemönlam, in Sanskrit Aryapadracharyaprana. It is a very famous text. Every year in Bodhgaya there is a gathering of monks, and they recite this prayer a hundred thousand times. In Lhasa, in the Jokang, there is no other prayer done, only the mönlam. Every year there used to be a big prayer meeting in Lhasa, many many thousands of monks came together.

This is a small, maybe ten or fifteen page long prayer, which comes from the sutras. In Buddhism there are three texts which they call the three kings, the king of the sutras, the king of the tantras, and the king of the wishing prayers. The king of the sutras is lotupa, if you understand that, then you understand all sutras. The king of the tantras is called jampal senjö, the Manjushrinamasangita, the praise of Manjushri’s name, that is one of the most important tantras and it is said that if you knew that tantra, then you would know all other tantras. The king of all the prayers is this samkochöpenmönlam, because all other prayers are included in this. This is the kundusampa, Samanthabhadra’s prayer, the grand wishing prayer. The Seven-branch-prayer is part of the samkochöpemönlam, so this is very very popular.

Since we have gone through the Seven-branch-prayer already, we do not need to go through it now. This is more elaborate than the last one. If you go through it, and there is anything that you do not understand, then you can ask me.

After this you make a mandala offering. Sometimes you make the thirty-seven-point-mandala-offering, it is not in your German translation, sometimes they do not do it, due to different traditions in different monasteries. The mandala-offering that in is the actual text is here, OM AH HUNG (short part missing) ... After saying OM AH HUNG, you do the actual mandala-offering. When you say mandala and mandala-offering, that is two different things. Mandala-offering means a very big offering that includes everything. When you say mandala, it is . . . a circle, a family, a center and its periphery, so when you say "The mandala of Tara", it means Tara and anything that is connected to her. Here, when you say mandala-offering, it means an offering that has all its parts, anything that is needed or necessary, a complete offering.

The words here are: “I have manifested an unceasing great mass of clouds of offerings of Samantabhadra” - the offering of Samanthabhadra is discussed very much in the sutras. One thing was very interesting, Shenpen Hookham, who came here last time, said that she had great difficulties with this visualization. Earlier when she was doing these practices, she did not know what she was doing, although she was doing everything and everybody was telling her: “Very good, you are doing well”, so she was doing it nicely, but she thought: “Why am I doing this?” Then she started reading the sutras, and then she understood everything clearly about the tantric practices, why you are doing this.

That is very significant, there are lots of connections. Unless you read the sutras, you do not understand some of the things that you do in tantra. The

offering of Samanthabadra comes many times in all kinds of tantric practices. But what is Samanthabadra's offering? You have to read the Samanthabadra sutra, then you have the complete, detailed, five hundred page long description of what the Samanthabadra Offering is.

But to tell you in brief - I think I told you before - it is a mass of clouds of offerings, and from each offering-god and offering-goddess, offering-bearing being, another cloud with the same amount of offering-beings and offerings is manifested, and in this way it multiplies, there is no limit, an offering completely beyond limit.

In this form of Samanthabadra's offering, which is inexhaustible, in this way I offer my own body, my speech, my mind, my possessions, even the good karma I have accumulated, the results of all the good deeds that I have done, all of that I offer, in the form of the four continents and sun and moon or anything that is good, anything that is wonderful, anything that I think is valuable, I create those forms and then I offer them to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, I offer them to the Lama, Yidam and kandro, that means the Guru, yidam and the dakinis, the dharma guardians and the deities of wealth, the Buddhas of the future, the Bodhisattvas, to the beings that are in not so good situations, that need to be given things, up and down and everywhere I make this great offering.

OM GURU DEVA DAKINI SARWA RATNA MANDALA PUDSA MEGHA AH HUNG

This is the mandala-offering mantra. OM GURU, to the Lamas, DEVA, the Yidams, DAKINI, the kandros, SARWA RATNA MANDALA, precious mandala, PUDSA, offering, MEGHA, like a cloud, AH HUNG, I am offering all these clouds of offerings. It is a very grand offering, there is nothing which is not included there, nothing that is not included because you have any attachment to it, or envy, or that you like or want or treasure. Therefore it is a complete offering. When you offer this again and again, you become more and more open. It is a very important exercise to open yourself up and give.

After you make the mandala-offering and the offering of the Seven-branch prayer, now, because you have accumulated so much punja, so much merit, so many good actions, you make a prayer, a kind of dedication, not really a dedication, a wishing prayer. The wishing prayer is regarded as very important, when you strongly wish something, consciously or unconsciously, you try to do something in order to make that happen. Especially when you have done a very positive thing, then you make a great wish, a good wish, and then the positive action makes the fulfillment of the wish even quicker. Wishmaking, good wishmaking, is supposed to be very important - if you make bad wishes, especially after doing a good thing, then it is very bad.

You know the story of the Boudanath Stupa? It is said that this stupa in Nepal, was first constructed by the lady who looked after the chicken of the king. She was very devoted to the Buddha of that time, and she wanted to make a stupa, but she did not have any land. One day she went to the king and said: "Could you give me a small piece of land, so that I can make a small tshörten, a stupa?" The king said: "How much land do you need?" She said: "Not too much, as much as an ox-hide can cover." The king said: "Take it, take it!", and he asked somebody to give this lady what she wanted. What she did, she cut this

full hide of an ox into a thin strip, and then she made a large circle around the land and said: "This is what the king talked about". Nobody could say anything, because when the kings give their word, they cannot take it back. So she got the land.

She was hard working, she worked on it, but before finishing it, she died. She had three sons, they worked on it and finished it. When they had finished it, they made a celebration and made prayers. The first one said: "May I be the one to bring the teachings of the Buddha to a place where there are no teachings, in the dark area of the country", that was Tibet. The next one said: "May I be able to give him all the necessary help to translate and bring the teachings." The third one said: "May I help to destroy all the obstacles that might happen at that time."

Then there was an ox that they employed to bring mud and stones, but they forgot about the ox. The ox was sitting there, waiting that they would say something good about him. But they forgot. So he got very angry, and he said: "I will make a wish which is totally against these people there, they are ungrateful, they used me to do all this work, and now that it is finished they forget about me. I should become somebody who destroys all the work that they have done." There was a bird nearby, listening to this. It was also a little bit involved, and it thought: "That is very bad, it should not happen like that. I should become somebody to destroy this person's wishes, to obstruct their fulfilment."

It is said that the first person, who wished to bring the Dharma to the land of barbarians was the king Dritsung Detsen, the Tibetan king at that time. Another one was the Khenpo Bodhisattva. The third one, who destroys the obstacles, that is Guru Padhmasambava. One or two generations after them was the king Langdarma, who tried to destroy everything, so that was the ox. Then there was another one, called Lalong Paldur, who killed this man, that was the bird. That is how it is said to be.

What it means, what I was talking about: If you do something good - because it is also said that all the powerful negative people in the world, they have also done very positive things, and made a strong negative wish, and then they become those powerful negative people. Therefore, especially if you do a big positive thing, make a very big positive wish, so that the result comes in a very good way.

Q: Who was Lalong Paldur? Another king?

Lalong Paldur was a translator and a monk. I got the relics of Lalong Paldur in a very strange way. Somebody of my country bought a small image of Tara, at a very low price. Then he wanted to sell it, and somebody came to buy it, and they bargained, and then it was fixed, tomorrow he was going to sell it. In the night, he dreamt of me, that I was saying: "Do not sell this image". So in the morning he was puzzling what to do, and he opened it before selling it. And there he found the relics of Lalong Paldur in it. So he did not sell it and he gave me part of the relics.

Now here in the prayer, first you go for refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and the Yidam, Dakinis and Guardians, and say that these are all one, they are not separate, but manifestations of just one wisdom. To this I go for refuge, and I seek your guidance all the time.

Then the main prayer is that we may get the blessings of this all the time, that

there may not be any diseases, no harm to anybody, that life and good fortune should increase, that all the wishes of everybody without exception should be fulfilled in harmony with the Dharma - the bad wishes should not be fulfilled. This is mainly the prayer given here. Then if you have any other prayers, you can add them in your mind. This is the wishing prayer.

Now you do the actual Tara practice.

First the Tara visualization and Tara invitation,

rang nyi kä tchig drän dsog ssu
dje tsün phag mä kur ssäl wä
thug kar da teng tam djang gu
de lä ö ser pag yä thrö

Here it says that instantaneously, with one thought, in one moment, I become Tara, I visualize myself as a Tara in just one moment.

What does Tara look like? I think most of you already know. This Tara, who is called the singny talche dolma, the sandalwood-forest Tara, is green in colour, sixteen years old (Someone: too young! A teenager!), very beautiful, decorated with precious jewel ornaments, dressed in a colourful skirt and top, the breast covered with very thin silk. With curled hair, the hair on the left side stroked backwards, the right side hanging curly a little in front - I have been doing some research on this.

