



SHENPENÖSEL

The Clear Light of the Buddha's Teachings Which Benefits All Beings

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

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Photo by Ryszard K. Frackiewicz

HIS EMINENCE JAMGON TAI SITU RINPOCHE

There is one thing that my supreme guru, His Holiness The Gyalwa Karmapa, told me, which I remember very clearly—and all the time I try to keep this in mind and be mindful of it. He said, “When you go around and teach people, let them know that they are the shrine of the Buddha. The Buddha’s shrine is within them. Let them know that.”

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Shenpen Ösel is a tri-annual publication of Kagyu Shenpen Ösel Chöling (KSOC), a center for the study and practice of Tibetan vajrayana Buddhism located in Seattle, Washington. The magazine seeks to present the teachings of recognized and fully qualified lamas and teachers, with an emphasis on the Shangpa Kagyu and the Karma Kagyu lineages. The contents are derived in large part from transcripts of teachings hosted by our center. Shenpen Ösel is produced and mailed exclusively through volunteer labor and does not make a profit. (Your subscription and support are greatly appreciated.) We publish with the aspiration to present the clear light of the Buddha's teachings. May it bring benefit and may all be auspicious. May all beings be inspired and assisted in uncovering their own true nature.

Preface

Our intention for this third issue of Shenpen Ösel was to present a variety of teachings, including a commentary by The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche on selected verses taken from Nagarjuna's *Sixty Stanzas of Reasonings*; a commentary by His Eminence Jamgon Tai Situ Rinpoche on *The Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra, the Definitive Meaning* by Rangjung Dorje, The Third Gyalwa Karmapa; and an introduction to the generation and completion stages of tantric meditation by The Very Venerable Khenpo Thrangu Rinpoche. When we completed the editing of the transcripts of all these fine teachings, however, we discovered that we had much more material than a single issue could accommodate. Consequently, we have elected to devote this issue to Situ Rinpoche's profound teaching on *The Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra* and to reserve the other two teachings for the next issue.

To introduce the teachings in this issue and to set the stage for what you will be reading in subsequent issues, I would like to touch on a distinction that is present in the madhyamika (middle way) schools of mahayana Buddhism. Nagarjuna's *Sixty Stanzas of Reasonings*, for instance, were a commentary on the Prajnaparamita teachings of the Buddha's second major cycle of sutra teachings, in which the Buddha taught that no phenomena—mental or material—has any true, substantial, indivisible, independent existence, independent of the causes and conditions that give rise to it and independent of the mind that perceives it. All phenomena are, in this sense, empty. Nagarjuna's commentaries constitute the foundation of the madhyamika rangtong (literally, self-empty) school of mahayana Buddhism.

In the third major cycle of sutra teachings, the Buddha taught that absolute reality is the clear light nature of mind and that this clear light nature of mind is the essential nature—generally called buddha nature—of all sentient beings. The madhyamika shentong (literally, other-empty) school of mahayana Buddhism is based on these teachings. The shentong school holds that, although the clear light nature of mind is ultimately empty of all the cognitive and emotional obscurations of mind that temporarily prevent one from recognizing this clear light nature of mind as one's own true nature, the clear light nature of mind itself is not empty of its own nature.

Those who adhere to the madhyamika rangtong view hold that the second turning of the wheel of dharma—the second cycle of the Buddha's sutra teachings—constitutes the Buddha's definitive teachings on the true nature of reality, and that the teachings of the third turning of the wheel of dharma are provisional, a kind of make-up course of slightly less profound teachings designed for those who couldn't understand the teachings of the second turning.

Those who adhere to the madhyamika shentong view, on the other hand, hold that the third turning of the wheel of dharma constitutes the Buddha's definitive teachings on the nature of reality and that the teachings of the second turning are the provisional teachings. They maintain that anyone who succeeds in meditation in freeing themselves completely from the attempt to understand one's reality conceptually will ultimately experience the clear light nature of mind. They further maintain that those of the rangtong view who fail to recognize that ultimate reality is the clear light nature of mind are still subject to a subtle form of conceptual grasping.

When the nondualistic experience of the mind's true nature arises, rather than allowing it simply to experience itself, those of the rangtong view try to look at it to see if it is permanent, indivisible, etc. This attempt to analyze, or even just observe, the experience dualistically, however subtle, causes the experience to disappear, thereby confirming the rangtong view

that all phenomenon are impermanent and empty of any true existence. The shentong view maintains, however, that if rangtongpas continue to meditate properly, they will gradually purify even this subtle tendency and then the true nature will dawn in them.

The vajrayana view corresponds to the view of the third turning of the wheel of dharma, the shentong view, though it is based on the tantric teachings of the Buddha and is not of the sutra tradition. Thus Situ Rinpoche's commentary on *The Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra, the Definitive Meaning*, is based on this view.

In the vajrayana, there are two paths—*drol lam* and *thap lam*—that are generally followed simultaneously or alternately by the practitioner.

Drol lam, the path of liberation, is what sometimes we refer to as formless meditation and includes mahamudra. In this approach to meditation one relates to the mind in terms of the awareness aspect of mind.

Thap lam, the path of means or method, includes all tantric practices

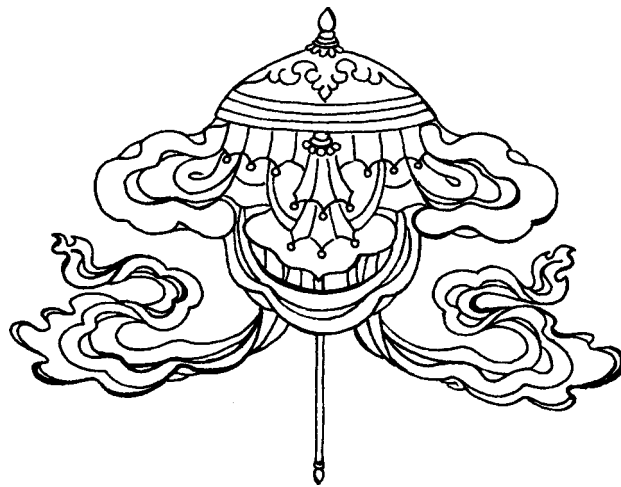
Dharmas of Naropa or the *Six Dharmas of Niguma*, etc. These practices relate to mind in terms of the energy aspect of mind. By properly integrating the distorted karmic energies of one's mind, one brings about the same enlightened awareness that is reached as the fruition of the formless meditation approach of the path of liberation. The virtue of the path of liberation is

that it tends to be smoother, while the virtue of the path of means is that it tends to be faster; therefore, they make a good complement to each other. Neither path can be practiced properly—and in the case of the path of means it would be dangerous to try to do so—without the guidance of a qualified tantric master.

Situ Rinpoche's teachings touch on these two approaches to meditation. They also discuss the relationship of the vajrayana approaches to meditation and the traditional sutra meditation practices of *shamatha* and *vipashyana* (*shinay* and *lhaktong* in Tibetan; tranquility and insight in English).

The study and practice of either of these two systems, mahamudra or madhyamika, will lead to buddhahood, and an understanding of one is thought to be beneficial to the study, practice, and understanding of the other.

—Lama Tashi Namgyal



The Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra, the Definitive Meaning

Composed by

The Lord Protector Rangjung Dorje

The Third Gyalwang Karmapa

Namo guru,

Gurus and yidams, deities of the mandala,
Buddhas of the three times in the ten directions and your sons and daughters,
Please consider us with kindness and understanding, and
Grant your blessing that these aspirations may be accomplished exactly
as we ask.

Sprung from the snow mountain of pure intentions and actions
Of myself and all sentient beings without limit,
May the river of accumulated virtue of the threefold purity
Flow into the ocean of the four bodies of the Victorious Ones.

So long as this is not accomplished,
Through all my lifetimes, birth upon birth,
May not even the words “evil deeds” and “suffering” be heard
And may we enjoy the splendor and goodness of oceans of happiness and virtue.

Having obtained the supreme freedoms and conjunctions of the precious
human existence, endowed with faith, energy, and intelligence,
Having attended on a worthy spiritual friend and received the pith of the
holy instructions,
May we practice these properly, just as we have received them, without
obstacle or interruption.
In all our lives, may we practice and enjoy the holy dharma.

Hearing and studying the scriptures and reasonings free us from the
obscuration of not knowing.
Contemplating the oral instructions disperses the darkness of doubt.
In the light born of meditation what shines forth just as it is.
May the brightness of the three prajnas grow in power.

By understanding the meaning of the ground, which is the two truths free
from the extremes of eternalism and nihilism,
And by practicing the supreme path of the two accumulations, free from the
extremes of exaggeration and denial,
Is attained the fruit of well-being for oneself and others, free from the
extremes of samsara and nirvana.
May all beings meet the dharma which neither errs nor misleads.

The ground of purification is the mind itself, indivisible cognitive clarity
and emptiness.

That which purifies is the great vajra yoga of mahamudra.

What is to be purified are the adventitious, temporary contaminations of confusion.

May the fruit of purification, the stainless dharmakaya, be manifest.

Resolving doubts about the ground brings conviction in the view.

Then keeping one's awareness unwavering, in accordance with the view, is the
subtle pith of meditation.

Putting all aspects of meditation into practice is the supreme action.

The view, the meditation, the action—may there be confidence in these.

All phenomena are illusory displays of mind.

Mind is no mind—the mind's nature is empty of any entity that is mind.

Being empty, it is unceasing and unimpeded, manifesting as everything whatsoever.

Examining well, may all doubts about the ground be discerned and cut.

Naturally manifesting appearances, that never truly exist, are confused into objects.

Spontaneous intelligence, under the power of ignorance, is confused into a self.

By the power of this dualistic fixation, beings wander in the realms of
samsaric existence.

May ignorance, the root of confusion, be discovered and cut.

It is not existent—even the Victorious Ones do not see it.

It is not nonexistent—it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana.

This is not a contradiction, but the middle path of unity.

May the ultimate nature of phenomena, limitless mind beyond extremes, be realized.

If one says, "This is it," there is nothing to show.

If one says, "This is not it," there is nothing to deny.

The true nature of phenomena, which transcends conceptual understanding,
is unconditioned.

May conviction be gained in the ultimate, perfect truth.

Not realizing it, one circles in the ocean of samsara.

If it is realized, buddha is not anything other.

It is completely devoid of any "This is it," or "This is not it."

May this simple secret, this ultimate essence of phenomena, which is the basis of
everything, be realized.

Appearance is mind and emptiness is mind.
Realization is mind and confusion is mind.
Arising is mind and cessation is mind.
May all doubts about mind be resolved.

Not adulterating meditation with conceptual striving or mentally created meditation,
Unmoved by the winds of everyday busyness,
Knowing how to rest in the uncontrived, natural spontaneous flow,
May the practice of resting in mind's true nature be skillfully sustained.

The waves of subtle and coarse thoughts calm down by themselves in their
own place,
And the unmoving waters of mind rest naturally.
Free from dullness, torpor, and, murkiness,
May the ocean of shamatha be unmoving and stable.

Looking again and again at the mind which cannot be looked at,
The meaning which cannot be seen is vividly seen, just as it is.
Thus cutting doubts about how it is or is not,
May the unconfused genuine self-nature be known by self-nature itself.

Looking at objects, the mind devoid of objects is seen;
Looking at mind, its empty nature devoid of mind is seen;
Looking at both of these, dualistic clinging is self-liberated.
May the nature of mind, the clear light nature of what is, be realized.

Free from mental fabrication, it is the great seal, mahamudra.
Free from extremes, it is the great middle way, madhyamika.
The consummation of everything, it is also called the great perfection, dzogchen.
May there be confidence that by understanding one, the essential meaning of all
is realized.

Great bliss free from attachment is unceasing.
Luminosity free from fixation on characteristics is unobscured.
Nonthought transcending conceptual mind is spontaneous presence.
May the effortless enjoyment of these experiences be continuous.

Longing for good and clinging to experiences are self-liberated.
Negative thoughts and confusion purify naturally in ultimate space.
In ordinary mind there is no rejecting and accepting, loss and gain.
May simplicity, the truth of the ultimate essence of everything, be realized.

The true nature of beings is always buddha.
Not realizing that, they wander in endless samsara.
For the boundless suffering of sentient beings
May unbearable compassion be conceived in our being.

When the energy of unbearable compassion is unceasing,
In expressions of loving kindness, the truth of its essential emptiness is nakedly clear.
This unity is the supreme unerring path.
Inseparable from it, may we meditate day and night.

By the power of meditation arise the eyes and supernormal perceptions,
Sentient beings are ripened and buddha fields are perfectly purified,
The aspirations that accomplish the qualities of a buddha are fulfilled.
By bringing these three to utmost fruition—fulfilling, ripening, and purifying—may
utmost buddhahood be manifest.

By the power of the compassion of the Victorious Ones of the ten directions and
their sons and daughters,
And by the power of all the pure virtue that exists,
May the pure aspirations of myself and all sentient beings
Be accomplished exactly as we wish.

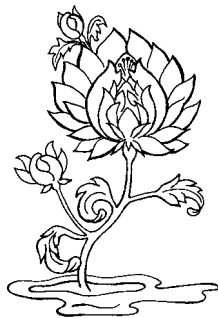




Photo by Ryszard K. Frackiewicz

His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche

A Commentary on

The Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra, the Definitive Meaning

Composed by
The Lord Protector Rangjung Dorje
The Third Gyalwa Karmapa

In February of 1995, His Eminence Jamgon Tai Situ Rinpoche gave a three-day teaching on the Prayer of Mahamudra at Edmonds Community College in Edmonds, Washington. The following is an edited transcript of that teaching, which Rinpoche gave in English.

By His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche

As requested by the dharma center and its lama, I will be teaching about mahamudra, particularly according to the *Prayer of Mahamudra*, written by The Third Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. We have only three sessions to go through the prayer, so it will be quite brief; but it will be both a teaching and a transmission.

As you know, in Buddhism every person who teaches dharma and also every person who receives the dharma has their own responsibility. That is very simple—the pureness and the authentic future of the lineage depend totally on the people who have the lineage of transmission, and by my teaching this to you,

you are going to have the transmission of this particular teaching and lineage. So this is not a public talk. This is not just a simple introductory lecture. This is very serious. I take it this way, and I hope you all know that. After this teaching, you will be connected to the mahamudra lineage just as we all have been connected to it throughout the history of the mahamudra lineage. I wanted to let you know this, because that is the way it was taught to me.