The right hand is in the posture of supreme giving, like this, the left hand holding the stem of an utpala flower at her heart, like this, in the kuchu sumche salja, the mudra of the Three Jewels. The Upala-flower is blooming at the level of the ear. Usually it is a blue flower, there is also a white Upala. It is not a lotus, it is grown on the land, maybe some kind of lily, but not growing on the water. Sometimes on top of that is a wheel, but sometimes not. She has a moon as a backrest, and she is sitting with the right leg down, that is called the 'sitting on the chair'-posture, but only one leg is down.

Then we think of a green TAM, the letter TAM, at the heart of Tara. From the TAM radiate immeasurable light-rays, and all twenty-one manifestations and all the mandala of Tara are invited. That is the visualization.

The actual words of invitation are

TAM kye me ö ssäl tschö kü ying
gag me phag mä ye she kur
gang dul gyu thrul dra war shar
tsur sheg arya tare das

Maybe you can look at the text: "The unborn Clear-Light expanse of the Dharmakaya arises as the unobstructed Jnana-Body of the Arya, as the network of manifestations, whatever will tame (beings). Come here, ARYA TARE JAH: Come Arya Tara." Can you understand the meaning?

It has actually a very deep meaning here. 'The unborn Clear-Light expanse of the Dharma', this is explaining what we call the true nature of mind, or the enlightened state, the unborn nature. 'Unborn' is a very important word in Buddhist philosophy.

When do you say 'unborn'? For example this glass is unborn. Where is the

glass? What do you mean by `this is a glass`? What is it made of? Sand, many things, a compound thing, if one part is not there, then the whole thing is not there. So each part is dependent on the other. When you see this glass, it is made of many things, there is the bottom, there is the wall, there is the gap inside, there is the rim. If you take out the rim, or the bottom, then there is no more glass. Each of them is again many parts, not one. When you take this apart, maybe you come down to the atoms, and also the atoms are made of many parts.

From the scientific point of view, even the tiniest atom, or electron, the tiniest particle, can be divided until it becomes a kind of energy. And when it becomes energy, that means that it is not there. So all of this is made of energy, almost nothing. At the same time, it is a glass, you can see it, but when you look very carefully, there is nothing in it. The glass is not really born, even when it is there, it is not there. That theory, that understanding, is called `unborn nature`. Like everything, you can see it, but when you look closely, then it is not really there, there is no substantial reality in it.

Even the mind, when you say that this is our mind, where is our mind? This moment, that moment? This thought, that thought? If you take those things away, then there is nothing which you can really say `this is my mind`. All of them together you can call your mind. But when that is happening, it goes and goes and goes - we make a concept of it, `this is the mind`, otherwise there is nothing.

When you understand that clearly, in a very experiential way, then it is the `Clear Light`, that you can call wisdom. There is no need of any limit, there is no limitation, there is no restriction, there is no `mine` and `yours`, there is only the clear light. There is all the divinity, there is all the wisdom, there is all the things, but still at the same time - there is the thoughts, but no thinker, there is seeing, but no seer, there is experience, but no experiencer. So all the thoughts are not entangled, all the experiences, there is no grasping, because there is no grasper. That expanse, that state of mind, that state of being can be called the `Clear Light expanse of the Dharmakaya`. That is the enlightened state, of Tara or anybody else.

Out of that enlightened state, all the manifestations arise. And those manifestations are unobstructed, they call it the `unobstructed wisdom-body`, because there are no limitations, no control, nothing that is obstructing it. XE "tape 7" That is how we manifest Tara. Tara manifests wherever she is needed, wherever there are the right conditions. She manifests to help all beings. Not only Tara does this, but all enlightened beings. It is not that sometimes when you ask for Tara to come, Tara does not come, because she is too busy. That cannot be, that is not the way things are. She does not really have to come, when we understand the clear light, she is already there all the time. We do not really have to ask her to come, because she is already there, always. So this is our way to invite Tara.

Then here it says: "Due to your love for myself and beings, through the power of Your miracles, for as long as I make offerings, Bhagavani remain, I pray." This is to say, to feel, that Tara has lots of compassion, lots of love for all beings, including yourself. With this warmth and with this strong connection, we request that as long as I make offerings, they remain with us, PEMA KAMALAYA SATOM, "a lotus-seat for You". We actually feel that the Tara-mandala is in

front of us, so then we can make the offering.

Q: ... potential of samsara, that you are offering?

A: No, you are just creating offerings that multiply and do not finish. It has nothing to do with samsara.

Q: I see it as a kind of exchange.

A: Exchange for what?

Q: It is like when you make out of the first thoughts something more than it is, it can be -

A: It is alright, you can make it anywhere, different people have been doing it differently. I have heard a story from Poland, there they have a strong tradition, when there is a party, a marriage party especially, then they really insist people to eat and eat. Once somebody arranged a marriage and everybody was invited and everybody was fed, the best of everything, so everybody was very happy and enjoyed.

But the father, who arranged the marriage, was becoming more and more sad. After three days somebody came and asked him: "What is it, everything is going so well, everybody is saying that the food is phantastic, that everything is phantastic, everything seems inexhaustible, no lack of anything, so why are you becoming so sad." He said: "I was preparing for this feast, this marriage for three years, I thought it should be best possible thing. But these people have been eating for the last three days, and still they are eating. That means that they are still not full, they are not completely satisfied, so something must be wrong." Then everybody started to pretend: "I cannot eat anymore!" And nobody ate anything anymore. Then he was very satisfied that now they were really full.

Q: ... translation of the word `unborn`, what does it mean in Tibetan ...

A. That means ma means negative, che means born, so ma che means not born.

Q: The Tibetan giving birth starts earlier than our understanding of giving birth, we mean the baby coming out, the Tibetans mean -

A: No, no, the Tibetan thinking of giving birth is also the baby coming out.

There is no difference there. Some people writing on Tibet, they got the wrong idea. The Tibetan way of counting the years, they are not very particular about the month, they are very relaxed about time. So when I am born, say, on the thirty-first of December, then on the first of January I have set the New Year, so I have a birthday, because in Tibet the birthday is at New Year. So the mother would say: "he is one year old", because he has had one birthday, not because he was in her womb for nine months. If he was born in `94, then in `95 she would say that he is one year, maybe he is only one or two months, or three or four months, or seven or eight months, that does not matter.

Q: The Unborn Light beyond all manifestations, what is that?

A: The unborn nature is within all manifestations, it is not beyond all manifestations. When we talk about the nature of things, when we look into the actual real essence of this manifestation, then we find the unborn nature, that is what we mean by unborn. It does not mean anything different. What is manifested, when we look into the way the manifestation is, then we find at the end that it has an unborn quality. But `unborn` may not be the right word.

Q: ..I have to think over it.

A: You will not understand it, if you do not have - you need to discuss it in a more philosophical way first, if you really want to understand it deeply.

XE "teaching 8"

Yesterday we came to the visualization of Tara as yourself, and then the invitation of the Tara-mandala in front of you. Now when we have this strong feeling, this strong presence of the Tara-mandala - if one has a better understanding, of the true nature of our mind, better understanding of Dharma, you can say, better understanding of the Three Kayas, better understanding of the enlightened nature, then we can have a more realistic, a stronger feeling of presence. But for us now, although we may not have the complete understanding of this, we still try to feel the presence, and then try to make offerings.

Now here is the general offering to Tara, "OM Having completely filled the Dharmadatu with Samanthabhadra's offering-clouds of mental manifestations and actual possessions, I offer them to Arya Tara and her entourage." We have mentally manifested, mentally created Samanthabhadra's offering-clouds, and now we try to offer them, as well as all the actual offerings, actual possessions that we have. We really try to offer them completely, openly, without holding back, without any miserliness, without clinging to anything.

Next, these mantras, the seven offerings, this is a very common thing. There are two ways, usually, in most of what we call the new tantras, there are the five offerings. And most of the old tantras, old translation tantras, have the seven offerings. The new tantra offerings are pupe, dupe, aloke, shapta, rupa which are flowers, incense, light, food and music. Most of the old translations have these seven offerings: drinking water, washing water, flowers, incense, light, scented water, food and music - it is actually eight, but we make seven offering bowls. The seven bowls represent the seven offerings, the eighth one is somewhere else.

The first one is argham, usually you put water in it. The second one is padam, you also put water in it. The third one is the flower, as you can see it. Fourth one is the incense, that you can see as well. In this way, when you make the eight offerings, you put the light, the lamp, separately, not in a bowl, but on its own. Then the next one usually you also put water in, that is supposed to be the scent - you know the `samsara` scent? (Translator: There is a perfume called `samsara` - some people put a bottle of perfume on that bowl, of course this is not traditional, putting perfume in the bowl.) The next is food, here you see the cake for the gods. The last is music, here I think you have put a conch shell.

Sometimes you do not put that, but instead the shab je, the food-torma, is the last one, and you put the small lamp on another bowl, so there are two ways of doing it.

When you do the mantras, you usually do the mudra with it, mudra means gesture. There are two ways of doing it, the Nyingmapas and the Kagyupas do it in different ways, the pekor, the lotus-swirling, the Kagyus do it like this, and the Nyingmas do it like this - it is supposed to be a lotus-flower, and then you do the mudra. There are also different ways of doing the argham, padam etc., but anyway. . . Accompanied by these mudras, you do the mantras, and in you

mind you are visualising that these particular offerings are being offered. These are the representations of offerings to the five senses. Whatever we perceive through the five senses, eyes, ears, mouth, nose and body - anything that is gratifying or good to the five senses, that are the things we are attached to, whatever is more pleasant, more desirable, more likeable, the things that we have any attachment to, we try to offer. These are the representations of that offering.

After that is the mandala offering,

OM AH HUNG kham ssum nö tchü päl djor dang
dag lü long tchö ge tsog kün
thug dje dag nyi nam la bü
che nä djin gyi lab tu ssol
OM SARWA TATHAGATA RATNA MENDALA PUDSA HO

We discussed the mandala-offering yesterday, there are different words here, but the same meaning, same understanding. So we are offering the mandala again. As we said earlier, the main emphasis of the practice is on the offerings, the mandala offering, this particular text is called the Tara mandala offering practice, therefore there are mandala offerings again and again.

The main concept behind it is that the more we generate a giving attitude, through more offerings, more generosity, the more prosperous we become in a way. This is the general concept of karma, the more we give, the more we receive. So we are accumulating here punja, merit. So the more grand the offerings, the more grand the opening is, the more positive and open we become, the more positive the result will be. This practice is mainly focussed on the offering practice. There are four times mandala offerings.

Sometimes you actually do the mandala offering. If you really do the Tara mandala offering practice for a long time, in a proper way, usually you take something like a square table, in the middle you put sometimes a small mandala plate, and on that you put Tara's image, and sometimes you actually put a mandala offering, and Tara's image behind that. Then you put four mandala offerings in the four directions, and then either you make one seven bowl offering around, or you make four sets of seven offering bowls around it. This is the usual symbolic mandala.

So you have four times the mandala offerings here, one generally, then three times more for Tara. Usually it is called mendal jechuk, there are other mendal jechuk as well, but this particular practice means shoda sadhana, with four mandala offerings.

Now come the twenty-one praises of Tara, you could also say the prayers to Tara. This is a famous Tara tantra that has a lot of blessing, and they are regarded as very, very valuable by teachers of all traditions. It is recited like a mantra, is repeated many times. It is supposed to be very, very swift, therefore this has been said by all the traditions, all the masters of Vajrayana Buddhism, with great devotion and with great respect. Even Atisha Dipankara and the Kadampa Lamas, who were not really very much into rituals, they also had great respect for this Tara practice and did it very constantly and very strongly. Atisha Dipankara himself had so much devotion to Tara that many times when he was going into the ocean or things like that, he had to pray to Tara and he

was saved from destruction.

And even before he went to Tibet - the Tibetans wanted him to come very insistently, some of you may not know this story. There was one descendant of the king of Tibet, he was in the Western part of Tibet, and his real desire was to bring a real great, authentic Indian pandit to Tibet and to revive Buddhism in Tibet, because at that time it was rather degraded. He went all around and visited many places, near the Ladakh area. He wanted to raise some money to do this project, and he went everywhere.

Unluckily he was caught by his enemies, they were not in good relations with the neighbour, the Muslim king. They caught him and demanded a ransom, which was as much gold as the weight of this person. At that time Tibet was known to be the source of gold, they used to have lots of gold, even now they have - well, not the Tibetans. So they demanded all this gold, and his nephew went around and collected gold from his own kingdom and from others, as much as possible. And when they weighed it, it is said that it was enough for his body, but not for his head, they could not get enough. His nephew sent him a letter, saying that they were trying to get more gold to ransom him.

But he wrote back with the message: "Please, if you really have any kind of respect for me, please do not do that. I am already very old, and even if I survive, I will live for a very short time. But my real desire, my real ambition is to bring the great pandit, the great master from India, and revive Buddhism in Tibet, that was my real wish. So if you really respect me, do not waste this gold on me, but spend this money in order to do that."

Because it was his genuine wish, they left him, and they tried to find out who was the most authentic, the most learned, accomplished master in India at that time. There was no dispute that this was Atisha Dipankara, they said: "If you can get Atisha Dipankara, he is the best one, he is the most learned, he is the most accomplished, he is the best one." So they asked him: "Please, you must come to Tibet." But he was already rather aged at that time, and he had lots of disciples, all of whom of course did not want him to go.

Then Atisha went to Bodhgaya, the stupa in Gaya, where he prayed to Tara: "Please give me some sign whether I should go or not." There was an image of Tara on the stupa, and that image spoke: "If you go to Tibet, the Tibetans will get a lot of benefit. But you will have a very short life, you will die in Tibet. It is your choice." After long deliberation, he thought that it was better to go. He went to Tibet, and he revived Buddhism in Tibet, but he also died in Tibet.

So Atisha had very great devotion to Tara. And not only him, but most of the great masters in Tibet and in India, all of them are very strongly - for anything that needs swift action or swift indication, they would pray to Tara.

This particular Tara prayer is from a tantra, therefore it is very very difficult to explain. Every word in a tantra can be described on four levels, one is that you have the literal meaning as it is, then there is what is called the zig tön, another meaning which is not exactly literal, but the hidden meaning. Then there is an even deeper hidden meaning, and then there is an ultimate meaning. All the tantra teachings are explained four times, and all those explanations are almost totally different from each other.

Here maybe we cannot do all the four levels, because we do not have the commentaries. But we will go quickly through the actual praises, and look at the literal meaning.

An example of the tantras having different meanings is for instance when you say Tara gives protection from eight different kinds of fears. When we count the different fears, they say: the fear of elephants, the fear of lions, the fear of snakes, and things like that. If you say: "What is the fear of elephants?", the next level of the explanation is düme lambe jepa, the elephant represents ignorance. So when you say langu jepa, fear of elephants, for the general people, they think: "In India there are sometimes elephants, so please protect us from elephants". For other people it is not just the physical big animal called elephant, but also ignorance, which is very big and huge and does not look anywhere and just goes ahead and tramples on you. And then there are different levels of that.

If you try to say it like this, elephant is ignorance. The lion is ngajal singi jigpa, which is pride. Tadel dulji jepa, jealousy is the poisonous snake, there is an arrow within jealousy. Döpa juwala, attachment is the water of the rivers. Chedung me depa, anger, hatred is the fire. Tesam chaji sipa, doubt is the ghost, the fear of ghosts. Chunje tö jula chimi jalduk, grasping desire has the binding quality - jaldu means iron chain. (...) wrong view is the fear of stealing, the fear of thieves. These are the eight fears.

Now the actual praises, the twenty-one praises.

Om djetsünma phagma drölma la tschagtsal lo

that means "I pay homage to Tara, or I make prostrations to Tara, the noble one, the Arya." Then,

tschag tsal tare nyurma pamo
tuttaryi djigpa selma
ture dön kun djin pä drölma
sohä yi ge khye la dü do

this first one is not really of the Twenty-One Tara practice, this is added, this is the praise of the mantra.

The mantra of Tara is OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA, the whole mantra is in this prayer. TARE is nyurma pamo, nyurma means swift, pamo means very heroic, Tara who has always been heroic, who has been very courageous. We all know the story that she had so much courage, so much self-confidence, not only that, but she was very swift, her actions are very swift, that is why TARE. Tara means to liberate, to cross over.

TUTTARE signifies the elimination of all fears, for others and for ourselves. jigpa is fear, the state of being frightened, doubt, the eight fears, all the negative emotions. The negative ways of thinking, delusions, are called fear because they generate fear, because when you think in that way, it naturally generates fear. Once you have aversion and attachment to things, then fear comes naturally, because you have the fear of either losing something, not getting something, or having something that you do not want. So through the practice of Tara, through the way Tara achieved her enlightened state, one can

eliminate all fears.

Then TURE, the word, the mantra TURE signifies the way you accomplish your purposes by giving, tön is purpose, project, whatever you want to do, want to achieve, djin pä drölma means by giving, by opening, by giving up grasping, giving away, making an offering, by this method you accomplish all the purposes for others. If one can learn how to release, how to not grasp onto things, then one can gain the power of complete spaciousness, complete liberation. You can not only save yourself from all fears and all problems, but also give others whatever they want, becoming the source of all good things, all positive things.