At the beginning, it is necessary to give you the definition of mahamudra. Mahamudra, both the term and the teaching itself, is actually derived from the essence of the teachings of Lord Buddha. The sources of the mahamudra teachings in the Tibetan language are called *gyu*, *kajung*, and *mengak*. *Gyu* means tantra, and those are the direct words of Lord Buddha himself. *Kajung* refers to the texts written by the great masters of India, originally written in Sanskrit, which were subsequently translated into the Tibetan language. *Mengak* are direct instructions from master to disciple, given according to the particular disciple's maturity and level of understanding with the sole purpose of improving the wisdom, the compassion, the devotion, and the realization of the disciple. These latter are usually not written. Sometimes they are handwritten, but definitely not printed.

But I must tell you that some of these *mengak* texts have been translated into English and printed and you can buy them in bookstores these days. Maybe I can call it "blessing in disguise." [laughter]

Now, *gyu*, the original source of the mahamudra teachings, are actually the highest tantras, such as Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, Mahamaya, Kalachakra, etc. The essence of these teachings is mahamudra. Another source of the

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'If I know how to drink this water properly, I will get enlightened.'

mahamudra teachings is the *kajung*, the texts written by the great Indian masters, such as Nagarjuna, and the teachings of the great Indian *mahasiddhas*, such as the eighty-four *mahasiddhas* and the thirty great female enlightened masters, etc. Those teachings and those texts are the *kajung* and are a source of the mahamudra teachings. And *mengaks* are texts such as The Ninth Gyalwa Karmapa's *Ocean of Certainty*, *Ngedön Gyamtso*. This is one perfect example of *mengak*. These are the sources of the mahamudra teachings.

Now the definition of the term mahamudra, if we make it very simple, is this: Every single, relative reality, inclu-

sive of everything and not excluding anything, is the manifestation of the ever-present, incorruptible, unchanged ultimate. That is the definition of mahamudra in general. Now, technically, this means that if we are able to do anything properly we can attain enlightenment through that particular vehicle. And, in principle, that means anything. So, I will give you a simple example: drinking this water. If I know how to drink this water properly, I will get enlightened. Okay, you wait. [drinks water] I'm not enlightened. [laughter] Why? I don't know how to do it. So, in principle, by doing anything correctly, we can attain liberation.

Now that is the mahamudra in general, according to its basic definition. But then, why did I not attain enlightenment by drinking this glass of water? Number one, I don't know how to do it properly; and, number two, I don't have the lineage that teaches how to attain enlightenment through drinking water. Do you see?

Therefore, the particular teachings of the lineage of transmission of mahamudra that we do have—such as the four foundations of mahamudra, the visualization practices of

mahamudra, the physical exercises of mahamudra, the breathing practices of mahamudra, the deity practices of mahamudra, and the way of observing the nature of mind of mahamudra—we have because we have that lineage. Therefore, through those means, which are limited in number, compared to everything else we might do, we can get enlightened. We don't know how to attain enlightenment by eating pizza. We don't know how to attain enlightenment by drinking Coca Cola, we don't know how to attain enlightenment by driving a sports car or by traveling in a mobile home. We don't know those things because we don't have such a lineage. But in the mahamudra tradition we do have the lineage of attaining enlightenment by praying, by meditating, by doing practices such as the four foundations [*ngöndro*], etc. Those things are alive, because there is the living lineage of how to attain liberation through those means. So, we shouldn't get these two things mixed up. When we see *in principle* what mahamudra means, and then see *in particular* what kind of lineage of living teachings there is, then it becomes very clear. Yes?

Now, the very widespread, let's say popular, concept of mahamudra is that you don't have to be involved in any kind of visualization, in any kind of prayer, any kind of ritual, any kind of discipline. You just somehow sit there and get enlightened. And that is very true in one particular aspect of the mahamudra teachings. That is the heart and the essence of the mahamudra teachings—to be absorbed in and to observe the nature of mind. To be absorbed in and observe the nature of mind, which is always nothing less than buddha itself. If we manage to do that, then that is enlightenment. Enlightenment is nothing more, and nothing less than that. That is the essence of mahamudra. But that happens as a result. We can't begin there; that is the end, not the beginning. We have to get there by the accumulation of merit and the accumu-

lation of wisdom, by purification of negative emotional defilements, by purification of cognitive obscurations. We have to overcome all the defilements and obscurations in order to get there.

So, although mahamudra means *trödrel*, *semche trödrel*, being away from activity, or an activity-free sort of practice, a non-conceptual, non dualistic aspect of practice, we still have to overcome the dualistic bondage in order to be nondualistic. We can't say we are nondualistic just because we want to be nondualistic. It doesn't work that way. We have to go slowly, step by step.

I have a kind of primitive new term for it, saying we are nondualistic just because we want to be nondualistic. You might even call it, with all due respect, slang. Okay? If we are not clear and honest about where we stand as far as our personal level of maturity is concerned, and we just want to be, and believe we already are, what we really wish to be, then it becomes a little inconvenient for everybody, especially for that person. And I call it “unidentified flying ego.” [laughter] So, “unidentified flying ego” is out to lunch. Has been taken for a ride. And maybe, while that is happening, buddha nature is temporarily out cold. [laughter] I don't mean to say inauspicious things, but sometimes in this way we get to the point pretty quickly. So, that is a basic, general description of mahamudra.

That is the heart and essence of the mahamudra teachings—to be absorbed in and to observe the nature of mind

In the *Prayer of Mahamudra* itself, The Third Gyalwa Karmapa writes about almost every important point of dharma—not only of mahamudra, but of whatever level of dharma that you can think of: hinayana, mahayana, mahamudra, madhyamika. Anything that you can think of about dharma is one way or another summarized in this very short prayer.

This prayer is written as a supplication. When we go through a traditional text like this, then it is very important to go through it

in the strict Tibetan way. In our tradition, when we learn about a text, there is an important, basic structure that you have to follow; you have to have an outline of the entire text first. Then you know which sentence means what and where it belongs, and in that way it becomes quite easy. Otherwise, it becomes like a big hotel with many rooms and many floors with no floor numbers and no room numbers. Then it becomes very difficult to find anything—like an elevator with buttons but no numbers on them—it would be very hard to find anything! In order to avoid that, there is, in the beginning, the outlining of the entire text. And we call that, *sachay*. I don't know what you call it. Maybe you call it outlining.

So then, this text has three parts. The first and last parts are very short. The first is the preliminary aspect of the *mönlam* or prayer. The second is the actual prayer itself, which comprises the majority of the text. And the last part, which is very short, is the conclusion of the prayer. So, there is the beginning, the main body of the prayer, and the conclusion of the prayer—three parts.

The first part is written in four sentences. We call each verse or four-line section a *shloka*. At the beginning of this first *shloka* there is a short Sanskrit sentence. I will read the text to you in Tibetan as I go through it so that you will also get the *lung* [reading transmission] for the text as I discuss its meaning.

Namo guru,

Gurus and yidams, deities of the mandala,

Buddhas of the three times in the ten
directions and your sons and daughters,

Please consider us with kindness and
understanding, and

Grant your blessing so that these aspirations
may be accomplished exactly as we ask.

That is the beginning part of the prayer—four lines and one short Sanskrit phrase preceding them. The Sanskrit phrase is *Namo guru*. Here

Karmapa bows to and salutes his guru. *Namo* means salutation, and *guru* means the master, his teacher. Here he means his personal root guru, as well as all the gurus of the mahamudra lineage.

When you talk about guru in the mahamudra lineage, there is the pure [dharmakaya] aspect of the guru, the distance lineage gurus, and the close lineage gurus. The distance lineage gurus start with the Lord Buddha and extend in a continuous, unbroken succession of enlightened masters and students all the way down to The Third Gyalwa Karmapa, who is the author of this prayer. We call that the distance lineage because it goes all the way back to the Buddha Shakyamuni.

This is very particular, because the great master, Tilopa—whose disciple was Naropa, whose disciple was Marpa who brought the mahamudra lineage from India to Tibet, whose disciple was Milarepa, whose disciple was Gampopa, whose foremost disciple was Dusum Khyenpa [The First Karmapa], all the way down to The Sixteenth Karmapa, and then to the present holders of the lineage—had many, many gurus, each of whose lineages extended all the way back to the Buddha Shakyamuni. From some gurus Tilopa learned certain tantric texts, from some gurus he received certain empowerments, etc. And the entirety of these mahamudra teachings was actually derived as one whole from Tilopa, who transmitted them to Naropa, who then transmitted them to Marpa, etc. So, that is the distance lineage.

There is the close lineage of mahamudra as well. That lineage begins with the buddha Vajradhara who bestowed mahamudra teachings on the bodhisattva Lodro Rinchen, which teachings then come down to Tilopa and Naropa. In the case of the great masters who received mahamudra lineage transmissions directly from the buddha Vajradhara, those transmissions happened a long time after Prince Siddhartha's paranirvana.* The physical Buddha, the historical

***Editor's note:** i.e., after the Buddha Shakyamuni passed from this realm; buddhas are not said to have died, since they have reached the stage of deathlessness, or deathless awareness.

Buddha Shakyamuni, Prince Siddhartha, was at that time no longer in physical Prince Siddhartha form. What happened was that first these great masters received the teachings of the Buddha and the Buddha's disciples through "distance lineages," and they practiced them. Through their practice they attained realization. As part of their realization the Buddha manifested to them, but not as Prince Siddhartha, as buddha Vajradhara. So, buddha Vajradhara means the dharmakaya of the buddha, the sambhogakaya of the buddha, and the nirmanakaya of the buddha, which is Prince Siddhartha in our case. The buddha Vajradhara means all in one—the ever-present buddha, the timeless buddha.

Then the buddha Vajradhara transmitted directly to certain great masters, but only as a result of the realization of the teachings they had already received from their masters, whose teachings started with the historical Buddha. In this way, the mahamudra lineage and many vajrayana Buddhist lineages actually have distance lineage as well as close lineage.

Close lineage we call *ngegyü* in Tibetan. *Nge* means close, not very far. Sometimes people misunderstand and think that these masters may have just been running around somewhere and all of a sudden a big light hit them, whereupon they encountered Vajradhara and received all the teachings and then commenced going around and teaching. But it is not like that. These great masters first followed the path of the distance lineages, they followed the discipline and really practiced. And through their practice they attained realization. Subsequently, they received the transmission as part of that realization. It is not another trip of UFE [unidentified flying ego].

So, when The Third Karmapa says *Namo guru*, he is addressing both the distance lineage gurus and the close lineage gurus, as well as his per-

sonal root guru from whom he received the teachings of mahamudra.

Karmapa salutes his guru in Sanskrit, according to the custom of most Tibetan Buddhist masters, who begin their writings and prayers with Sanskrit words. The reason for this custom is that the Lord Buddha, although there was no limitation on Buddha's part, physically was born in India. And the Buddha's teachings were originally heard by those people who spoke the Indian language. In order to respect that, and also to receive the blessing of the original sound of the Buddha's teachings as they were heard by his disciples, these masters always begin with a few Sanskrit words. In Tibetan, to somebody who

doesn't know Sanskrit, *Namo guru* doesn't mean anything. But in Sanskrit it means salutation to the guru.

Now I want to go on a little side-track here.

Since I have been in the West many people have talked about doing prayers and practices in the English language, in German, French, Spanish, Chinese, etc. People are very much concerned about this, because they say

that when they say prayers in Tibetan they don't know what they are saying. When they say them in their own language, they know what they are saying, and it makes them feel better. That's understandable, isn't it? And somehow it will happen; not it has to happen, it will happen! But it will not happen out of haste and out of everybody's desperation. It has to happen properly. I think to a certain degree it has happened properly already, very nicely. But, for the dharma as a whole, or the texts as a whole, it has to happen very, very nicely. Nicely, not just socially nicely, if you know what I mean, but in accordance with the transmission of the lineage as it has been continued all the way through history. First the dharma was transmitted in Sanskrit; then it was transmitted in Tibetan, in which

First the dharma was transmitted in Sanskrit, then it was transmitted in Tibetan . . . Now it has to happen in English and other languages

language it has continued to be transmitted for many centuries, for more than a thousand years. That's a pretty long time. Now it has to happen also in English and other languages. That transition has to take place in a sacred and holy manner, not just like some kind of simultaneous translation at a world trade conference. That is okay for them; they are professionals there, and they render speech in all the languages needed. But it doesn't work like that in the translation of dharma.

What I see happening, and what I think will happen inevitably, is that our translations into English and other languages will employ three languages. Because the dharma originally came from India, the Sanskrit mantras and certain other phrases will always remain in Sanskrit. They will not be translated. The Tibetan masters never translated *OM MANI PEME HUNG*, or the hundred-syllable mantra, or any of these *namo gurus*. In this particular prayer we are studying, this phrase is not even used as part of the translation of a text originally in Sanskrit. The Third Gyalwa Karmapa wrote the Sanskrit sounds of *Namo guru* in Tibetan. Nobody speaks Sanskrit as a language, but he wrote it in Sanskrit, so there is a reason for it. Therefore, this custom will remain as it is.

Then, secondly, very important parts of the text will remain in Tibetan. A few words. Yes? The majority of the texts will be translated into the local language. That is how I see it unfolding. I share your aspiration in this matter. I think you all pray for this transition to take place quickly and properly and without damaging the lineage, without damaging its blessing. We have many wonderful texts, but there will be no blessing if there is no lineage. If translations come about only as a result of people's fear and people's greed, then there will be no benefit. Translations have to happen in a pure and healthy manner. We

should all pray for that. Okay? Now back to the text.

After that short Sanskrit phrase, The Third Gyalwa Karmapa continues to invoke all the gurus and deities of the mandalas, and the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times and ten directions, requesting their compassion, that they be compassionate towards him, and requesting that they support the fulfillment of the prayer that he is writing. He wants them to bless his writing of this prayer.

The meaning of gurus you understand. Deities refers to the sambhogakaya of the buddha. And the surroundings manifest as the environment of that deity. The environment and the deity together make the mandala. Mandala means the whole thing. Mandala does not mean only the surroundings; it means the surroundings and the deity.*

The reason that we practice deity meditation in Tibetan Buddhism is that each and every one of us in our potential is buddha. Ultimately, we are buddha, nothing less than buddha. This popular concept of human nature as being bad is wrong, according to vajrayana Buddhism. Human nature is perfect and good and nothing less than buddha. And not only human nature, but the nature and essence of every single sentient being is perfect. However, although we have this ultimate potential of perfect, limitless goodness and positiveness, we have negativity and we have

***Editor's note:** There are three bodies of buddha: the dharmakaya, or the body of the realization of ultimate truth, which benefits the buddha in question; the sambhogakaya, a "form body" called the "enjoyment body," that exists for the benefit of beings but is perceptible only to high-level bodhisattvas; and the nirmanakaya, a form body that is perceptible to ordinary beings and manifests for their benefit. The latter two arise spontaneously from the former. When Lord Buddha taught tantra, the Buddha himself manifested as the central deity of the particular mandala of whatever tantra he was teaching.