Again and again, in all Buddhist teachings, you will find this, that we cannot give, that we cannot do things, that we are not liberated, because we limit ourselves, we close ourselves, and we do not use our own potential, our own strength, because we are frightened, because we are closed, because we are limited. The moment we choose to open ourselves, choose to release our grasping to small things, and we choose to completely release our power, then we become the saviour, we can become the source of all the positive powers.

We do this in tonglen practice. This is the essence of what we mean by enlightened people. When you become a Buddha, when you become an enlightend person, you become limitless, it is nothing more. You are the same person, but now we are very limited, we make ourselves very small, very covered, very protected, very individual, and the moment we let ourselves out of this entanglement, then we become limitless, and that is what we call an enlightened being. That is why it says "who gives all benefit with TURE". "I bow down to You, SVAHA". This SVAHA, you are the SVAHA - SVAHA is a word which has lots of meanings, it is one who is devoured, completely digested, eliminated, eaten up - but here it means that kind of being, that kind of enlightened state. It is the praise of Tara, praise of the principle of Tara, through the mantra, relating the words of the mantra to different aspects of the qualities of Tara.

(Q: I did not quite understand what SVAHA means.)

If you say IDAM BALINGTA KAHİ KAHİ SVAHA it means "please eat this completely and devour it", devour like finish it, eliminate, like burning in a fire. From here begin the Twenty-one Taras.

tschag tsal drölma nyurma pamo

this is the first one, Nyuma Pamo is the name of Tara, and to that I bow down. Then comes the description

tchän ni kä tchig log dang dra ma
djig ten ssum gön tschu khye shal gyi
ge ssar tsche wa lä ni djung ma,

"She who has eyes like instantaneous lightning, she who appeared from the opened blossom of the lotus face of the Lord of the Three Worlds".

I do not think we can completely explain each of these sentences, we do not have that much time. If you really try to explain Tara, you need lots of commentaries and lots of time, it is very meaningful, but very difficult. What we

will do is I will tell you which one is for which Tara. So the first stanza is for the Tara called Nyuma Pamo, the second one is for Jang Shenma - I do not know how to do it. I have the names of the twenty-one Taras here, if you are interested, and also the descriptions of them. There are different ways of describing them, different appearances of them.

This is according to the thanka-drawing instructions written down by the third Dodrupchen Teminima. He has written a description on how to draw twenty-one Taras, so this gives the physical appearance in the drawing, or in the visualization of each of these Taras. The first is Nyuma Pamo, red in colour, with an expression which is wrathful, smiling and seductive, charming, holding a white conch-shell with a clockwise spiral inside an Upala flower. Things like that, maybe I do not need to read them out, if any of you are interested, maybe you can make a copy. This is the only copy I have, so please give it back to me. You want to copy it? (for the copy see page 64)

(Q: Maybe you could say what they stand for?) Well, the first one Nyurma Palmo, is for swiftness, courage. The second one Yangchenma, it says "she who has the face of one hundred completely full moons of autumn, laid one upon another, she is shining intensely with the completely diffused light of a multitude of thousands of stars". She is the Tara of brightness, of intelligence, of clarity, wisdom.

The third one is Serngo or Sonam Chogter, "she whose hand is perfectly adorned by a gold and blue lotus born from water"

(Q: What was the third Tara's name?) Serngo you find there, but the whole name is Serngo Sonam Chogter, it is written here, so you do not have to bother.

(Translator: The name comes after each `tschag tsal`).

Then comes:

tschag tsal de shin scheg pä tsug tor

tsu tor nam jalma, it is written here in a different way. (Translator: The fourth one is called Tsugtor, it is difficult to compare it with the German text...)

Then the next one is:

tschag tsal tuttara hung yi ge

it is again written in a different way, it is Rigjekma - I do not know, in this way it does not make any sense. What is the best way to go through this in a good way?

I think it is not much use to go through it like this. You can say that these Twenty-One Praises are for the action, the twenty-one Taras, who have twenty-one slightly different activities, and if you want to visualize them, I have the manual here. And if you want to know about them, then we need to go through the book in a more detailed way. If you want the exact meaning of all the praises in a detailed way, then we need some time and we need some books, and we need at least one week. Otherwise, what we can do at the moment, we can say it as a mantra, like a parrot.

(Q: Could you say something about the visualization, for example is the green

Tara in front and all the twenty-one other Taras around, and by doing the prayer, you contact each of these Taras, and then the blessing comes from her to you?)

You can do that, if you want to, but I think it is not that necessary. If you are that clear, then you can do that. But usually it is like this, when you visualise twenty-one Taras, in the beginning we visualise Green Tara, and then just feel that the others are around her. That is enough. But if you want to be very clear, in the middle is Green Tara, in the centre, and around her, according to this visualization, a little bit below, there are ten lotus-flowers, and around that, a little bit below, there are another ten lotus-flowers, so two circles of ten.

Starting from the east, that means in front, it goes like this (shows).

(Someone gives him the book "In praise of Tara" by Martin Wilson) This is a very good commentary, they have taken information from many different commentaries both from the Sanskrit and the Tibetan sources, they have also given pictures, but these are very elaborate pictures, which is not the same as our text. There is a picture of each one in a different form, some with many hands, some standing, some sitting. In this practice they are all the same. If you want to read this, maybe it is a quite a good commentary. I have the book, but I have never read it. There is also the Sanskrit and English translation, maybe a different translation. There are also one-hundred-eight Taras here. Maybe that is all. Any questions?

Q: If someone wants to look at a thangka of the Twenty-one Taras, there is one in room number nine.

A: Here are also the Twenty-one Taras. Here they are in groups of four. That is the artist's work. I also have a thangka, a small photo, I have the negatives, so I gave the picture to many people last time. But then I wanted to make a cheaper version, I asked someone in India to reproduce them, but they made it so bad, that I am ashamed to give it to anybody. But if you want, you can have it, I have lots of copies, but not good copies.

Q: Could one see it in the way that the twenty-one or rather twenty aspects are embodied in the main one, in the green one?

A: Yes.

Q: And White Tara?

A: Of course it is the same thing, but when you are doing the Green Tara aspect, you are doing Green Tara. It is actually the same.

Q: You mentioned something about the difference between a lotus-flower and an upala-flower. When she took refuge, she received the name Karma Upala, but the translation on the refuge-card says Karma Lotus.

A: I think it is not really lotus. There are different kinds of upalas, also different colours. But one upala I was shown was not at all like a lotus, it was not growing in the water, but growing on the ground. It had a very tall stem and the flower was blueish with a little bit of red, quite a big flower, and there were many flowers, the stem was thick like this.

Q: It would change the meaning with respect to the symbolism, the lotus is known for growing out of the mud, but the upala does not grow out of the mud.

A: I do not know whether upala grows out of the mud or not. In fact all flowers grow out of mud. Generally we Tibetans are not very good at distinguishing this

kind of things, only the Tibetan doctors, they have to be very particular. For me these flowers here could be upalas, I think it was a little bit like this, but I do not remember very well.

Q: Is it the same flower the Medicine Buddha is holding?

A: No, he is holding an Arura, I do not know what it is called in English. It is a fruit which is a little bit bitter, it is not a flower, it is very good medicine.

Q: ...you said the Guru Padmasambhava's teachings were hidden in different elements,sometimes in water, sometimes in earth, and in this case in the air ... have a problem understanding do green colour and air go together ...

A: There are three ways of recovering the ter, one is the earth terma, which includes water, rock, houses, whatever is physical, then the mind terma, that is not really air, and the third one is the pure vision. The gun tir, it cannot be called air, it just comes to somebody's mind, and then the person has to write it down or say it. I do not think that it has anything to do with jealousy or air-element.

I do not blame you for having problems with the terma-system, it is again one of these crazy Tibetan things, which is quite unique. This kind of thing might have happened in other places also, but there is no set tradition as in Tibet. But there were also many pretenders.

There is a story. Once somebody wanted to become a tertön, so he buried a nice image somewhere, and then he said to everybody: "I am going to get a terma!" So he went with all his students, or some people, and tried to find this image, but he could not find it. After some time he panicked, and he said: "What a pity that I cannot find this valuable image again!"

Sometimes some people get this inspiration, some signs, that there is a ter, even if he is genuine, and he goes there, and cannot find it, then he has to return without anything. Sometimes more powerful tertöns take other's share of ter also.

XE "teaching 9"

We just did away with the twenty-one Tara practice, and now we come to the benefits. This is actually part of the twenty-one Tara praise, and it is also from that tantra. For the twenty-one Tara praise, it is very clearly recommended that we do first two, then three, and then seven, but the practice in Europe is that you do one, two and three, special concession for the Europeans.