This popular concept of human nature as being bad is wrong, according to vajrayana Buddhism. Human nature is perfect and good and nothing less than

shortcomings and limitations, which is very apparent. I don't have to tell you about it. And, I don't mean only apparent in me; I presume in you too. But anyway, the practice of the deity begins right there where you are. Through the practice you transform your subconscious and unconscious levels of mind, as well as the physical body through your visualization. You transform your experience of form into the deity. In this way, then, it is the ultimate form of purification, and the ultimate form of the accumulation of merit. The deepest and most direct way to transform whatever is negative, all of which exists as the result of negative deeds—the physical limitations and mental limitations and defilements, etc.—is to transform it all into the essence of itself. That is the purpose of the practice of the deity, the practice of the *yidam*.

When Lord Buddha taught any particular tantra manifesting as that particular tantra's deity, then the particular disciples to whom Buddha manifested all got enlightened. So, the lineages come from those enlightened masters. Through practicing the meditations associated with these deities, we also have the chance to attain enlightenment. Our great masters, like Marpa, attained enlightenment through these practices. Milarepa attained enlightenment through them. Gampopa attained enlightenment through these practices. Indeed, all of the great masters of our lineage attained enlightenment through the practice of deity meditation, the essence of which is the recognition of the true nature of mind—the essence of mahamudra itself. When Karmapa talks about the *yidams* or the deities, that is what he means.

As for the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three times, three times means past, present, and future; and ten directions means the four cardinal directions with the four directions in between and above and below—making ten. That's actually a more complicated way of saying every direction, yes? So, buddhas everywhere. Maybe our great masters are worried that we think that beneath the earth everything is solid. Therefore, they say below. Perhaps they want us to know that there is space below, just like space

above. In practical terms it means every direction.

Now the second part of the text, which is the main body of the text itself, Karmapa writes in two parts. The first part generally dedicates all the prayers and intentions of himself and all sentient beings and all their virtuous activity of body, speech and mind towards enlightenment. And the second part of the main body of the text particularly dedicates the prayers in five sections to five particular, specific objectives. First, the general dedication, and, second, five specific objectives. First, the general prayer:

Sprung from the snow mountain of pure intentions and actions

Of myself and all sentient beings without limit,

May the river of accumulated virtue of the threefold purity

Flow into the ocean of the four bodies of the Victorious Ones.

This is very simple poetry. Here Karmapa makes an analogy with the very pure snows of a snow mountain, which melt and give rise to very clean streams, which will enter into the ocean and become part of the great ocean. I think this is perfect for your mountains here. His supplication concerns the virtues of himself and all sentient beings that derive from pure motivation and pure action. The purity is like the clean, unstained snow on the top of a mountain. That is the example of the pureness of the motivation and the deeds. Then he makes reference to threefold purity. By implication he is saying that there are three things that make an action impure. He's talking about pure motivation and pure action, which are free from three aspects of impurity. The three aspects of impurity are these: a fixation on or attachment to the subject, the object, and the deed itself. Dualistic fixation makes an action limited and impure. For example, if I give something to a beggar, then the beggar is the object to whom I'm giving, and I am the one who is the giver, the subject. There are five dollars that I am

giving to the beggar. There is a fixation on these three things, and so it is a samsaric gift. It is okay to give. We should give, of course. But it is still limited when there is fixation.

When we refer to the paramitas, as in the paramita of generosity, we mean a form of generosity that has become totally pure. Generosity then is totally achieved. This achievement doesn't mean that you have to go bankrupt. It doesn't mean that you have to make everybody rich, you know? It means that there is no dualistic clinging of any kind between the giver and the recipient of the giving, and no clinging to the things that are given. The giving is totally free of these three limitations and three aspects of duality.

So Karmapa prays that all of our intentions and actions be free of these three aspects of dualism. He says that virtue, or positiveness, is like a very pure river coming from the mountain. And this, he prays, will flow into and become one with the four kayas of the Victorious Ones, whom he compares to a great ocean. The four kayas of the buddha are dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya, and svabhavakakaya. The first three kayas are not three separate things. They are just three aspects of one thing, which is the fourth kaya, the svabhavakakaya. And so, looking at the whole prayer, these four lines express the general prayer of Gyalwa Karmapa. He is praying that our actions be very positive, free of any kind of dualism, so that these positive activities may become the condition for our enlightenment. That is his prayer in general.

Now I will comment on this a little bit as it relates to the mahayana. In vajrayana Buddhism the most important step of inner maturity is to be a complete mahayanist. If one does not have mahayana motivation, then one cannot be a vajrayanist—*cannot* and *will not* be a vajrayanist. It is not illegal to be a vajrayanist without proper mahayana motivation; but one simply won't be a vajrayanist without it; the preconditions are not there. Proper mahayana motivation is the wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings—to have bodhicitta. So, Karmapa in these four lines is saying: May all of our intentions and deeds be for the sake of enlightenment.

That establishes the basis of this entire prayer. He does it all at once in this part.

In the next section of the main body of the prayer, he makes several specific prayers with specific objectives. He makes five major, specific prayers. Number one, he is praying for perfect conditions for the path to liberation. Number two, he is praying for perfect wisdom, which will enable us to really understand and to attain realization on the path. Number three, he is praying for a path that is an unmistakable path, a correct path. Not a wrong one, not a look-alike path. A real path. Then, number four, when we apply and practice this path, he wants the practice to be authentic, too. The path could be a correct path, but we might practice it incorrectly. Then it doesn't work. So, he prays that we also get the practice right. Then, number five, he prays for the accomplishment of the journey on the path, for the final, perfect realization, for buddhahood itself. So, he makes these five particular prayers.

Of these, the first one, which is about perfect conditions for the path to liberation, he writes in two *shlokas*. The first *shloka* concerns general, ordinary conditions, while the second concerns the extraordinary, more advanced conditions. So, first, the ordinary conditions:

So long as this is not accomplished,

**Through all my lifetimes, birth
upon birth,**

**May not even the words “evil deeds” and
“suffering” be heard,**

**And may we enjoy the splendor and goodness
of oceans of happiness and virtue.**

Here Karmapa prays that, until one reaches that great liberation—the great ocean of the four kayas of the Victorious Ones—until that is achieved, life after life, rebirth after rebirth, in all reincarnations, may not even the sound of negative deeds and negative conditions, such as suffering, which is the result of negative deeds, be heard. He prays that not only will we not accumulate negative deeds, but that negative

deeds will not even be around to hear about. This is a bit of an extreme prayer, of course. It is a *prayer*, you have to remember. Karmapa is not saying that hearing negative things is bad. But if it were possible not even to hear of negative things, that would be wonderful, wouldn't it? And then he prays that joy and virtue be totally abundant, like a great ocean, and that we may totally enjoy the goodness of it. So he prays that, for all sentient beings, life after life, there be no negativity, no suffering, and that their lives may be full of joy and totally auspicious and positive. That is his general, very basic, fundamental prayer.

This leads to the second, extraordinary or more advanced prayer, concerning the perfect conditions for the path to liberation:

Having obtained the supreme freedoms and conjunctions of the precious human existence, endowed with faith, energy, and intelligence,

Having attended on a worthy spiritual friend and received the pith of the holy instructions,

May we practice these properly, just as we have received them, without obstacle or interruption,

In all our lives, may we practice and enjoy the holy dharma.

***Editor's note:** *Tal* is often translated as "freedom" and *yor* as "endowments," "qualities," "resources," and here as "conjunctions." The eight freedoms are traditionally enumerated as freedom from birth as a hell being, a hungry ghost, an animal, a barbarian, a long-lived god, a heretic, a mentally handicapped person, or living in a dark age. Of the ten conjunctions or resources, the five personal conjunctions are having a human body, being born in a land to which the dharma has spread, having all of one's senses intact, not reverting to evil ways, and having confidence in the three jewels. (Having one's senses impaired to the extent that one's mind could not function properly in the study and practice of dharma would constitute the loss of one's precious human birth.) The five conjunctions that come by way of others are that a Buddha has been born in this age, that the Buddha taught the dharma, that the dharma still exists, that there are still followers who have realized the meaning and essence of the teachings of the dharma, and that there are benevolent sponsors.

With faith or trust, diligence and wisdom all together we can accomplish a lot

The four lines before these last ones are very basic, very fundamental, but very general. But, in these next four he makes his aspiration more advanced, deeper and quite specific. Not general, very specific. He says, may we obtain the profound precious human life. There are eight *talwa* and ten *yorpa*, eighteen particular qualities of this precious human life. I think all of you know of or have done the four foundation practices [*ngöndro*]. At the beginning of these practices, you do four contemplations. The first of these is the precious human life, and within the precious human life contemplation, you contemplate eighteen subjects. Now Karmapa

is talking about these eighteen subjects. *Tal* refers to eight particular conditions, and *yor* refers to ten particular conditions.* So, Karmapa is talking about and praying that we may have these eighteen conditions of a precious human life. And then he prays that we may have profound devotion, faith, and trust, profound diligence and wisdom, all of which qualities are very important on the path of dharma. With faith or trust, diligence and wisdom all together we can accomplish a lot.

Next, Karmapa prays that we may meet and become acquainted with a profound and kind master. He uses a particular word, *shenyen*. *She* actually means one who is sympathetic. *Nyen* means one who is helpful—one who is sympathetic with our shortcomings and weaknesses and able to transmute our shortcomings and weaknesses, help us to develop our potentials and lead us progressively through the journey. *Nyen* means a support. As we practice, our teacher, our master accompanies and supports us. Karmapa prays that we may meet such a master and receive from him or her the essence or nectar of the instructions. What this means is that—and this is most important—when we have a great master, and when we have great faith, diligence, and wisdom, then what we must receive under those conditions has to be the real nectar of dharma,

the profound, authentic teachings of the Buddha. So Karmapa prays that these teachings may be received.

Then Karmapa prays that there be no obstacle to the practice of the correct path. We have to be able to practice correctly what teachings we receive; we have to be able to digest them and apply them properly without obstacle. If we are getting something wrong, we want to have obstacles, so that we don't continue, so that we stop and ponder, and then learn about the correct way. You see? But if everything is going well, positively, we don't want obstacles. He prays that we may practice appropriately without obstacles. And he prays that every consecutive life will be totally dedicated to and involved in the practice of the precious and profound dharma. *Damchö* means profound and sacred dharma. This is a specific prayer for the basic conditions, the appropriate conditions necessary to progress on the path.

In this *shloka* we learn quite a few very important things. In general, we learn about devotion and diligence and wisdom, etc., but there is a tremendous depth of understanding within these topics in regard to the importance of practicing the pure dharma correctly. He emphasizes this in every one of the four lines. In the first line, he refers to precious human life, which is profound. Profound means precious human life that is conducive for attaining enlightenment—a human existence endowed with all the requisite qualities to pursue the right goal. And in the next line, when he talks about the teacher, he indicates the need for a profound and kind teacher. At the end of this line, he also indicates the need for the nectar of the profound and precious instructions. This also gives further emphasis to practicing the *pure* dharma *correctly*.

In the next line, he indicates the need to prac-

tice appropriately, without obstacles. Not just practice, but practice appropriately. Correctly. In the last sentence, he says, *dam chö*. *Chö* means dharma. *Dam chö* means profound, sacred, precious, authentic, pure dharma. *Dam* has many meanings. So, in this way The Gyalwa Karmapa is emphasizing the correctness, the rightness, and the accuracy of all of these particular conditions. He is praying that they all arise in that way because they are all necessary for the attainment of enlightenment.

Now I'm going to take a little side-track here. Sometimes people are very, very diligent. We have a saying: so diligent that the forehead can make a hole in the wall. [laughter] You see, they will bang on it continuously until it makes a hole. But it

doesn't really help very much because you could have bought a sledgehammer and just hit the wall once. Then there would be a hole. You don't have to use this. [Rinpoche points to his forehead.] So diligence does not mean desperately trying to do something. One has to get everything right. And if one does everything in this right and correct and pure way, then everything will be fruitful, and every moment of doing something or doing nothing becomes diligence. You see? That's why in our teaching there is tremendous emphasis on mindfulness and awareness. It doesn't emphasize mindlessness. It doesn't suggest that to really hit the wall you have to be mindless, not mindful. You see? So, diligent mindfulness and awareness. This all goes together.

I have four lines here that were said by one of Tibet's great yogis. I have shared these in several places, and for

me they mean a lot because they really helped me to understand devotion and compassion. Okay? This great Tibetan yogi is called Drukpa Kunli. He is supposed to have been one of the three craziest yogis of Tibet. He was very unconventional and very extreme. One day he went to a shrine, a very beautiful shrine. He was standing in front

One has to get everything right. And if one does everything in this right and correct and pure way, then everything will be fruitful, and every moment of doing something or doing nothing becomes

of it, and, of course, he doesn't fit there, you see. Because he is one of the craziest persons. His clothes are terrible. Everything is really bad. He is standing there, and he looks at the Buddha statue without bowing, without doing anything; he is just staring at the Buddha with some sense of surprise, as though he were seeing an old friend that he hasn't seen for a long time. As you say in America, "long time no see." [laughter] So he's looking at the Buddha with a "long time no see" attitude. He looks at him for a long time. And finally he says four things.

First he says, "A long time ago you and I were the same."

Then he says, "You were diligent; therefore, you have become enlightened."

Then he says, "I am lazy, therefore I am still wandering in samsara."

Then he says, "Therefore, I bow to you." Then he prostrated to the Buddha, and behaved himself.

You see, faith and trust and devotion all come to the same thing. It is not that the Buddha had something that we don't have, and that we are so thrilled by what Buddha has and are so blindly amazed by it that we fall on our faces everywhere for the Buddha. It is not like that. It is for the very reason that we and Buddha are, in essence, the same. In a buddha, that essence is fully liberated and mature. A buddha has attained ultimate freedom and ultimate liberation already. And the Buddha's teaching is the manifestation of that limitless liberation and limitless realization.

We have all the potentials of the Buddha. It is for this reason that receiving the Buddha's teachings is meaningful to us. Buddha did not campaign for himself to teach dharma. And we are not Buddha's propaganda minister, either. Propaganda minister, I'm not either. You see? The Buddha's teaching is the manifestation of his realization. It is not his egocentric, dualistic concepts and findings and discoveries.