But in Hongkong, they do it in a slightly different way. The first stanza,

tschag tsal tare nyurma pamo
tuttararyi djigpa selma
ture dön kun djin pä drölma
sohä yi ge khye la dü do

this is a kind of brief praise of the Tara mantra, the first time they do the praise once, but the first stanza two times, the second time they do the first stanza once and then the whole praise twice, that makes it three times, and then the third time they do the first stanza four times and then the whole praise three times, that makes it seven times. It is more to the letter, although they do not take much more time, they are as busy as Europeans. I do not know whose

tradition it is, maybe somebody who is more particular about what is said in the text. I thought that was very nice, because then you do not completely disregard the recommendation, and you also do not lose time. But it is just a suggestion.

Now we come to the actual Tara practice. After doing the praise for the first time, there is one offering of the eight offering substances, and then one offering of the mandala. The second time you do the two or three Tara praises, and then again you do the offering and mandala,

Om ngö djor yi lä djung wa yi
kün tu sang pö tschö trin gyi
tschö ying gyä par kang djä te
phag ma dröl ma khortchä tschö
OM ARYA TARE SAPARIWARA etc.

Before the second time, we change the visualization - earlier the Tara-mudra was like this, (the right palm facing upwards) the supreme-giving mudra. Now the supreme-giving mudra is turned into the protection-mudra chab yin chalja, here it says giving-refuge mudra, it is the protection-mudra. We think that the Tara's hand, which was like this before, is now turned like this (right palm facing down)

tchag yä tschog djin tschag gya nyi
kyab djin tschag gya gyur pä og
dag dang ssung dja kün tsü nä
djig pa kün lä ug djung gyur

We think that we are under this protecting hand of Tara, myself and all the beings that I want to protect, we are all covered by the protection-mudra of Tara. Then we are completely relieved, completely protected from all kinds of fears, all kinds of dangers. This one is for protection, and the next one, is the healing. When we talk about healing through the practice, this is mainly what we do. We do the practice for ourselves, but then we also do it for others who need help and protection and healing, who need to be sent help from us. We think especially of them, we do the practice for somebody else especially then. With this concentration or meditation, we again say the twenty-one Tara praise, this time, according to the text, three times, or one or two times, as we discussed earlier. This is the second stage. When we are chanting the twenty-one praises, our main focus of concentration is not on the whole figure of Tara, but more on the protecting hand of Tara, which is radiating light. We feel that this light gives us protection, a very great sense of relief, of protection, total freedom from all obstacles and all problems. That is the main feeling we need to have.

Then again for the third time the Om ngö djor yi lä djung wa yi etc, the usual offerings, and then again the mandala offering kham ssum nö tchü päl djor dang etc. After that, the third way of meditation is this one:

ku lä dütsi tschu gyün bap
rang dang ssung djä tchi wo nä
chug te lü kün gang wa yi
djin lap ma lü chug par gyur

That is translated as: "A stream of amrita has descended from her body, has entered through the top of the head and filled the bodies of myself and all who need protection, so that every single blessing resides within us." From Tara's body, usually from the big toe of her right foot, like a stream from a waterpipe come all the blessings in form of liquid amrita. It enters through what we call Dharma hole - how do you call it? There is a hole, whether you like it or not, on the top of our head - from there it enters into our body. And when it enters our body, all the negative things, the negative emotions, negative karma, all that is washed away, even the diseases, illness, pain, fatigue, everything completely washed away.

Not only that, but all the blessings in the form of joy, wisdom, compassion, enter into our body, and our body is filled with them, and we feel warm, joyful, pleasant, blissful. And not only the one who is doing the practice, but we think about the people to whom we send this energy, not only one or two, but all sentient beings if it is possible, they are also getting it. This is what we visualize when we do the third round of twenty-one Tara prayers.

According to the notes, we do them seven times, usually we do three times in the West, but if you could also do the first stanza four times in the beginning, it might be more appropriate. This way the people in Hongkong do it, maybe Tenga Rinpoche introduced that, I do not know.

At the end of the seven or three praises, we finish the twenty-one Tara praise with reciting the benefits:

lha mo la gü yang dag dän pä etc.

This means, with great honour, great homage, respect, to the lhamo, the goddess, this word means not only ordinary goddess, but you can say goddess also referring to Tara, with great, with true devotion, somebody who has lots of understanding, who has intelligence, who gets up at the rise of dawn, in the early morning, or stays behind in the evening, and if they recite this prayer, then complete fearlessness will be given, will be granted, will be achieved.

It is the most important thing, that we try to generate the feelings of fearlessness and joy and happiness and compassion, the positive feelings, on our own, deliberately. The main problem with our usual way of dealing with things is that we think that fearlessness or joy will come automatically, if certain circumstances are there, and if they are not there, we will not have it. We only try to get those circumstances, we do not consciously, deliberately generate those feelings.

The main emphasis here is that we should deliberately, without any other reasons, ourselves feel fearlessness, feel joy, without needing anything else.

Because any feeling is a habit, if you are habituated to feeling lonely, then you feel it more and more, worse and worse. If we make it a habit to feel happy, then we feel more and more happy. So we have to form a habit of feeling fearless, a habit of feeling joyful.

We use the Tara image, we use the deities as a source of this feeling coming from somewhere. It may not really come from anywhere, but since we always think that all our good things should come from somewhere, because we do not have the good things, we are taking the practice as a means. But the main thing is that we need to feel it ourselves, it is in us.

It is not necessarily in us, but all that we feel is our own feeling, if you feel fearful, the more fearful you feel, the worse it gets. Sometimes if we are used to only feeling fear, then even a tiny noise is enough to make us jump. For instance when we were chased by the Chinese, when somebody walks on a twig and it breaks, everybody jumps, because of the fear.

There was a Tibetan, he was travelling alone on a plateau, in an area where they said that there were lots of evil spirits and ghosts, a haunted place. He had to go there, and because it was dark, he had to sleep somewhere. He could not sleep, because he was a little bit afraid. After some time he heard a voice, somebody calling, quite far away, but with a strong voice, his name `Gi Ho Ja´. He thought: "There is someone who knows me in this area, but there is no man around this place, it must be a ghost!" He looked around, nothing there, and again he lay down and could not sleep

Then again he heard, even nearer, a strange voice calling: `Gi Ho Ja´. He looked around everywhere again, nothing. When he heard the voice for the third time, he was completely certain that a ghost was descending on him, calling his name so strongly almost near his ear. So he got up, put the saddle on his horse, and fled away towards home. After some time, he looked back, and he saw many, many horsemen coming after him. He rode and rode, and when he looked back again, the horsemen were still coming after him. Again he listened, and again he heard the same voice calling `Gi Ho Ja´.

The whole night he rode and rode, and at last he reached home, completely tired. He went into his bed, but still he heard the voice. Because he was in his home, he was not so afraid anymore, he went and looked and listened carefully, and then he noticed that it was coming from his nose. The nose was a little bit blocked, and when he was breathing, it was giving this sound. And he was wearing a fur, a sheep-skin, and it was frozen, and it went up and down, so when he looked back, it looked like horsemen.

So when you are afraid of something, then you can even see and feel that everything is not going well, if you have that mental attitude, that something is not right, it gets worse and worse. If we can feel more free, more fearless, then we have less of those feelings.

The translation continues "All bad karmas will be totally pacified, the lower existences will be defeated." Of course, if you just read it once or twice and expect all your bad karma to be pacified immediately, that is maybe too easy. Sometimes it says about a mantra, that if you recite this mantra once, then all the bad karma of a hundred thousand kalpas will be completely destroyed. These things you may take literally, but it is called `leading truths´, the Buddha used to tell things for some purpose. When you say this, it means that slowly, because you have made this connection, you have entered into the mandala of

Tara, you have made an unbreakable connection, sooner or later all your bad karma will be pacified. There is no other way, because you have got into that mental attitude, you cannot do anything else, but sometimes slowly, sometimes more quickly, in the end all bad karmas will be pacified.

And once you have made this strong wish, that I would like to help all sentient beings, that I would like to get myself liberated from the samsaric state of mind, myself be liberated from all the sufferings of the world, and also that I would like to help all other beings to reach the best possible state. If you have this great Bodhisattva's attitude even once, that is such a great intention, such a magnificent wish, that once you have planted that seed, you can be sure that sooner or later that will come up, and all the lower existences will be defeated. It does not mean that what is said here is not true, of course it is true. But one should not say: "I have done this prayer, and I still have problems, so it is not true". It is true, because we made this connection, there is this direction, and sooner or later, ultimately, we will come to that place.

Then it says "The multitudes of sufferings, of afflictions by demons, diseases and poisons are totally removed, also for all other beings." If there is a certain confidence, these things can really happen. I know of a person in Tibet, when I knew him, at that time he was very old. He was the most notorious thief of our locality, he was very famous. He was called Nagama, 'Saddlenose', because someone had smashed the back of his nose, his nose was broken, so it looked like a saddle.

He used to be put into iron chains, and he actually could blow on them, and then take them off. He did the twenty-one Tara practice all the time, continuously, day and night, whenever he was not sleeping he was doing that. He was caught stealing, redhanded, many, many times, hundreds of times, and sometimes even an order was given that he be executed, but he was never kept for more than a few days, he always got away. Later on, he gave up stealing, and he was pardoned, nobody could do anything anyway. So he became an old man, he was just going around, and he died like that. He said, and everybody said, that it was all because of the recitation of Tara all the time.

When we were escaping from Tibet, we used to do Tara often. There was a very old monk, Balo, he was very pleasant, always smiling, however bad it was. Even when it was raining all day and all night, he would smile and tell a joke, such a nice person, he did come out of Tibet and later died in India. Every day when we had made camp, he called us to do the Tara prayer, and everybody came.

There also were two or three ravens, you will not believe me, but these ravens were actually guiding us throughout our journey. They would come, in the evening, or sometimes even later, and when they crowed loudly and wildly, and kept going up and down, we knew we had to leave immediately, and we would pack up and go. The next day we would find out that the Chinese had been there, many, many times it happened like this. They also showed us which way to go, and we would follow exactly the way they showed. That is how we went, we had no maps, we were only following the ravens and prayed to Dölma. Sometimes we could see the Chinese coming from the valley, and we would hide and recite the Dölma mantra. And when the ravens came down and made a low sound, then we knew it was alright, even if we could see the Chinese army coming down, we did not bother and slept, and nothing happened.

(Q: How many of you) More than that. I was a young man, I was riding my own small horse. But then a most devastating thing happened, we had to cross a big river, and somehow the reins of the horses were not tied up properly, and his rein got tangled up and he broke his leg. So I had to leave him. That was the end of my riding.

(Q: How many people travelled?) That varied all the time, sometimes up to five hundred, never much below one hundred.

In the translation it now says "If truly recited in two, three and seven, by desiring a son, a son will be obtained, by desiring wealth, wealth will be obtained". So if you want to have a son, you will have son, and if you want wealth, you have wealth. In other writings is another way, it says "If you desire Dharma chö, spiritual progress, you get that, if you desire wealth, you will have wealth".XE "tape 9"

In India it was so important to have a son, because it was said that if you do not have a son to set fire to your dead body, then you will not go to heaven. You need to produce a son, daughters do not count. A daughter you have to marry, you have to give lots of money to the husband and his family. If you have lots of sons, you are wealthy. If you have only daughters, then you are finished.

Maybe the Tibetans thought that a son was not that important, so they changed into `Dharma´, maybe, I do not know why there are these two ways.

Then it says "All that is desired will be obtained, all obstacles will be eliminated, individually vanquished." This is not difficult to understand. "Seven times a million Buddhas will swiftly give empowerment so that more than exists in the present will be obtained, and the ultimate level of Buddhahood is proceeded to." I do not understand the English very well, but it means to say that you will be empowered, you will receive the blessings, the empowerments, of seven million Buddhas. Whatever you have in the present moment, whatever your attainment, your good circumstances, will be increased, and slowly, gradually you will attain perfect Buddhahood.

All poisons will be eliminated, the poisons that come from animate beings or inanimate objects, the mind-poisons or negative emotions, the poisons that you eat or drink.

So that is the benefits of the actual Tara praises.

After this you come back to the main text, to the tormas-offering.

Usually, in the Tibetan tradition, if you do not have a tormas, if you do not make a tormas, then you do not do this part. But in the West it seems that you do it every time, whether you have a tormas or not, maybe that is alright. The tormas-offering is the same idea, same purification, same multiplication, and the way you generate the offering is almost the same. At the end you offer the tormas with OM AH HUNG and OM ARYA TARE SAPARIWARA IDAM BALINGTA KA KA KAHI KAHI. This is the mantra, "Arya Tare, the attained, enlightened Tara, and all the entourage, this tormas, take take take and eat eat eat".

`Take´ has a completely different meaning in Nepali. Once a Nepali was serving an English gentleman, he was taking a cake and gave it to the gentleman. The gentleman took some of the cake, and he gave the rest to the Nepali and said: `take´. The Nepali was surprised, and the Englishman repeated: `Take,take!´ Then the Nepali put it down and stepped on it, because in Nepali `take´ means `step on it´.

After the tormo-offering is another praise for Tara, which is translated here: "I pay homage to and praise Arya Tara, the possessor of the activity of all the Buddhas." Tara as the main deity of activity, of action. "Arisen from the face of the Lord of the World", that is the literal translation, it is one of the names of Avalokitesvara, Chenrezig. If we divide the deities into five Buddha-families, Avalokiteshvara belongs to the Padma-family, Amithaba. The story is that this particular Tara appeared from the tear-drops of Avalokiteshvara, that is why it says that she came from the face of Avalokiteshvara.

"I pay homage with supreme faith, perpetually, with as many bowing bodies as there are particles in the realms, to all those who are worthy of praise." This is one way of visualization: We radiate, we emanate from our body as many bodies as there are particles, and all the bodies are saying the praise, all of them are doing prostrations. Whatever action we do is mentally multiplied, so that it becomes very powerful and grand. Since we are doing this with our mind, and our mind can be limitless, we try to do it in a limitless way. Why should we do it with one body? The idea is that we must get out of this restricted, limited habit, we should do it in limitless way.

Now we have the wishing prayers and then the dissolution, and then the Tara practice is finished. Tomorrow we will talk about the completion stage. So far we have been talking about the developing stage more or less all the time.

Q: ... you visualize Tara in front of you, but when you say that the amrita is entering into our head, she has to be above us. Does she move?

A: Why does she have to be above your head? Well, it should not be too static. Here from Tara's big toe, the amrita comes out like a fountain, and then you receive it, that is the usual explanation I have heard. If it is easier for you, you can visualize it that way also, it does not make much difference.

Q: Is it O.K. after the practice to imagine that I am still in the Tara mandala, and see it in front of me, but at the same time visualize myself as a different yidam, maybe Chenrezig or Medicine Buddha?

A: You can change as much as possible. When you do one thing, you do it from beginning to end, and after that, if you want to do something else, you can immediately do something else, and another thing and another thing. Basically it is all the same, only the form is changing, no difficulty there.

Q: ...when practicing Guru-Yoga, I visualize the Guru above my head, and when the blessings come, I find that difficult, so usually I move the visualization to the front, and after the blessing back. I know it is not so important, but how should it be?

A: In Guru Yoga sometimes the Guru is visualized on top, but usually, mostly it is done with the Guru in front of you, and then you receive the wangs, the empowerments, directly from the Guru. When the Guru dissolves, he enters into you in a light form, not necessarily coming from above your head.

Once there was a person, he was given a Guru Yoga practice by a Lama who was bald. He was told to meditate on the Lama on top of his head. He understood that he should meditate himself on his Lama's head. The next day he came back and said: "Please do not give me this task! I cannot sit properly on your head, every time I try to sit on it, I slip, your head is so bald."

XE "teaching10" In the sadhana of the Tara mandala practice, we now have come to the stage which is called the "prayer for the fulfilment of wishes". This is making a strong wish. After every good deed, after every accumulation of merit, it is very important to dedicate, to make a strong prayer. The sooner the prayer is made the better, because something might disturb you. So without finishing the whole thing, you immediately say these prayers.

In most sadhanas, the wishing prayer is done at the very end of the practice, but here it is done even before the mantra, just after the mandala offering and praise. I am sure it is because you need to hurry. There is a saying, *calva tonde salpa je*: The good deeds that you have done for a thousand kalpas could be destroyed with one strong hatred. Maybe it will not be completely like that, but it shows the seriousness of what a very strong negative thought can do, if you do not dedicate, if you do not make a strong wish towards a more permanent, more consistent cause. That is why the wishing prayer here comes even before the mantra recitation.

In Buddhism, we have put so much emphasis on prayers, on the aspiration, on wishing good things, that sometimes it gives the impression to some people that if you just wish, that is enough. It does not mean that you do not have to do anything. But if you cannot do anything, if your wish is good, that is very good, because that will create the circumstances, it is a conditioning that at one time or another there will be the right conditions so that you can actually fulfil those wishes. It may not come in this life, but it will certainly come.

Some people always ask questions about this - maybe it is completely off the subject. We say that there will be a thousand Buddhas in this world. Some people say: "There is a great contradiction here. You say there will be only one thousand Buddhas in the life of the earth, in the life of the civilisation, and at the same time you say that each person can become enlightened in this lifetime. If everybody can become enlightened, and you say that many people did get enlightened, and many people will, how is it that there are only one thousand Buddhas?" This is quite a common question, it has been asked in Australia, it has been asked in Amerika, it has been asked in Poland, anywhere. (Q: And you have the answer?) Well, let us see whether my answer is convincing enough. I could not completely convince the Australians, they are more difficult to convince, but the Polish people were quite convinced, they are rather believing.