Our devotion to Buddha is deeply rooted in our essence and our potential. When the Buddha talks about the sufferings of samsara, he's not saying that good food is bad. He's not saying that being healthy is uncomfortable. Being healthy is very comfortable. Buddha knows that. Good food is very tasty. He knows that, too. But what he is saying is that the suffering of samsara is that no sentient

being can or will ever stop struggling until they become buddha. That is what he is saying.

The nature of every sentient being is without limitation—that is buddha nature. And until each person and each being is fully free and unlimited, until they each reach the ultimate freedom and ultimate liberation, they are not going to be at peace. They will struggle with whatever it takes. We can see very well how many problems there are in this world, in every society, even in religions, everywhere. And we can see how many problems there are in every family. And also, how many problems there are in every person. And we are not just busy with problems of bread and butter. Most of us do very well with bread and butter, don't we? But it doesn't make us liberated. From this we can see that our ultimate liberation is the destination of our ultimate potential, our buddha nature.

So devotion to buddha is totally inherent in us. And compassion for all sentient beings is the other side of that devotion to buddha. Sometimes people say, "I have lots of compassion, but I don't have devotion." That is not possible. That means that the person must look more deeply at their compassion. Once you have pure, authentic compassion, that

is devotion. Compassion and devotion are not two separate things. They are two sides of the same coin. You have compassion for all sentient beings because you know their essence is buddha. When you see someone lying in the street with no food and no clothes, you know that in that person there is the buddha. How you feel towards that person lying down there—that is authentic compassion. It is not that you think that you have clothes, house, and food, and that this person

doesn't have them, and so, therefore, you feel superior to that person. That is not complete compassion. That is also not bad. Instead of just ignoring the person, you have that kind of superficial compassion. And then you try to help. That is wonderful, that is good. But true compassion and devotion are much deeper than that.

In these four lines, The Third Gyalwa Karmapa covers all of these very important areas of vajrayana Buddhism, which are also very much, actually, the essence of theravada and mahayana Buddhism as well.

The suffering of samsara is that no sentient being can or will ever stop struggling until they become buddha

We have completed the beginning of the prayer up to the two specific prayers that Karmapa wrote regarding the perfect conditions for the path to liberation. I will stop here for now and will continue later. If you have questions . . .

Question: By “unidentified flying ego,” are you alluding to or referring to nihilism?

Rinpoche: Definitely not! With nihilism—there is no ego. . . Ah . . . I’m joking. [laughter] It can be both eternalism and nihilism, but it is actually a little bit more difficult than that, because in eternalism and nihilism there is already *identified ego*. You see? And because it is identified as eternalism or nihilism, you can fix it. But unidentified ego means ego is very much there, yet the ego still says that there is no ego. For example, if I tell you that I am enlightened, then you might say, “No, you are not enlightened.” Then I will say, “I am.” Then if you say, “No,” then I will say, “Okay, if you don’t stop saying that, I will call my lawyer.” [laughter] You see? So that is UFE. Okay? It is not so much a question of eternalism and nihilism. The ego is there, and yet the ego is not recognized by the person, either intentionally or unintentionally. And that is very hard to deal with—very, very hard to deal with. The only one who can deal with it is oneself. For another person it is very hard to deal with.

Question: Rinpoche, what was the name of the yogi who was staring at the Buddha?

Rinpoche: Drukpa Kunli. I think he is quite well known around here. Lots of Western people know about Drukpa Kunli.

Question: What is the name of the fourth aspect of buddha that encompasses the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya?

Rinpoche: Svabhavakaya. In Tibetan we say *ngowo nyichi ku*, *ngowo nyi ku*. It simply means dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya are not three separate things. They are three aspects of one thing—that is what it means. It does not mean another thing. It means further emphasis.

Question: How can one do something properly unless one is enlightened?

Rinpoche: That’s very good. That’s very, very good. Excellent. But actually, we can do it properly by following the lineage closely and properly. If there is no lineage, then it will take somebody who is enlightened to do anything properly. Because we have the lineage, then we follow the lineage. And the teachings of the lineage transmitted to us and interpreted for us are the original teachings of the Buddha. They are not the original teachings of the person who teaches us. That is the closest way to the correct way. That’s an excellent question.

Question: Regarding the issue of translation, could you explain the reason for the *benzra* in Tibetan and *vajra* in Sanskrit. Which should we use?

Rinpoche: Well, it’s very simple. Because the majority of the great Tibetan masters were not educated in Sanskrit, they didn’t know how to pronounce Sanskrit properly. So *vajra*

became *benzra*, you see. And we continued to say *benzra* because we received the transmission as *benzra*, not as *vajra*. So, we continue to say it that way. The sound has the blessing. Many great masters got enlightened saying their mantras with *benzra*. So *benzra* is equal to *vajra*. But, if we are here to pass a Sanskrit exam, we might lose a point there [laughter]—because we don’t know how to say *vajra*. It’s like *OM MANI PEME HUNG*, instead of *OM MANI PADME HUM*.

Lama Tashi: Rinpoche, this questioner is a bit confused about the distinction between close and distance lineages.

Rinpoche: Okay, I will give you an example. And this is a totally fabricated example. But maybe it will help you. If I attain enlightenment in this life, I will be attaining enlightenment through the practices that I received from my gurus. I could have received 200 different teachings from 200 different teachers. Each teacher received each particular teaching from his or her guru who had in turn

If there is no lineage, then it will take somebody who is enlightened to do anything

received their teachings from an unbroken lineage that goes back to the Buddha. That is the distance lineage. But, when I attain enlightenment, as part of my realization, I might receive direct teachings from Buddha himself. That would be a close lineage. That lineage would start from that particular buddha and would come first directly to me and would then continue on from me to others. That would be a close lineage. My distance lineages would be the lineages of all of my gurus, the practice of the teachings of which brought me to this realization. Both are involved. It is like many, many small streams on the mountainside. They all come together into one big river. And the big river goes all the way down to the ocean as one single body of water. So it's like that, the distance and close lineages. Now undo this fabrication. I'm not enlightened; I'm not buddha. Okay. I'm Buddha's disciple, his follower.

Question: Do close lineages always begin after a *siddha* has attained enlightenment?

Rinpoche: Of course. Of course. Not before. After they attain enlightenment, of course. If somebody receives the teachings directly from buddha without being enlightened, that would be unfair. [laughter] Unfair to all of us, you know. Why didn't that happen to us? Why for him? Did he pay more money or something? [laughter]. That would never happen.

Question: As regards the three impurities, Rinpoche, is the third "that which is given," or "the act of giving," or is there a difference between them?

Rinpoche: Take, for example, *jinpa* or generosity. *Jinpa* means what is to be given. *Lenpo* means the one who is to receive. And *dongpo* means the one who is to give. These three: the one who receives it, the one who gives it, and that which is given. What is to be given, and all of that together involves giving and taking and all of this, but then of course, if somebody really wanted to go into detail, it might end up becoming 10,000 [things to see as empty or not to be fixated on], instead of three. Because, with

We want to practice the dharma for the sake of attaining enlightenment, for the benefit of all sentient beings. If that is purely established, then the guru and the teacher, all of that will happen

respect to every moment you have to talk about every single thought. Before I wanted to give, the other one is hoping that something will be given. So, if one were to consider all the moments of thought involved before, during and after one act of generosity, it would become too complicated. Because all of it is involved. Threefold purity and these three main spheres of activity are just a general outline of three particular things.

Question: Rinpoche, what is it that makes them impure, and what is it that makes them pure?

Rinpoche: Dualism and nondualism. Because enlightenment can never be limited, and dualism of any kind is limited. You can't have a limited buddhahood. You see? Then it might

just be, "Buddhahood Limited, Inc." [laughter]

Question: Rinpoche, how does one find one's guru, the physical guru, the human guru?

Rinpoche: When you find, you find. There is no particular way to find the guru. You receive teachings, you have certain inspirations. You learn from a guru in whom you have full faith and trust and from whom you gain or derive inspiration and with whom you really feel a connection, an affinity. Because of the affinity, the connection, the trust, the faith and the inspiration, you learn from the situation. There's no way to *make* those affinities and those connections—like some kind of signing of something—there's no such thing. It has to happen from your heart. When it happens, it will happen. The basic, fundamental thing is that we all have to be sincere. That is very important. Our motivation should be sincere. We want to be sincere in the way we want to learn about Lord Buddha's teachings. We want to practice the dharma for the sake of attaining enlightenment, for the benefit of all sentient beings. If that is purely established, then the guru and the teacher, all of that will happen naturally. I don't think it will be anything very complicated.





Photo by Ryszard K. Frackiewicz

'One has to accumulate merit in order to overcome relative obstacles. And relative obstacles, even if we mean well, we might not succeed in overcoming without a rich accumulation of merit.'

Beginning With the Three Aspects of Wisdom

Continuing our teaching on the *Prayer of Mahamudra*, written by The Third Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, we are in the second part of three parts of the main text, which is the actual main body of the text itself. Within this part, we are on the second of the particular prayers, the particularly focused prayers. The Third Gyalwa Karmapa writes regarding the perfect wisdom necessary to understand and realize the path to liberation in four lines:

Hearing and studying the scriptures and reasonings free us from the obscuration of not knowing.

Contemplating the oral instructions disperses the darkness of doubt.

In the light born of meditation what is shines forth just as it is.

May the brightness of the three prajnas

grow in power.
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Here The Gyalwa Karmapa writes about three aspects of wisdom: the wisdom arising from learning or learning by hearing, wisdom arising through contemplation, and wisdom arising from meditation. Three aspects of wisdom. He prays that these three wisdoms should increase. Now remember, this particular prayer in which he talks about the three wisdoms is a prayer to have perfect wisdom to understand and to attain realization on the path. That is the particular subject here. The Gyalwa Karmapa, in writing about the first wisdom, says that by hearing the *lung*, which here means the direct teachings of the Buddha, and also the *rigpa*, which refers to the particular reasonings and commentaries on the teachings of Buddha, one's obscuration of not knowing, of ignorance, will be liberated; one will be freed from the ignorance of not knowing. So, once we know, we overcome "not-knowing." This is the first step in the development of wisdom. He

specifically says *lung* and *rigpa* here because we can know all kinds of things. We can know how to make nice bread. We can know how to sail a boat. We can know how to surf, or how to ski. All of that is knowing. But here, a particular kind of knowing that will clear away ignorance is required: *lung*, which refers to the teachings of the Buddha, and *rigpa*, which refers to the commentaries and explanations on the teachings of Buddha given by his followers. The main purpose of a Buddhist—and particularly of mahayana and vajrayana Buddhists—is to become enlightened, to attain buddhahood. To fulfill that purpose, the first step is to overcome the obscuration of not-knowing.

The next stage he writes about is wisdom arising through contemplation. Here he mentions a particular kind of contemplation, the contemplation of sacred instruction. *Mengak*, means instruction, but very special instruction. *Sempay* means contemplating. It also can be translated as thinking. First you hear the teachings and then you contemplate them, you think about them, look into them, and go through them as thoroughly as possible. That is *sempay*. Now, what that does is to cause one to be victorious over the darkness of doubt. If we were walking at night with no light, then we wouldn't know where we were going. We could end up anywhere, you know. Therefore, the example is nightfall, the darkness of night. The darkness here represents doubt. If we don't contemplate these things that we have learned, then we might still have doubt, and we might not overcome those doubts. What we have learned he describes as *mengak*, sacred instruction. So, the second kind of wisdom we obtain through contemplation of *mengak*.

Then contemplation is followed by the third kind of wisdom, which he says here arises from

The wisdom of hearing the teachings; of contemplating them, thinking about them; and of meditating upon what you have established through thinking and hearing. Those are the three aspects of wis-

meditation, from the light that is the result of meditation. The light that is born from meditation will make clear the actual “as-it-isness” of everything. That is bad English, I think. But the meaning behind that is: Whatever is there, you see as it is, unmistakably, without delusion. Through meditation one develops clarity, not this kind of clarity [indicating the physical light in the room], but the clarity of knowing correctly, of seeing correctly, seeing accurately, both your objectiveness and your subjectiveness, both sides.

So, in this way, at the beginning, what you have learned as the method, whatever it might be—meditation, prayer, visualization, or just a simple discipline, whatever you have learned—you will see accurately. Then, what those meditations and prayers and disciplines are for, the essential purpose of that particular discipline, meditation, or prayer, will also be seen accurately. Then, what has been seen accurately will also be realized accurately. In this way, the third wisdom is described here.

Karmapa ends these four lines by saying, may the light of the three wisdoms be ever-increasing—the wisdom of hearing the teachings; of contemplating them, thinking about them; and of meditating upon what you have established through thinking and hearing. Those are the three aspects of wisdom.

Now, I would like to go on a little side-track here. As far as the English language is concerned, I really don't know exactly the distinction between meditation and contemplation. Maybe they are the same thing. Once, when I had an exchange with some Christian mystics, they talked about contemplation very much as we talk about meditation. So, I'm not really sure exactly how it works in your language. But, in Tibetan, when we say *sempa* it means “thinking” (traditionally translated “contemplation”). And when we say, *gompa* it is also “think-

ing,” of course, but not thinking about something to find out something. It is just going through the particular matter, whatever it is, step by step—an established and confirmed practice. As for example, systematically going through the procedures of a particular meditation practice as outlined by a teacher. It is not trying to find out what you know and what you don’t know, and making sure that you get it right and all that sort of thing. So there is this difference. But both are mind. You contemplate with the mind. You meditate with the mind. Meditation posture is body, but meditation is mind—is involved with mind. It is a mental activity. But once one achieves the final realization of meditation, then that is not a mental activity. It is something that one becomes. But, until then, it is a mental activity.

Now, the third particular prayer that The Third

Gyalwa Karmapa writes is for the unmistaken, correct, path itself. This is also written in four lines:

By understanding the meaning of the
ground, which is the two truths free from
the extremes of eternalism and nihilism,

And by practicing the supreme path of the
two accumulations, free from the
extremes of exaggeration and denial,

Is attained the fruit of well-being for
oneself and others, free from the extremes
of samsara and nirvana.

May all beings meet the dharma which
neither errs nor misleads.

Here The Gyalwa Karmapa writes about ground, path, and fruition. The ground, he says, is the two truths—the relative truth and the ultimate truth—free from both eternalistic and nihilistic extremes. The path is the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom, free from the extremes of asserting and denying.

Then, the fruition, he writes, is free from the extremes of samsara and the extremes of peace, nirvana, and is the benefit for oneself and the

benefit for all beings. He ends these four lines by saying: May I and everyone meet the dharma that is not antithetical to the actual purpose of dharma, that is not mistaken or going on any detours away from the actual purpose of the dharma. So, *golwa* means totally going against. And *chukpa* means misunderstood. He prays that one meet with dharma that is neither going against the actual purpose of the dharma nor is a misunderstanding of the dharma.

This particular stanza is extremely rich and extremely deep. The whole, entire dharma is here in these four lines. To be simple here, when Karmapa says ground, he doesn’t mean some kind of basic foundation practice. Ground here means the ground for everything. When we say, “I wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings,” that is the basic motivation of mahayana.

Every single one of these ideas must have a ground [a basis]. When you say, “I wish to attain enlightenment,” you have to have the ground to attain enlightenment. “For the benefit of all sentient beings.” With respect to *your* attaining enlightenment, there must be a ground that it will be a benefit for others. And then finally, enlightenment itself should be beneficial for others—and there must be a ground for that. And then, everybody can attain enlightenment, there must a ground for that. Otherwise, it is all just wishful thinking. So, the ground means this basic ground for everything.

Now, the basis and ground for the entire Buddhist tradition goes back to enlightenment. That is what Buddhism is all about. How far we get in this life is one thing; but every single Buddhist wishes to become enlightened. Some Buddhists wish to become enlightened as far as *arhatship*. Some Buddhists wish to become enlightened and become buddhas.* So, there are slight differences between becoming an *arhat* and

***Editor’s note:** *Arhat* and *arhati* are the names applied to those—male and female—who reach the pinnacle realization of any of the hinayana traditions, and signify personal liberation from samsara and the attainment of peace or nirvana. Buddhahood comprises personal liberation from samsara, as well as omniscience and limitless capabilities for leading sentient beings to liberation.

becoming a buddha. I mean, not slight. [laughter] Tremendous. But somehow, both are a kind of enlightenment, the process of enlightenment. And as for me, you know, I wish to attain enlightenment, too, definitely. But realistically, I don't want to fail to improve by at least one percent in this life. So, from when I was born to when I die, I definitely want to make sure that I improve one percent at least. And, I do my best. [laughter] So everybody has their ambition in this life. Still, everybody's ultimate goal is to become buddha. That is for every Buddhist. There must be a ground for that, a basis for being able to do that. And the ground is that every single sentient being's potential, which is the essence of their mind, is equal to the Buddha's mind. And we call that buddha nature. The essence of the mind of every sentient being is perfect and has no limitation, just like the Buddha's.

So, this is the ground. There is not one single sentient being, however insignificant it might look—it could be something like an amoeba—that does not have buddha nature. I don't know whether or not amoebas have buddha nature, but they are supposed to be sentient beings. That means they have buddha nature. Every single sentient being has buddha nature as their ultimate potential. That is the basic ground.

The ground for why your enlightenment will benefit all sentient beings is that the Buddha Sakyamuni's enlightenment benefits us. Two thousand five-hundred years after his enlightenment, it still benefits us. The previous Buddha's enlightenment benefitted Buddha Sakyamuni. He took the vow to attain enlightenment three trillion eons in the past, and the benefit of that is that Lord Buddha became enlightened. In this way, we can know that as his followers, we too will be enlightened, and that our enlightenment will definitely benefit all sentient beings, just as Buddha's enlightenment benefits us. That is the ground for thinking—and

thinking correctly—that our enlightenment will be of benefit to all sentient beings.

That enlightenment is a necessity for every single sentient being to attain, the ground for that is that every sentient being in essence is nothing less than buddha. Therefore, until they attain buddhahood, they will not be at peace. They will struggle. Every single sentient being will go on wandering and struggling in samsara. The definition of samsara is going in circles. When you are going in circles you might be running, you might be crawling. The circle can be as big as the whole universe. The circle can be as small as the circumference of a finger, but going in circles means going in circles. At the end of the day you end up in the same place. The definition of samsara is that, however much we struggle, we end up in the same place. But that will not stop us from struggling. Until we become buddha, we can find ourselves in all kinds of realms; we can go through all kinds of things, but we will continue wandering and struggling and being helplessly propelled from realm to realm, sometimes

seemingly happy, more often in pain, but always dissatisfied. Therefore, attaining buddhahood is the final destination of every single sentient being—because their ultimate essence is buddha. Therefore, enlightenment is a necessity, and the destination of every single sentient being.

In that way, the ground for the enlightenment of the person who is praying, and the ground for enlightenment itself for which the person is praying, and the ground for the benefit to all sentient

beings of attaining enlightenment, for which the person who is praying is praying, all become relevant.

That is the simple way to understand the ground. Ground means that if you are a travel agency and somebody comes and asks you to sell a ticket to someplace called Seattle, then there has to be a place called Seattle. There is a place called Seattle, right here. So, that is the ground.

**There is not one
single sentient
being, however
insignificant it
might look . . .
that does not
have buddha
nature**

If there weren't a place called Seattle on the planet earth, and somebody wanted to buy a ticket to that place, then there would be no ground, see?

The particular definition of ground that Karmapa has written here is relative truth and absolute truth. Absolutely, we are all buddha; relatively, we are not yet manifesting as buddhas. As far as extreme views—eternalism and nihilism—are concerned, if we don't understand relative and absolute truth, then we inevitably become either eternalistic on the one hand, or nihilistic on the other. We might believe that everything is a real, solid thing for ever, which is eternalism; or we might not believe in anything at all, which is nihilism. In other words, we might think that everything exists, or nothing exists. However, the true understanding of relative truth and ultimate truth is free of eternalism and nihilism, or of any eternalistic view or any nihilistic view. The correct view of relative truth and absolute truth is that they are a unity; they are in harmony.

The next line talks about the supreme path of the two accumulations, free from the extremes of assertion and denial. This is very much related to the previous point. Every dharma is related. Here, if we are eternalistic then we will assert everything, because, when we do something good, it will be to our minds only an entirely good thing. If we do something bad, then we will regard it as a completely bad thing. And, somehow between these two, if we are fighting the good and the bad as a battle, nobody is a winner. You see? You Americans have a wonderful saying for that: "To get tangled, you need two." [laughter] [Rinpoche is trying to say, "It takes two to tango"]. Do you say that? Oh, tangled, entangled, two to tangle. You say it really well. Two to tangle.

What is important to understand here is that,

If we think of doing good karma as opposite to bad karma, and doing one good thing to purify one bad thing, then enlightenment will never happen

if we think of doing good karma as opposite to bad karma, and doing one good thing to purify one bad thing, then enlightenment will never happen. Impossible! How impossible? Well, in one day, just to keep the human body moving, living and breathing, how much life do we have to destroy? For example, you eat a plate full of rice. When you grow that rice, how many animals have to be killed? First you have to plow the ground.

The worms are cut. The animals on top of the soil have to be cut under, and insects and animals underneath have to be dug up. And they will die, dried up by the sun. This happens all the time. And then every day you have to water. How many insects get drowned? Countless. Then you spray; otherwise, other little creatures will eat the rice or we will not be able to get any rice. After that, you have to harvest. How many beings will be chopped into pieces in harvesting? For each single grain of rice—maybe ten, twenty lives, maybe more are taken. And then we eat a full plate of rice. And so on, and so forth. I don't want to depress you, but that's the reality.

And when we brush our teeth every morning, what happens? We know we have to brush. So, when we do, how many germs are we killing? You see? And we have to brush, you see? And so on. There are many things like that; I can't enumerate them all here; there are so many. The whole of life—just to keep it going. If it were the case that we had to purify every one of our bad karmic actions by doing some good karma equal to it, what would you have to do? What would I have to do? For one day's karma, I would have to live maybe a hundred lives without creating any more bad karma. How do I do that? Am I supposed to hibernate, or do nothing? You see, in this way, if our thinking becomes eternalistic, then we get stuck.

Then, if we talk about being nihilistic, there

are many ways to be nihilistic. One “positive” way to be nihilistic, which is very harmful, is to say, I am buddha. My potential is buddha. I don’t have to do anything. But by not doing anything, things will just continue and go on as usual. There will be no progress, definitely not. Just by thinking we are buddha does not make us buddha. Knowing is up here [pointing to his head], you see. Knowing has to do with knowledge; it is not wisdom. Knowing and information have to be transformed into wisdom through work, through practice, through application, through really going through it and digesting it and applying it.

So, that is a “positive” way to be nihilistic, saying that you are buddha. But there are negative ways to be nihilistic, as well. You know these ways very well. People believe that they can do just one “something” to make everything right. They do that something and get everything wrong. They do something, trying to get rid of the things that they think need to be got rid of. After some time it becomes a religion that they want to get rid of. It becomes a race that they want to get rid of. Or some kind of culture that they want to get rid of. In this way it becomes a total evil disaster. Worse than a disaster, there is no word to describe it. That is the result of a nihilistic attitude.

The real balance and harmony between these two extremes is the actual path of dharma, which Karmapa describes in the next line as the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom—balanced and harmonized. We can’t totally avoid accumulating bad karma, but we do our best. That means we don’t *purposely* kill something. We don’t purposely steal something. We don’t purposely hit people. As far as our intentions are concerned, we avoid all negative karma. We do our best to avoid it.

Also, we try to be generous, we try to be kind, we try to be considerate. Not that we think that

these actions will take care of everything—they won’t; but somehow, we do our best. First, we avoid all negative activities. Then, even though they are not negative, we should also try to avoid and overcome unnecessary activities, and replace them with positive and meaningful activities. That is the accumulation of merit.

At the same time you have to accumulate wisdom. Enlightenment happens through the accumulation of wisdom, not through the accumulation of merit. The accumulation of merit will provide the space and opportunity and the conducive conditions for the accumulation of wisdom. But the accumulation of wisdom comes through truly developing compassion, truly developing devotion, truly meditating, truly praying, truly recognizing one’s essence and the essence of everything. On the outside, positive conditions must be developed, but it is on the inside that the actual realization happens. Enlightenment is possible only in that way—from the inside, not from the outside. Why is it that we can become

enlightened in that way? What happens to the bad karma that we have accumulated just by living? How is it taken care of?

We can get enlightened because it is impossible to accumulate ultimate bad karma. Bad karma is all relative, isn’t it? We know that on this planet we don’t see any human beings who are older than 200 years, who have been here for a long, long time, millions and millions of years. All of those people, what happened to them? They died, they all died. But do you know any of them who died ultimately? Nobody died ultimately. Everyone died relatively. Their human bodies died. Their minds never ever died. You see? So, from that point of view, and through the realization of

ultimate truth, the relative negativity, relative karma, is naturally transformed and purified. That is how enlightenment through the path

**Accumulation
of wisdom
comes through
truly developing
compassion,
truly developing
devotion, truly
meditating,
truly praying,
truly recognizing
one’s essence
and the
essence of ev-**

happens. That is also why good karma benefits us, and why bad karma harms us only on the level of relative truth. But now, right now, can we comprehend the ultimate? No, we can only hear about it. I can talk about it; you can hear about it; you might understand it. That's about it. [laughter] You see, that's about it. Our days, our nights, our body, our speech, our minds are totally ruled and controlled and influenced by relative truth. Therefore, as long as we don't realize the ultimate truth, we are totally under the influence of—and under the total cause, condition and result of—karma and relative truth.

Therefore, both merit accumulation and wisdom accumulation are extremely important. Sometimes when people become very intellectual—even Buddhists when they become very intellectual, when they really know a lot—then they somehow overlook the accumulation of merit. That is no good, because what happens then? I see lots of this kind of person. They say, “I want to do good things. I am sincere. I want to practice dharma, but, you know, this happens, that happens, this does not work.” They say all kinds of things. And I know that they are not just making excuses. It's real. It's happening that way and it's difficult for them. Why does that happen? Because of the lack of merit. That person has not accumulated enough merit. One has to accumulate merit in order to overcome relative obstacles. And relative obstacles, even if we mean well, we might not succeed in overcoming without a rich accumulation of merit. Unless we are really, really dedicated like Milarepa or Naropa, and that I don't think is very easy. I don't like to say it, but in reality, you know, it is not that easy for most of us.

In that way, we will be very happy if we have



‘We will be very happy if we have merit and, because of that, things fall into a positive kind of condition, and we are able to progress internally as well.’

merit and, because of that, things fall into a positive kind of condition, and we are able to progress internally as well. Therefore, if we develop both externally and internally, from both the relative point of view as well as from the ultimate point of view, from the merit point of view as well as from the wisdom point of view, gradually, together and harmoniously, then this will be wonderful. That is what Gyalwa Karmapa is praying for here.

In the next line, Karmapa talks about the fruition, which is free from extremes. The first extreme is mere samsaric attainment, and the second one is peace, but a passive kind of peace, which we call nirvana. Those are extremes. Why? Because attainment that is beneficial for oneself and

beneficial for all beings is what we actually wish to achieve. We wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. On the one hand, we don't just want to reach some kind of very peaceful, very happy, very quiet state of realization and just sit there and enjoy it forever. That's not what we are looking for. And on the other hand, The Gyalwa Karmapa says that our attainment should be free of mere worldly attainment, such as being a king, being rich, being the richest person on earth. You can be the most beautiful person on earth, you can be the most powerful person on earth. Your worldly attainment can be anything. You could even be a universal monarch ruling over four continents, over one whole solar system—well, you'd better be good in that case. [laughter] If you become a universal monarch ruling four continents, you will have lots of responsibility. We will all be in your hands. Anyway, the point is that we can be or might become anything in the universe. That's perfect. But then, that attainment will still be

impermanent. It will not last forever. In that way it still entails the suffering of samsara. The struggle will still go on.

If we should reach some kind of peaceful and quiet state and just enjoy that, that would be quite good, but that is not the practice of mahayana, nor is it the practice of vajrayana. This mahamudra prayer is written in accordance with the aspirations of the vajrayana, which are the same as the aspirations of mahayana. Vajrayana is practiced for the benefit of limitless sentient beings. One-sided nirvana is good and nice, even desirable, but it is just for oneself. So, it is limited.

Therefore, what Karmapa is praying for is the total realization of buddhahood—mahamudra realization, with no limitation whatsoever, for one's own benefit and for others' benefit—totally without any limitation. That is the kind of fruition that Gyalwa Karmapa is praying for. Then he prays for an unmistakable path, not a roundabout kind of path—he prays for the correct path for himself and for all of us. That is the third particular prayer.