I have been explaining it like this: If you see the true nature of your mind, if you can get out of your samsaric state of mind, then you are enlightened. But that is only for yourself, that you are liberated. To become a Buddha like Buddha Shakyamuni, to create a buddhafiield, you need to work not only on yourself, but on other people too, so that the other people can also come to the stage, to a maturity of karma, where they can also see the buddhafiield. Therefore the buddhafiield is created by wishing prayers, dedications. When a Buddha becomes a Buddha, it is not just a coincidence that everybody who sees him is there, but it all comes from a continuous interaction, connection with that Buddha.

In the Yataka-stories, the Buddha tells for example how Kontinia, the first of his students who gets realisation, why he gets the realisation first. And why the first five disciples became the first five disciples. According to Mahayana belief,

Buddha Shakyamuni became a Buddha a long time before he became the Buddha in Bodhgaya. When he actually appeared as the Buddha, he had created the circumstances, the connection with the people.

In the same way, the Buddha Maitreya, when he comes to the world and appears as a Buddha, everyone of us who really wants to be born into Buddha Maitreya's field, we need to create that connection, and only then it can happen. The creation of the buddhafield mainly comes from making karmic connections with all different kinds of people. Also from prayers, for example Buddha Shakyamuni wished to become a Buddha, an enlightened being at a time when the people are at very strongly degraded state emotionally, and it is not quite easy to talk to them, quite a violent time.

I do not want to talk any more about it now. Maybe it has created doubts in you, but that is alright.

Now here it says:

dje tsün phag ma khor dang tchä
mig me thug dje tser gong la
da gi dji tar sol wä dön
geg me drup par djin gyi lop

"Jetsun Arya Tara and Your entourage, regard me lovingly with non-referential compassion". You may ask: What is non-referential compassion? It is what we call wisdom and compassion, or sometimes the union of emptiness and compassion, which is the characteristic of the mind of the Buddha.

Usually we might think that compassion is a kind of emotion, that there is a compassionate person and a person to be compassionate towards. Of course we have to think that these are the people, they are like me, they also want happiness and do not want suffering, therefore I feel concerned for them, I wish them to be happy, I wish them to be without suffering. Of course that is how we need to do it.

But the compassion of the enlightened Buddha goes beyond that. Our compassion, however pure it is, still has the concept "this is me, this is the other", there is inevitably a certain amount of pride, a certain amount of separateness, thoughts like "these are the other people, I have been very compassionate to them, but still they are not very grateful", always there is something not completely pure.

When one realises the true nature of things, in Buddhist terms, when we talk about wisdom, it is more or less about emptiness, shunyata. When an enlightened being sees things as they really are, it is without reference point. Usually when we say "I am compassionate", maybe you feel compassion, maybe you feel hatred, maybe you feel something else, but the moment you say: "This is my thought", immediately when we have a thought, we assume that there is a thinker. At that moment we create two parts, the thought and the thinker, and then the person at whom the thought is directed, then it is already three parts.

So when an enlightened person sees that the thought is not different from the thinker, and when the thought of compassion is arising, there is nobody who is separate from the one who is called the compassionate one, the thinker, then you lose the reference point, there is no doer, there is no grasping. The

compassion is free, it is not attached to anything. The concept of ego, our habitual, created, lenmchi chi maripa, 'together-born ignorance' - the moment we have the consciousness of duality, you create somebody separate from the consciousness - our ego is the reference-point of all our ignorance. We call it ignorance, because that is the main thing through which all the reactions take place: "this is good, this is bad, this I like, this I do not like, therefore this I fear, this I am attached to".

When you see clearly that there is nothing like that, that is seeing emptiness, seeing the true nature of your mind. When that happens, when you see this more and more, then you do not have any selfishness, you do not have to cling, you do not have to protect anything, so your compassion is not superficial, it is completely simultaneous, uncontrived, you see that everything is as it is, but then you also see that these beings suffer, for no reason at all. You see that you had the same wrong way of seeing this before, and therefore you had lots of suffering, and these beings also have a wrong way of seeing, and therefore they suffer completely needlessly and uselessly. Therefore compassion without attachment, without pride is generated, arises spontaneously. That is what we call non-referential compassion.

So we ask Tara and the mandala of Tara to regard us lovingly with non-referential compassion. And then we request that whatever my prayer is, give your blessings so that all the prayers I make may be completely fulfilled soon, without obstacles.

ssang gye tän pa dar ching gyä

"May the Buddha's teaching..." - tenpa is not just the teaching, but something very difficult to translate. Usually you say: sang je ten pa na min te / so no to pe da ni che. What is sangje tenpa? It can mean two things, one is the teachings of the Buddha, another is the experience of beings, the difference stages of the enlightened state, the different stages of awakening, the different stages of liberation that is developed in beings. May that tenpa be widely spread.

tän din thug thün chap pä tän

"All the holders of this tenpa," not just the teachings, but the experience and the teachings, "may they live long and possess harmony". It is a very strong prayer in Buddhist texts, the harmony of the teachings and the teachers and the sangha. Unless you have harmony in the sangha, there is conflict, unless there is harmony in society, there is conflict, unless there is harmony in the family - whatever, if there is no harmony, there is no progress, no development, therefore harmony is most important, and therefore we pray for harmony. "End all malicious obstacles",

nyer tse bar tscäe kün chi ching

nyer tse is all obstructing obstacles, everything that is bad, there is no 'maliciousness' in the Tibetan. All the harmful obstacles, may they please be ended.

shä drup thrin lä phel war dsö

"Increase the activity of teaching and practice."

"Increase life, good fortune, power, experience and realisation, cause negative views not to appear, while the two Bodhicittas arise effortlessly, and what is wished for is fulfilled in harmony with the Dharma". May we have a long life, good fortune, lots of power, good experiences and also realisation, and also may we have the right view and may all our wrong views be abolished, eliminated. May the relative and the ultimate Bodhicitta arise, develop effortlessly in us. May all our wishes that are in harmony with the Dharma, which are beneficial to ourselves and to others, may those wishes be fulfilled. "From this time, until the heart of enlightenment, like a mother with her only child, never apart, look at me with your eyes of compassion, I pray that you make me inseparable from yourself." This is the last wish, that Tara may protect us like her only child, that we may never be separated from the protection of Tara, from life to life. This is the last stanza of the wishing prayer.

Now we come to the dissolution of the mandala of Tara in front us. When we say :

dün kye ö chu rang la thim
yer me nyi du djin lab pä
rang nyi phag ma dröl mä ku
nang la rang chin me par gyur,

the visualization in front melts, dissolves into light, and then that ball of light dissolves into us, merges into us. We already have been visualising ourselves as Tara, but now we feel completely inseparable from the energy of Tara, from the mind of Tara. With that meditative state, we say the mantra OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA, as many times as possible.

In the wishing prayers I overlooked one page, maybe you can just read it, it says "End illness, starvation, fighting and quarreling, increase the wealth and splendour of Dharma-practitioners, augment the power of the Dharma protecting king" (Someone: Sounds like the newspaper) Like the newspaper? Oh no. In Amsterdam they have this yearly competition of the best newspaper photographers, and last year I went to see it. There is one lady who organizes it who is a Buddhist. She took me there and she showed me the `best photographs of the year´, the prize-winners, and she showed me around, and the more and more we looked, the more and more depressed and sad we became, and in the end she said: "Do you want a book of this?" And I said: "Thank you very much, but no thank you!"

All the worst kind of photographs! Maybe they are best photographs, but the worst subjects. She said: "The world is becoming so bad", and I said: "No, no, it is alright, it is not so bad. As long as the bad news is news, it is not so bad. If the good news starts to be the news, then it is really bad." I did not invent this, somebody said this. Did you understand it? If it is news, it means that it is not happening too often, it is something unusual.

When I said this, she said: "We never understood the contestants coming from China, their candidates for the competition always sent photos like `the

daughter standing with the grandmother'. This is not news. Maybe there the good news is the news."

(Q: Rinpoche, do you think that this kind of newspaper photographs showing suffering can inspire our compassion, or do you think it is more harmful. It is part of our daily life, if you watch television, you always see these pictures of suffering. But I think it is not good to look away, because it is like this). Very true. No need to look away. (Q: But maybe no need to look?) It is good to look sometimes, it can generate compassion. Anything you do depends on how you do it. Some people say that you should not watch television, I always say: It depends on what you do otherwise. If you do not watch television, and you do something better, good. But if you would do something worse instead, why not watch television?

I was having a strong argument with a Bhutanese man. In Bhutan they had taken off all the antennas, all satellite dishes, saying that this was totally spoiling the young people. I said: Do they not do anything bad? It is quite arguable, that if they do not sit in front of the television, but with a big tungba all day long - you do not know tungba? You are very lucky! It is a Tibetan, Sikkimese beer made of millet. There is a big problem of alcoholism. Anyway, we do the Tara mantra, with or without looking at the newspapers.

OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SO HA

is the mantra, "OM Saviouress, Loving-One, Swift-One, SVAHA". TARE TUTTARE TURE, these three words give the complete meaning, maybe not directly, but indirectly. TARE is not only the saviouress, it is as we discussed the 'crosser', the 'freer'. The three words denote the three qualities of the enlightened state, wisdom, compassion and power.

Wisdom is knowing the true nature of things, the knowledge of what is what, what to do and what not to do. 'Loving-one' is the loving aspect, the compassion, not just wisdom, but real spontaneous compassion, filled with genuine loving kindness, always compassionate, always meaning well, having the capacity to engulf everyone in that kind of state. Then there is the power, the spontaneously arising activity. This also comes from the prayers, the wishing prayers of the omniscient ones, of the enlightened beings, it becomes the programme. XE "tape10"

You can do as many mantras as you like, one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, one thousand, three thousand, one hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, one billion. Then you come to the "Confession of errors". You start with the hundred syllable mantra, the Vajrasattva mantra, three times, to purify the errors that you have made in the practice. Whenever you make any mistakes, or if anything is incomplete, or you do not do as much as you wanted to, or not as much as is recommended, then you purify this, and you do not feel any guilt about it afterwards, none at all.

After that is a "Prayer to Remain", a kind of rabne, you think that all the deities that have come as guests, that they all dissolve into the images, into the thangkas, into the objects of prayer, objects of worship, whatever you have. If you do not have any of them, you just say the "Prayer to leave". (In the German edition there is no "Prayer to leave"). Then you think that all the worldly deities that have come as your guests leave you and go to their own

places.

Then the dissolution, dissolving oneself as the deity:

lha dang rang ssem yer me par
tschö ying nyug mä ngang du chag,

“The inseparability of the mind of the deity and my own, Tara’s and my own mind inseparable, rests in the natural state, the Dharmadhatu.”

Usually here we discuss the dissolving part. The dissolving part is not necessarily just here, it is all the way through. The thing is to let our mind remain uncontrived. When you say uncontrived, the word is very good, but still we are so used to contriving, we do not understand how not to contrive.

In most meditation techniques, they would say: Do not follow the thoughts of the past, do not go into the thoughts of the future, do not even grasp onto the thoughts of the present, be just in the moment, in a very ungrasping state, the changing state, the momentary state of your present consciousness. That is the main instruction given. And in that, the whole, the complete instruction of how to let your mind be uncontrived is present, is all included.

But to learn how to do that in your own experience of course depends from person to person. If you understand this, if you reflect on this, and not only reflect, but be - if you just think about this, it is no use, it just becomes a concept. But if you actually try to do it, and then experience it, that is where the real meditation is. There is no completion stage other than that.

We remain in that state of meditation for some time, or if we are doing a retreat on Tara separately, then we can spend some more time on this kind of meditation, not necessarily only here, but at any time, at any stage you can do that, when you are saying the mantras, you can do that, even when you are saying the prayers, if you know it by heart, you can do it.

Actually in the sadhanas, you will find this part, the dissolution, dissolving part, very small, but that does not mean that the dissolving part is not important.

The dissolving part is the most important part of any sadhana. But the sadhana mainly consists of the visualizations and other methods, therefore the sogram is something you need to learn separately, like the mahamudra teachings and dzogchen teachings, even the Six Yogas of Naropa teachings are included in dzenchi sogram, ‘more active sogram’. Except the sadhanas, except the visualizations, the rest of practice is sogram. Most of our time of learning Buddhism, learning meditation has to be spent on learning how to do sogram. Whether you read lots of books or whether you do not read many books, that does not matter. What matters is how you do it from your experience, how deeply you go into that. This is also where the guidance of Guru is required, is also here, sogram, because this is something very experiential, and when you do the practice through your own experience, you sometimes need guidance. This is the heart of the practice.

Then we do the “Dedication Prayer” and then the “Prayer for Good Fortune” or the auspicious prayer. About dedication prayers we have talked quite a lot, so

maybe we do not need to say much about this. And that is the end of the Tara practice instruction.

We have been here for one week, and I think we remained quite happily together, at least I do not think we fought among ourselves, therefore we did something good. We tried to concentrate on the practice of Tara and tried to understand some of the things in the Tara practice. With a good intention all of us came, we stayed in harmony, and we made lots of prayers, so therefore we all got ourselves hooked into the Tara mandala, entered into the Tara mandala. We have created a positive connection, among ourselves and also for the sake of all sentient beings.

Therefore now I would like us to dedicate whatever good merits that we have acquired, for all sentient beings, a big dedication, a grand dedication. Then slowly we come down to the world that we live in, that there be no problems, prosperity and that everything goes well. That we may achieve our goals, our enlightenment, that all our life goes well, without illness, with all problems solved. May the Dharma live long. May everything go well in Halscheid, and we have Lama Yeshe going away for a short temporary period, but we wish him a very nice time during this vacation, and we wish and pray that he will come back sooner than he thinks. We wish him very well, and we also wish the new secretary, the new boss of the center, a very successful stay, a happy stay. We thank all of them for hosting us here for this week. I also thank everybody here for coming and participating in this. We will now say the dedication prayer and the prayer for good fortune from the Tara practice.

Thank you. Danke schön.

(L. Yeshe: I also would like to thank you, Rinpoche, in the name of everybody here, for the teachings and your presence and your kindness and your patience and your humour. We thank you for visiting Halscheid for the second time, and also pray that you will not stay for so long on vacation from here.

I would also like to use the opportunity to thank all participants. I think that what Rinpoche has just been saying about harmony has been felt by everybody. Also particular thanks to the team of helpers, Lama's kitchen, kitchen, etc., which was very large and active this time. In that spirit I hope that you will find your way here again, helping the centre to continue to exist. Most of you have already met Mario, if you support him in his work here, I am sure the centre will remain good.

We hope, Rinpoche, that you will return to Halscheid, since you are with one foot in Germany. You may have heard that Rinpoche is now the spiritual guide of the Tibetan Centre in Hamburg, in the Harkortstieg. Since you will now be half German anyway, it is easy for you, we hope, to come.

Twenty one Taras
(3rd Dodrupchen Rinpoche)

Green Tara
The Tara of the Sengding forest

Green colour, sixteen years old, beautiful, decorated with precious jewel ornaments, dressed in a colourful skirt and top, the breasts covered with very thin silk, with curled hair, the hair on the left side stroked backward, the right side hanging curly a little in front, the right hand in the posture of supreme giving, the left hand holding the stem of an utpala flower at her heart. The flower blooming at the level of her ears, holding/supporting a wheel. She has a back rest of a moon. Around her are two rounds of ten petals, on which the twenty other Taras are seated. All are sitting in the same posture as the central Tara, with different colours and different objects on their flowers.

Clockwise:

1. Nyurma Pamo, red, expression of wrathful, smiling and seductive (charming), holding a right turning white conchshell on the utpala flower,
2. Yangchenma, colour of autumn moon, holding a mirror with the letter Hring on it,
3. Sönam Chogter, golden blue, holding a precious, wishfulfilling jewel,
4. Tsugtor Namgyal, golden colour, holding a longlife vase,
5. Rigjema, dark marron/brown, holding bow and arrow,
6. Jigshe Chenmo, dark red, holding a phurba,
7. Shenji Mithupma, dark/black, wrathful face, holding a sword,
8. Shen Migyalwa, dark red, wrathful face, holding a dorje,
9. Jigten Sumgyal, red, holding a victory banner,
10. Norter, red, wrathful, holding a treasure vase,
11. Tashi Tönchema, yellow, holding an endless knot,
12. Dapung Jomma, red, holding an open spoked vajra,
13. Tronyer Chenze, black, holding a pestle,
14. Rabtu Shiwa, shining white, holding a watervase (shilug),
15. Barwe Wöchen, red, holding a double/crossed vajra,
16. Pagme Nönma, orange, holding a chorten,
17. Maja Chenmo, bright white, holding a moon,
18. Mipham Gyalmo, bright white, holding a white umbrella,
19. Ritö Lhamo, orange (red and golden), holding a casket,
20. Öser Chenma, white red, holding a golden fish.

All are (sitting on a stair) sitting in the (tabab chiltrung) posture.

Dedication

All my babbling
In the name of Dharma
Has been set down faithfully
By my dear students of pure vision.

I pray that at least a fraction of the wisdom
Of those enlightened teachers
Who tirelessly trained me
Shine through this mass of incoherence.

May the sincere efforts of all those
Who have worked tirelessly
Result in spreading the true meaning of Dharma
To all who aspire to know.

May this also help to dispell the darkness of ignorance
In the minds of all living beings
And lead them to complete realisation
Free from all fear.