Payer number four is concerned with the practice

of that unmistakable path. He is praying for correct, unmistakable practice upon that unmistakable path. He makes two divisions: The first is a general prayer for this unmistakable practice upon an unmistakable path; the second is a more detailed prayer for this. The general prayer covers a very large part of the text—this particular prayer, prayer number four, the correct practice upon the correct path. He says many prayers within it. It gives an overall view of the whole thing.

The ground of purification is the mind itself, indivisible cognitive clarity and emptiness.

That which purifies is the great vajra yoga of mahamudra.

What is to be purified are the adventitious, temporary contaminations of confusion.

May the fruit of purification, the stainless dharmakaya, be manifest.

In these four lines Karmapa says everything there is to say about the path and the practice of the path. He uses variations of the same basic word four times here, which is *jang*. In the first line, when he says *jang*, he means purification, to purify. It has several meanings. One basic meaning is to purify. Another meaning is mastery, to master something. There are a lot of meanings in this same word *jang*—pure. So let us limit it to purifying and mastery, okay?

In the first sentence he says, the ground for purification is the mind—the unity of clarity and emptiness. That is how he describes the mind. When we practice, at the beginning, it means purifying all sorts of shortcomings and defilements and negativities, etc. Then, as you progress on your path you are going deeper, and what you are mastering is much deeper than just overcoming negativity.* In that way, the ground for that purification, what you are purifying, is the mind itself. As for the mind's qualities, there are no limitations. How he describes this is the very commonly accepted way of describing it in high-level vajrayana teachings, which is the unity of emptiness and clarity. Emptiness, here, in the sense that mind does not have any kind of dualistic entity. A person who is alive may weigh sixty-five kilos, and then after that person passes away, the body will still weigh sixty-five kilos. Mind doesn't weigh anything. Mind doesn't have any kind of color; mind doesn't have any kind of shape; you can't trap mind in anything. It does not get suffocated under water; it does not go crazy in space. Mind has no limitation of any kind of dualistic identity. In that way, mind is described as empty. Empty doesn't mean that nothing is there. Mind is the essence of everything. But, it doesn't have any solid thingness to it, as such. Therefore, it is empty.

But then, mind is the essence of everything.

***Editor's note:** Rinpoche is referring here to the basic dualistic split and the fundamental ignorance of the true nature of mind that form the basis for the negativities and that must also be purified if the negativities are not to recur.

Right now, we all can see, understand, wonder. Somehow we can communicate, we can feel. There is so much. All of this is mind, isn't it? Mind is everything. Therefore, it is clear. If mind is put under the ground in the middle of the lava in the middle of the planet earth, it will not be burned. If you look up from within the darkest place on earth, from some kind of cellar or basement, where there is no light whatsoever, it sees everything. So mind is clear. It is not ignorant, it is clear. It is luminous. But then, these two qualities—cognitive lucidity and emptiness, clarity and emptiness, luminosity and emptiness—are one. It is all the mind. It is a miracle in itself. The unity of emptiness and clarity is the ground for purification. If you remember what I told you about the ground earlier, then that applies here as well.

In the second line, the Karmapa says that the means to purify—the method of purification—is mahamudra, the yoga of the vajra. Mahamudra is like a vajra in the sense that it is the most powerful, most direct method, and of incomparable strength. It is like a diamond, like a thunderbolt. The greatest possible strength and quality and power—that is all described by vajra. Vajra means all of that in one. And yoga actually means ways and means, and the application of ways and means. In the West, when someone says yoga, you think of somebody putting their feet here and there, and stretching, and all of that. That is hathayoga exercise. Yoga in general means actual practice, the application of ways and means. Gyalwa Karmapa here describes mahamudra as vajra yoga. He also adds great and calls mahamudra the great vajra yoga.

In the third line, Karmapa says *jang cha*. *Jang cha* means what is to be purified. We have the ground for purification and the means of purification. And what is to be purified are the temporary, illusory obscurations or stains that obscure the mind. That is what is to be purified. All the defilements and all the negativities [Rinpoche is referring to the emotional and emotionally reac-

tive afflictions], and all the basic defilements such as ignorance [Rinpoche is referring to the cognitive obscurations, which also include dualistic perception], all are temporary. They are not permanent. They are not ultimate. They are relative and temporary, and so they are also illusion itself. They are temporary, because they are illusions. That is what is to be purified.

Illusion is very easy to understand, especially in these days when we are exposed to so much in the world. I really admire your people who have invented all of these means of communication. If you really think about what you see these days, you can come to understand so much. People are fighting somewhere, and you look at what they are fighting about, and you say, "Oh, that is nothing." [i.e., nothing worth fighting about] But for them it's everything. They die for it. Their parents and their

friends are proud of somebody's dying for that specific thing. But when you look at it from here, as members of the same human race on the same planet, looking at it from your own perspective, then you can get really shocked that something like that is so important to somebody. And I don't think that they are less enlightened than you, and you're not more enlightened than they are—you can be totally equal in that regard—but just by seeing how illusion works, how they are involved in such an illusion, then you are shocked by it.

Then, if they look at something that we do here that we think is very important, maybe they will think the same thing—"This is not very important; it is just nothing." In this way, we can see that it is all illusion. It doesn't mean that it is bad; but that is the reality of the situation.

There is so much illusion. There is positive illusion, there is negative illusion, all kinds of

Mahamudra is like a vajra in the sense that it is the most powerful, most direct method

***Editor's note:** For example, the illusion that gracious living requires the ownership of a dishwasher is an illusion on which dishwasher manufacturers thrive. But the dishwasher manufacturer's notion that ownership of a Mercedes is absolutely essential to his or her business prosperity is an illusion on which the Mercedes manufacturer and the Mercedes dealership thrives.

illusions. I can even say, and maybe be correct in saying, that almost everyone is thriving on one or another kind of someone else's illusion. And those people's illusions are also that on which some other ones thrive.* In this way, illusions keep on encouraging illusions and keep on developing further and further. Once that happens, then the good part is that the true color of illusion, the true nature of illusion, shows up more often. We end up seeing it quite clearly. That part is actually quite good. The bad part is that everything goes so fast that there is no time to get to the bottom of any particular illusion. Just as soon as we are about to find out about any particular event, then something else has already happened. So in that way, you get illusions within illusions. It's like dreaming within a dream, actually.

The Gyalwa Karmapa's words here say that what is to be purified are the illusions, all of the obscurations, which are temporary and relative. That is what is to be purified.

In the last line, he discusses the fruition, "the result of purification"—*jang dre*—which is the dharmakaya totally free of all defilements. "May it manifest." *Ngön* actually means manifest. So, here, this particular word, *ngön*, says very clearly that enlightenment is not something that you get from the outside. Enlightenment is something that happens within and then manifests. It is not something created that finally manages to be a complete creation. It is not a creation. It is the manifestation of what is already there. In fact, it is simply the purifying and overcoming of all the relative dualistic creations of confused mind, thereby unveiling what has always been there and is always there as the essence. So, *chö ku ngön gyur shok*, "dharmakaya, may it manifest."

For this, there is one particular example: As you know, the mahamudra lineage was brought to Tibet by Marpa. His guru was Naropa. And Naropa's realization, when it happened, happened in quite a dramatic way. You might even consider it a little extremely dramatic, and maybe not 100 percent acceptable in your kind of culture and society. Naropa was following Tilopa all over to get teachings. Naropa was quite enlightened already, but not quite there yet. So, he's following

him everywhere, and Tilopa really tests him. Tilopa led Naropa through the hardest and most extreme journey towards liberation. Because, he—Naropa—wanted to be enlightened in one lifetime, and also because he was ready for it. So, Naropa passes through all kinds of tests, and each test teaches one particular great transmission. So, Naropa is transformed. And then one last transformation was still supposed to happen. But it didn't happen. So, he had to go through many, many things. Finally, Tilopa asked Naropa, "Now what do you want?" And Naropa says, "I still have not received the final teaching and transmission. I want that." Then Tilopa asks Naropa, "What could that be?" Naropa says to Tilopa, "I want to attain enlightenment without having to practice. [laughter] Without having to do anything." Then Tilopa got really angry, or at least looked like he really was—with all due respect. He looked around for something, but there was nothing but his shoe. So, he picked up his shoe and slammed it into Naropa's face, and knocked Naropa out. You see? Naropa was out cold there for a couple of minutes. Then, when he woke up, he was enlightened. [laughter] He says to himself, "I knew this always." So Naropa's miracle happened as a result of that. Tilopa told him, "The final enlightenment has to come from you. There is nothing more I can give you toward it." So, that is, I think, exactly what Gyalwa Karmapa is saying here: The result of purification, the stainless dharmakaya, may it manifest. May it manifest in its fullest manifestation. Those are the general prayers.

Now, secondly, when Karmapa writes specific prayers for this, he writes them in two parts again. First, he says it briefly in one prayer, and then he goes into detail, one by one in four specific prayers. First the brief one:

Resolving doubts about the ground brings conviction in the view.

Then keeping one's awareness unwavering, in accordance with the view, is the subtle pith of meditation.

Putting all aspects of meditation into practice is the supreme action.

The view, the meditation, the action—may there be confidence in these.

Here Karmapa writes about the three most important components of practice that we all must have as practitioners of mahamudra. One has to have the correct view, the correct meditation, and the correct action—view, meditation, action—these three should be correct.

View covers meditation and action both, because the view applies at all times. You could call it view, or attitude, or understanding, or value, or philosophy. It covers everything. Meditation and action mean meditation and post-meditation. Action refers to post-meditation, when you are not meditating. Meditation refers to when you are sitting and meditating and practicing. Action means when you are not meditating—when you are doing other things. All of your activities have to be conducted according to the view. In this way, the practice becomes successful. We have a very old Tibetan saying—it's a little bit sloppy and not very refined actually: "When the stomach is full of food, and the sun is shining warm, one looks like a great dharma practitioner." But when negative circumstances fall on you, then the true color of a real, ordinary person shows up. If we are not able to have and maintain the view very clearly, then the meditation and the action might not be in accord with one another. Even if we have the correct view, if we are not able to maintain it during post-meditation, then, during meditation we could be very good and quite diligent, but during post-meditation we could be behaving quite differently. It would be like someone who is going on a diet and who is not very good at it. One might go on a diet for one month and really get thin, and then as soon as one comes off one's diet, the first thing is to go to a McDonald's and next to a pizza parlor. And then

**You are buddha
in your essence.
Nothing can
corrupt that,
nothing can
shake that.
That is real
confidence**

next is what? In that way, one spoils everything that has been achieved. So, in that way it doesn't help. It's the same thing, if we meditate very well, but then, after coming out of meditation, we become undisciplined and not mindful, not

aware, then it doesn't really take us anywhere, and the meditation becomes something else. It actually does not become the real dharma by which one attains enlightenment. It becomes something like stress management. [laughter] We meditate to overcome the little aches and pains, to feel good, and then just go on with our lives in the same old way. Then the next day, we meditate again. It becomes stress management. There is nothing wrong with it, but that's not real

dharma, that's not the real purpose of Lord Buddha's teaching. So the view, the meditation, and the action all have to be understood and practiced together.

Now, Karmapa says that the confidence of the view is the total confirmation of the ground. The ground is buddha nature, isn't it? When we confirm that in our own minds, then we have confidence. We are nothing less than buddha. We are not this limited, miserable human being. Lots of people say they are depressed, they are disappointed in themselves, they don't feel worthy of anything. And there's all this guilty feeling, and there are all kinds of things like that. One thing I have come across since I came to the West for the first time in 1980 is that a lot of people say that they hate themselves, which I still haven't really digested 100 percent, although, somehow, I roughly understand it. They don't like themselves. They resent themselves. And people have a lot of hurt. All sorts of things like that. So, I may be wrong, but I think the greatest and most direct remedy for these attitudes and feelings is in this first sentence: The confirmation of the ground is the incorruptible, unshakable confidence that you are buddha. You are buddha in your essence. Nothing can corrupt that, nothing can

shake that. That is real confidence, the highest and deepest and most natural confidence.

Then Karmapa talks about meditation. He says maintaining this confirmation of the ground, this confidence, without getting affected by thoughts and concepts and emotions, is the secret or key to meditation. That is the crucial point, the important definition of meditation—to maintain awareness of that ground.

In the third sentence, The Gyalwa Karmapa says that the best and the most profound action is the fully matured mastery of all that is meditated upon, that meditation on the ground, on that confidence of the view that arises from the confirmation of the ground, and the mastering of that in all situations—that is the profound action. No matter what we are doing—we can be just having a holiday, or we can be just resting at home or working at the office, or doing whatever we are doing—if we are always able to maintain this awareness of this ultimate essence, then that is the true, profound action. He ends these four sentences by saying, may one obtain this confidence and this depth of view, meditation and action.

That is the general, overall version of this particular prayer. After that, The Gyalwa Karmapa breaks it down and makes a prayer about each one of these. He makes a prayer regarding the view, a prayer regarding the meditation, and a prayer regarding the action, and a prayer about the fruition or the total accomplishment of the path.

He will be praying for these four separately. The first one, which is the view, he writes in two

***Editor's note:** Situ Rinpoche was teaching in English and it was not entirely clear exactly how he was using the words “observe” and “absorb.” From practical experience one can say that when we sit in meditation and observe our mind, that the process is both personal and inward; whereas, when we become absorbed fully in the mahamudra experience, as the name implies, our experience then contains everything; there is nothing that is either shut out of our awareness or that passes beyond our awareness. In this sense, absorption in the experience of mahamudra entails acute and pervasive awareness of relative phenomenon. However, if one thinks of absorption in the sense of becoming engrossed exclusively in one's own thoughts or in one's own little world, then the use of this word could be misleading.

parts. The first is brief, and the second is in greater detail. This part of the prayer covers most of the main body of the text. The brief one reads:

All phenomena are illusory displays of mind.

Mind is no mind—the mind's nature is empty of any entity that is mind.

Being empty, it is unceasing and unimpeded, manifesting as everything whatsoever.

Examining well, may all doubts about the ground be discerned and cut.

The Gyalwa Karmapa says that all phenomena, including everything, are the manifestations of mind, are interdependent manifestations of mind. Mind itself is not any kind of dualistic entity. Mind is totally free of any kind of limitation. He says it is empty, but it is totally alive and clear. There is nothing that cannot manifest through it and within it. Then he prays: May one totally confirm this with clear and profound examination of it.

For mahamudra practitioners it is the highest mahamudra attainment if we are able to observe the essence of our mind and absorb ourselves in it. We say *observe* when we are viewing the process personally and inwardly, and *absorb* when we are viewing the process from the outside. In that way, both the relative manifestation and the ultimate essence of the mind become part of our experience.* Of course, it will be dualistic, otherwise we will become buddha in one second, in no time—which would be wonderful. It hasn't happened to me. It's true. It hasn't happened to me. I want it to happen to you, but I don't know. [laughter] So I can't say too much about that.

Anyway, what Karmapa means here is that the view of mahamudra is the confirmed understanding that everything is the manifestation of mind with no limitation—and that everything is interdependent with mind with no limitation. But, there is nothing new, nothing different about this mind out of which everything manifests, and

within which we experience everything as we are. This mind is beyond any limitation: both of having any kind of solid, dualistic identity or substance, and also of not having clarity and clearness that pervade everything. Beyond any limitation.

Knowing this and observing this, becoming absorbed in this, and confirming this, is the view of mahamudra. That is the general, overall prayer for the view of mahamudra.

Question: Rinpoche, how can we accumulate merit when we are always giving it away in the act of dedicating it to others?

Rinpoche: Oh, dedicating merit is the accumulation of merit itself, but I don't know whether or not I am supposed to say that. If I do, your motivation might change, you see? Practically speaking, there is not so much that we can do in one life. If we dedicate our life, our entire life, it might be eighty years, yes? Ninety years, for doing something for others. What can we really do, how much can we do? Not so much, you know. We couldn't do some really big limitless thing. Some people can do things. Some emperors have built walls that you can see from the moon. Some kings build palaces that cannot be destroyed even by bombs. These kinds of things they can do, but still it wouldn't be limitless. Because of this, what little meritorious activity that we can accumulate, good things, we dedicate to everyone for the benefit of all sentient beings, so that they may attain enlightenment. Then, that limited virtue becomes limitless. That is the only way that something limited can become limitless. It is for this reason that we dedicate the merit. We should dedicate the merit, because in that way our little merit becomes limitless and lasts forever. It is not like giving money. If you have lots of money saved for many years, and then you put everything in one check and give it to somebody, you will go bankrupt. So, merit doesn't work like that. I understand what you might mean by this ques-

We should dedicate the merit, because in that way our little merit becomes limitless and

tion. You look at it as some kind of cash flow. [laughter] But it is not that way. We will not have a merit cash flow problem. It is dedication that will make a little merit limitless.

Question: Rinpoche, will this teaching place us within the Kagyu lineage, and if so, what does that mean for those who practice Zen or other forms of Buddhism?

Rinpoche: Of course it doesn't limit your involvement with other lineages. There is no such thing. It is not some kind of secret society that you're signing into. [laughter] Whatever practice you do, whatever dharma that you practice, whatever job that you have, whatever kind of friends that you have—everything remains as usual. But in this way you do get involved with the mahamudra lineage. Yes, of course. This is not a lecture. This is a transmission. It is a teaching. Because of that, you get involved; you are involved. Yes. And that's what you are here for. You wanted to receive a mahamudra teaching. But it doesn't mean that you can't associate with anybody else. The mahamudra lineage masters will not be jealous, you know. [laughter] You shouldn't think like that. You should be open. That is part of being a mahayana practitioner, and especially a vajrayana practitioner.

Question: Rinpoche, could you please explain a little more about view, meditation, and action. For example, what do you mean by not doing well in post-meditation, or being anything during meditation?

Rinpoche: Not doing well during post-meditation is very simple to explain. You meditate for maybe two hours, not moving and everything is perfect, but after that, then you go to the pub, you drink, you get drunk, and then you smoke, and then you might even do something not so nice, and maybe go hunting and go fishing and all that sort of thing.

So, that is not doing well during post-meditation.

Doing well during meditation means: First, you have to receive the teaching and instruction and lineage of transmission for the exact practice that you wish to practice. Here, I'm not teaching you how to meditate, exactly. I'm not giving you meditation instructions. I am teaching the *Prayer of Mahamudra* as written by The Third Gyalwa Karmapa, as it was interpreted in the commentary by The Eighth Tai Situ. So, this lineage you have. But then, in order to know actually how to practice, you have to receive the practice instructions, and the practice transmission from the lineage, on top of that. Then, following those instructions exactly and meditating accordingly, is the proper practice of meditation, is doing well in meditation. Meditation we don't just make up. We have to receive the lineage of transmission.

Question: [A question was apparently asked concerning the difference between the hinayana realization of cessation of an arhat or arhati and the full enlightenment of a buddha. Rinpoche seems to have started by saying that the realization of arhatship entails liberation from klesha and karma, and . . .]

Rinpoche: . . . all the negativity totally, no more negativity. And no more negative karma, also. So you purify all the negativities, such as mental defilements [*kleshas*] and negative karma. So, everything becomes zero. When you reach that state, then that is peace [nirvana]. You reach the realization of peace. But that is not the full development of all the limitless qualities, nor is it the manifestation of the limitless potential of mind, not yet. But reaching zero, which means, for example, that if you were a very good *shamatha* meditator, and you could sit very still and very quiet for hours, and then if you really went deeper and deeper you might sit there so long that when you woke up it might be the fortieth century. Yes? We call that cessation. So it is as though all those 2,000 years went by just like that. We call that, not samsara, but the other side.

And another one is enlightenment. Again, when it comes to the English language, enlightenment is not nirvana—it is the English language version of enlightenment, which could be anything. At first I thought that enlightenment meant buddhahood. I must let you know

that I'm not educated in English. I can't read properly, I can't write properly at all. I'm Tibetan-educated. English, I can only talk so-so. So I really don't know the meaning behind every word precisely. I just have some feeling about it, and then I use it. And somehow most of the time it seems to be quite okay. The meaning seems to get there. So anyway, enlightenment, I thought, meant buddhahood. But then, several times people have come to me with some very simple question. And they say, "Can you enlighten me on this?" [laughter] And then I would wonder because at first I thought their question was really serious business, because I thought somebody wanted to attain enlightenment through that. But actually in such a case, enlighten is something like knowing. You don't want to be ignorant about something. You want to know about it. So, it's the opposite of ignorance. It is like *a* knowing. But then in the Tibetan tradition we say enlightenment of buddhahood—the final enlightenment, total realization. All people say, "I realize this," "I realize that," but it doesn't mean much. Somebody goes to a barber to have their hair cut. And the

barber does something wrong, and the somebody doesn't realize it. So, he is walking around, everybody is looking, and he doesn't realize what's wrong. But as soon as he goes to the mirror he sees what's wrong. Then he realizes why people are looking at him. So this word can sometimes be a little misleading.

But when we say the enlightenment of buddhahood, the final realization, that means total. That is the same as realizing

dharmakaya. Dharmakaya is another name for the total realization of the essence. The dharmakaya essence, the ground that exists right now, the essence of our mind, is dharmakaya. The realization of dharmakaya is when we attain enlightenment as to the nature of our mind. This is something that you have to emphasize. I always end up most of the time emphasizing *total* realization, enlightenment of *buddhahood*, *Buddha's* realization, realization of *buddhahood*. Okay. So, that's the definition, roughly.

Question: Beings, what are sentient beings? For instance, plants react to the sudden death of their fellow plants. Are they beings?

Rinpoche: If the plants have mind, they are beings. If they don't have mind, they are not beings. I don't know

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whether plants have mind or not. In some of the sutras, the Buddha talks about certain plants having mind. But it is not a generalization. It is in reference to some specific events. In one teaching it says that there was one family whose oven was a sentient being. It was a hell realm. Every day the being in the oven was baked inside. All ovens are not beings, but sometimes the mind can reincarnate into things like that. In that way, a mind can reincarnate into a plant, yes. Definitely, into plants, or anything. But it doesn't mean that all plants have mind. I have never seen any text that says all plants and all trees have mind. But I have seen in the sutras that there were certain situations in which some plants were beings and suffered in certain situations, yes.

Question: Rinpoche, there's a second part to this question, what are sentient beings? And does it mean, when we say sentient being, that it is knowing that one is alive—is a worm less sentient than a fish, a fish less sentient than a cow?

Rinpoche: I really don't know. That is a question of English language definition, which I don't know. In the Tibetan language we call sentient beings *semchen*. *Semchen* means one with mind. *Sem* means mind, *chen* means having, whoever or whatever has mind. Then, *more sentient* and *less sentient*, I really don't know. I would rather say *more intelligent* sentient beings, and *less intelligent*, or *more complicated-minded sentient being*, or *less complicated-minded sentient being*. But these English language definitions I think you yourselves know much better than I.

Question: Rinpoche, what is the relationship between intention and the karma involved with harming or liberating sentient beings?

Rinpoche: Well, intention is most important, definitely. But then intention has many levels. Some mentally disturbed person might do lots of harm to somebody and think that's something good. This is very possible. And some person who is a little bit mad might go around destroying lives, thinking that they are helping them to be liberated from some kind of evil thing. This kind of thing

happens in society. In this kind of situation, intention does not count as anything positive. It is the clear, pure, correct, and adequate intention that is most important from a Buddhist perspective. One's real intent should be: "I wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order to accomplish that end I will follow the Lord Buddha's teachings according to the lineage." And then one should try to practice them in one's

meditation, and try to have the proper view, and try also to apply them in one's post-meditation. There need to be very strong guidelines, yes. Otherwise, your intention is just wandering around out in the wilderness, you know. And then the ego, the kind of ego that I was describing, can take over, and one could become anything. Many of the really terrible people, who have done so much harm to humanity, many of them have thought that their intentions were good. Some of them may have known exactly what they were doing. But many of them might not

have known. They may have thought they were doing the right thing.

Question: Rinpoche, this is a related question. If one isn't fully realized, then one can't go through the world engaging in non-activity or buddha activity. So, while we are still with our obscured minds, how can we know whether an action we take that isn't obviously a good action, or a bad action, is worth doing, whether it will be beneficial or not; how does one not get locked in the struggle of nihilism and eternalism?

Rinpoche: Yes, well, a little bit of that problem always will be there, along the way. But one has to be able to progress through it. That is what dharma practice is all about. The moment that you begin practicing dharma you will not become buddha. That means you will still be making mistakes. You will still have shortcomings. That's why one has to have the profound, living lineage. If the lineage is not there, even if all the dharma books are there, it doesn't really mean much, because then the dharma books are taught by people according to their own ideas and ego. In that case, it actually is only their own ideas and ego disguising themselves as dharma, rather than real dharma. The living lineage has to be there. That's number one. And the living lineage's master whom

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and adequate
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perspective**

you associate with has to be a qualified master of the lineage. Then, your practice has guidelines, is properly guided. But then, you should not become totally dependent upon the guru because you also have buddha nature, just like your guru.

In your practice you follow the guru. The important issues, the spiritual issues you relate to the guru, but for regular things, you have to stand on your own feet, you have to use your own common sense. And you have to make your own decisions. Don't be afraid of making mistakes. That would be paranoia. We make mistakes. Be mindful and aware; then the mistakes will be little mistakes. Maybe ninety percent right and ten percent wrong. That is easy to overcome gradually. In certain things, we repeat mistakes, because we are so used to doing and saying things in the wrong way. But slowly we progress. When people start to think that they would like to make exactly the perfect, ultimate, correct decision, then that's a big problem. Because that expectation implies that, as I told you this afternoon, if I drink this water I can get enlightened if I know how to do it perfectly, ultimately. But being able to do that is *already* enlightenment. That kind of total, ultimate perfection—100 percent ultimately perfect, will happen *as a result, not as a cause*, of enlightenment. So we do our best. We have a saying, "A journey of a million miles starts with the first step." We have to take that first step, and then keep on marching. On the way we might lose the path, we might make a mistake. Maybe there might be landslides. We may wander about, but we don't miss the real, ultimate goal. We do our best.

Question: Rinpoche, if mind's nature is pure, where do defilements come from?

Rinpoche: Well, during every moment in which we don't realize this ultimate essence of mind as it is, the defilements continue. But then, according to the vajrayana teachings, when you become enlightened, none of those lifetimes, not even one moment has happened. In this way, time is relative. Everything is relative, but everything is also beyond any limitation. It doesn't mean that we are truly, ultimately in

samsara. We are truly, relatively in samsara.

Question: Rinpoche, would you kindly tell us a story from your own life experience to inspire us in our faith?

Rinpoche: Are you serious? [laughter] Okay, okay. Well, my life experience, yes. All right. I don't know whether or not it will be inspiring, but I will say a few things. I was very, very, fortunate to be connected with so many great masters. My time with those great masters has been very, very precious. And I learned a lot from them verbally, and I learned a lot from them through their actions as well. Not necessarily always just sitting there and listening to some talks from books. But observing and learning from the way they were, how they manifested. Starting with His Holiness The Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, and including all the other great masters that I really consider my teachers, from all of them I received so much. So, one could

say, I could have even been the Arizona desert, but by now there should be a couple of huge, beautiful lakes in it. Because that is how much was received really. In their teachings all these great masters emphasized just one very simple thing. And they tell you, and they tell you, and they tell you, that your essence is buddha. That is actually the essence of all the teachings that I have gotten from them. You are not just your limited physical body, and your limited knowledge and your shortcomings and problems—with some potentials. You are actually nothing less than buddha. That is you. That is your essence. And they empower you with it.

And they instruct you in it. Everything is based on that. This is very, very precious, as far as I'm concerned.

Let's say I don't like flying very much. Especially in big, big airplanes. It must be karma, because I spend so much time on airplanes. Since 1980, I have been flying almost every month. Sometimes every week—and still I don't like it. But even though I don't like it and even though something might happen to my airplane, and even if someday I find myself about to crash, and then really do crash and become barbecued, from a practical point of view, then I know that this buddha within me will still be intact. There is no way that this buddha within will be

The spiritual issues you relate to the guru, but for regular things, you have to stand on your own feet, you have to use your own common sense

corrupted, or affected, or burned, or hurt, or lost. So this is, I think, the most important, essential blessing from all of those great masters. There is one thing that my supreme guru, His Holiness The Gyalwa Karmapa, told me, which I remember very clearly—and all the time I try to keep this in mind and be mindful of it.

He said, “When you go around and teach people, let them know that they are the shrine of the Buddha. The Buddha’s shrine is within them. Let them know that.” So that is what I’m trying to do. That’s all.

Question: Do you have women monks in your temple? If so, what are the different duties, how are their duties different, if at all, from those of male monks?

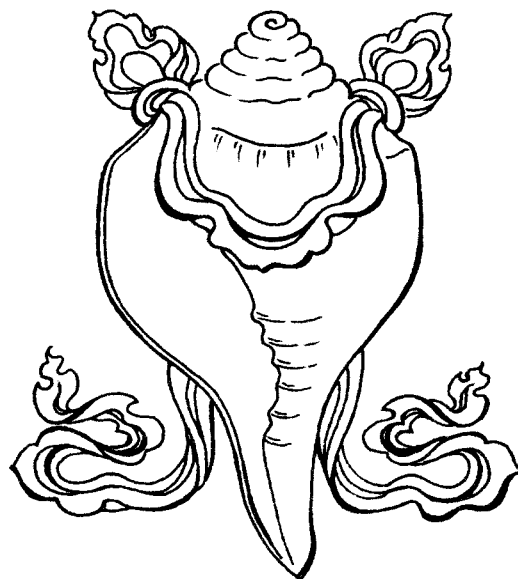
Rinpoche: Well, actually in our lineage, the Karma Kagyu lineage, right now, counting the monks and nuns together all over the world, altogether there are about 20,000—over 20,000, actually. In Tibet, there is a huge difference in the population of monks and nuns. There are many, many more monks than nuns, which is a reality. But these days it seems to us that the population of nuns is growing. I don’t know why. But somehow, there are many more nuns. And, there’s also another very inspiring development in India and Nepal and Tibet and everywhere. There are three-year retreats for nuns, and there is a college where nuns can study. These things are developing, about which I’m very happy.

In vajrayana Buddhism, as you may know, there are two ordinations for monks: novice and *bikhu* [a fully ordained monk]. But nuns don’t have *bikhuni* ordination in Tibetan Buddhism. The lineage is missing. We have novice nuns, but no *bikhunis*.* His Holiness The Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa, my guru, wanted to revive the *bikhuni* ordination. He sent Sister Palmo, Freda Bedi, to become a *bikhuni*. Sister Palmo was a very special nun, a Westerner, who actually was responsible for training Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and many other rinpoches, too, to speak English, which was a very great contribution. And since then several additional efforts have been

There is no way that this buddha within will be corrupted, or affected, or burned, or hurt, or lost

made to revive the *bikhuni* ordination. Since His Holiness passed away in 1981, I have put everything I can into continuing this effort. Right now we have enough fully ordained nuns to pass on the lineage, enough *bikhunis* who are mature, which means that ten years have passed since they were ordained and they are thus permitted and empowered to pass on the lineage. So, we have reached that point. And now we are stuck with one last thing to do, which is to get the entire lineage of *how* this ordination has been continued from the Buddha up to now and how it is to be continued. We need the lineage, the name, and the history. We don’t have that fully in our hands yet. We are waiting for that. And when that happens, then I’ll be very happy.

In my monastery in India I have built a three-year retreat center for nuns, and right now eleven nuns are doing the three-year retreat, a few of them actually for the second time. So that’s where we stand. Still, there’s a long way to go. And we will get there. So, let’s make the dedication. Our little deed here we dedicate for the benefit of all sentient beings, so that it becomes limitless. ❶



***Editor’s note:** no *bikhunis* who have successfully transmitted the *bikhuni* lineage to the next generation of nuns.

We Pray for Perfect Practice on the Perfect Path

In this particular section that we are now studying, The Third Gyalwa Karmapa is making a prayer for perfect practice on the perfect path of mahamudra. Within this section, we have already finished going over the general prayer. Now, The Third Gyalwa Karmapa writes five particular prayers concerning the view. First, everything that is in the universe is actually the manifestation of mind. He is praying for that understanding. Second, mind itself is free from all kinds of limitations and extremes—neither mind nor any of its manifestations is any kind of solid entity, nor are they nothing at all. Beyond both of these—that is the second prayer. Third, mind is free, not only from the extremes of existence and nonexistence, but also beyond the existence or nonexistence of any kind of limited identity. The fourth prayer is that we understand the unity of emptiness and interdependence. And number five is concerned with overcoming all aspects of doubt regarding the ground, the essence. So, regarding the practice of the perfect path itself, Gyalwa Karmapa is writing about ground, path, and fruition, and within the category of ground, which is the view, he writes about these five particular categories. Since, within this same prayer he is also writing about view, meditation, and action, then these five prayers concern the view itself, which is the ground. After that then, the meditation. Of the five particular prayers regarding the view, the first is that everything is the manifestation of mind. Karmapa writes here:

Naturally manifesting appearances, that never truly exist, are confused into objects.

Spontaneous intelligence, under the power of ignorance, is confused into a self.

By the power of this dualistic fixation, beings wander in the realms of samsaric existence.

May ignorance, the root of confusion, be discovered and cut.

Here Karmapa means that all of the external manifestations, which we call objects, have never existed with any kind of ultimate reality. They have existed as the manifestation of the essence of mind. So, they are projections, which are interdependent manifestations. The definition of ignorance here is that we have mistaken those manifestations, which are interdependent with ourselves, as various kinds of separate entities, and we have mistaken them as objects. That is the first step here.

Then he takes the next step. He says that we always encounter our ultimate essence, always. But each time we encounter it, we mistake it for an I, a self. The buddha within is always recognized by us, but we misrecognize it as I. So, those two are the basic delusions, the ignorance of all sentient beings. In the third sentence, he says



Photo by Ryszard K. Fraekiewicz

‘We always encounter our ultimate essence, always. But each time we encounter it, we mistake it for an I, a self.’

that, because manifestations are taken as objects, and buddha nature is recognized as a self and taken as the subject, then duality is established. And due to this dualism, we have been wandering in all kinds of different confused conditioned existences, in samsara. Then he says, may I and everyone totally recognize this illusion, which is ignorance, for what it is. May we totally confirm the truth of this, and may we be totally victorious over this confusion of ignorance.

Relatively, we are sentient beings in samsara. Our mind, through which we see things and communicate with things, which has emotions and concepts, etc., is *in its essence*, nothing less than the buddha's dharmakaya itself. But, in relative manifestation, we manifest as ordinary sentient beings. We have likings and dislikings. Not only that, we act upon them. We are influenced by them, and from time to time, we do negative things to ourselves as well as to others. It is not just the I; there is much more that develops out of it. Regardless of what the I does and how it appears, it does not change what everything is all about. From that point of view, Karmapa's prayer is very simple. He's pointing out that everything out there is there. It is not just made up, it is there. But it is not there more than an interdependent manifestation of what is within us. It is totally interdependent. Everything is interdependent. Everything is interdependent, and everyone is interdependent. What is out there is the object. For me, you are the object. For you, I am the object. For me, my eye is the subject; for you, your eye is the subject. Everything is interrelated. There is nothing more and there is nothing less than that. This kind of subject-object dualistic interaction goes on forever—sometimes temporarily good, sometimes temporarily bad. In the context of this dualism sometimes people kill each other, sometimes people are very nice to each other and help each other. But it is dualism in either event. So in this way, he is saying, may we realize the nondualism or nonduality, and the oneness—and even beyond the oneness—of everything.

This is the way that vajrayana Buddhism and the mahamudra tradition understand and de-

scribe everything as the manifestation of mind. Only this way. The way of understanding that everything is the manifestation of mind, that takes everything out there as only the projection of *your own* mind, is not complete. Mahamudra will never say, nothing is there more than just *your* mind. Mahamudra will say, everything is there as nothing more or less than the interdependent manifestation of everyone else's mind, and also of your mind. That's how you see it, that's how you perceive it. That's how you affect it, and that's how it affects you. This is quite different from saying, everything out there is a production of my mind. If that were the case, what about my being a production of your mind? In the mahamudra tradition it does not end there, saying that nobody is there, only me. If it were so, why should I tell you all of this, because it's only me. [laughter] [Rinpoche would just be talking to himself.] So, in these four sentences, The Gyalwa Karmapa writes from the mahamudra point of view that everything is the manifestation of mind, and he's praying for that recognition.

The next prayer is the second in this category. Mind itself is free from any kind of true, dualistic solid reality, and it is also free from not having any kind of reality at all:

It is not existent—even the Victorious Ones do not see it.

It is not nonexistent—it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana.

This is not a contradiction, but the middle path of unity.

May the ultimate nature of phenomena, limitless mind beyond extremes, be realized.

What Karmapa says in the first sentence is that the mind does not have any kind of solid, dualistic reality. He says that even the Buddha, who was enlightened, did not see anything that was a dualistic, solid existence. He says that mind is not just nothing; it is the foundation and essence of both all of existence and also buddha itself, of realization, of enlightenment, of libera-

tion. Therefore, it is not just nothing. It is everything. Then he says that this something and nothing, or everything and nothing, is not contradictory; this is the unity, the middle way. And then he says, may one realize this ultimate nature, the essence of mind which is beyond any kind of limitation. The meaning behind this is quite simple. Gyalwa Karmapa ends this question of whether mind is something or mind is nothing with the final conclusion of the middle way.

It is important here to understand what middle does not mean. You have a perfect image for misunderstanding “middle way.” You know, in your schools you have one person with a very big head sitting on a wall. What do you call that? Humpty Dumpty! Middle way doesn’t mean you have to be Humpty Dumpty. [laughter] Middle way doesn’t mean you don’t believe in this, you don’t believe in that. You just sit in the middle—it doesn’t mean that. The middle way means the unity of everything. The harmony of everything. It doesn’t mean that when somebody says mind is empty, that you say, “I don’t say anything—no or yes. I’m in the middle.” And then if somebody says that mind is something, then you say, “I don’t say anything, I’m in the middle.” Maybe that’s wise. Maybe you won’t get into trouble with either side, but then maybe you get into trouble with both sides. [laughter]

Here the modifier of middle way—*zung jug* in Tibetan—means unity. Unity here means that the mind has no solid, dualistic limitation at all. If the mind is something—if the mind is supposed to be big, then what is the definition of big, the actual size? Is it the size of a planet? Is it the size of a whole solar system? Is it the size of a whole universe, one hundred million solar systems? Or, is it the size of one million times that? What is it? In that way you get nowhere. The mind does not have any kind of physical size, as such.

Then we can even go to the simple and very stupid concept, “Is mind green, is mind blue, is

mind purple? Does mind have all the colors that you can think of? Is it like a rainbow? You see?” We could go on and on asking questions about mind’s specific characteristics without being able

to answer these questions with an affirmative. Therefore, mind does not have any kind of solid, dualistic entity that you can somehow use as an example to say, this is what mind looks like. There is no such thing.

But then mind is not something about which you can say that it is nothing. It is everything. If somebody says mind is nothing, then who is saying it? Nothing is saying it is nothing. So, mind is not just nothing. The middle way here is the unity of these two views beyond any limitation,

either in terms of existence or of nonexistence. I’m not sure, have you heard about these particular philosophical terms such as shentong? Okay. So, this is the shentong view, which is the philosophy of our lineage.

According to the shentong view it is like this: Mind does not have any kind of solid reality. Mind is neither totally existent, nor does its lack of any kind of solid dualistic reality suggest the total nonexistence of anything. It is everything. It is all-pervading. There is no limitation to mind whatsoever. That is the unity of both of these. That is the middle way. The Gyalwa Karmapa emphasizes this here very clearly. *Zung jug*. He doesn’t just say middle way he says *zung jug*, which means unity.

The third prayer is again slightly different, because whether mind is a solid reality or whether it is totally empty, whatever its nature, it cannot be said that this is it or this is not it. It is free from that limitation. The Gyalwa Karmapa writes here:

If one says, “This is it,” there is nothing to show.

Mind does not have any kind of solid, dualistic entity that you can somehow use as an example to say, this is what mind looks like

If one says, “This is not it,” there is nothing to deny.

The true nature of phenomena, which transcends conceptual understanding, is unconditioned.

May conviction be gained in the ultimate, perfect truth.

The Third Gyalwa Karmapa here writes that there is no example that can illustrate the mind as being “like this” totally. There is nothing equivalent to it except itself, except the mahamudra nature of mind itself—buddha, the dharmakaya. The Buddha can say, “Your mind is just like my mind.” He can say that. But it does not really change anything. You cannot say, “Your mind is like this glass of water.” There is no equivalent example for the mind itself.

Then Karmapa says that you cannot say that mind is not this or is not that. There is nothing that does not have the quality of mind, because everything is a manifestation of mind. Everything is the interdependent manifestation of mind. There is nothing about which one can say that mind is totally unlike this. Mind is like everything, and everything is part of the limitless manifestation of mind. Mind’s manifestation has no limitation whatsoever and the essence of the mind has no limitation of any kind whatsoever. This is the meaning of the second sentence in this verse.

The Gyalwa Karmapa says in the third sentence, *lo les des pay chö nyi dü ma jay*, that the true nature of phenomena, which is also the true nature of mind, is beyond any kind of concept, idea, thought, perception, etc., whatsoever. The ultimate nature is beyond all of this, and this essence is also not the result of a composition of anything, which means we cannot create a mind mechanically. We cannot create a mind by combining many things. Mind is not a result of many

components put together, and then something comes out of it. *Dü jay* means “composite” and is used to refer to things that are compositions of other factors. Our body is a composition. Some factors that make up our body come from our father, some from our mother, some from the universe at large. When we are born, we are very small. Then we keep on eating, keep on drinking, and grow bigger and bigger, and then we become six foot or even seven foot tall. But the mind is not a composition in this way, neither in its cause

nor in its condition. Therefore, he says mind is *dü ma jay*, not composed. And it is beyond any percepts and concepts, because those are merely the manifestation of mind.*

You see, our ordinary impression of mind is like our thoughts. But, for mind itself we cannot find an example, except itself. Any example will be incomplete, because it is dualistic. I have heard some scientists say that they can examine the materials of the universe, down to the finest details, down to the nuclei of atoms and so forth, but they can’t know exactly the nature of anything in its undisturbed state.

Because when they check anything, they have to disturb it to check it. When you examine something, then you can know how it is in that kind of situation when it is being disturbed by examination. But you still don’t know how it is when it is not being examined. In the same way, when The Gyalwa Karmapa says the mind is beyond being an object of thought, he is saying the same thing. Thinking itself is dualistic. Whatever you might think about, in this case the ultimate nature of mind, will be conditioned by the thinking and thus will no longer be the

Whatever you might think about, in this case the ultimate nature of mind, will be conditioned by the thinking and thus will no longer be the unconditioned thing itself

*Editor’s note: According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a percept is “an impression in the mind of something perceived by the senses, viewed as the basic component in the formation of concepts.”

unconditioned thing itself. The true nature of phenomena, which is the true nature of mind, is beyond all of this.

Then Karmapa prays, may I confirm a correct understanding of the ultimate essence, the pure essence of everything, the pure nature of mind. The fourth prayer is about the unity of emptiness and interdependence. Regarding this, The Third Gyalwa Karmapa writes:

Not realizing it, one circles in the ocean
of samsara.

If it is realized, buddha is not anything other.

It is completely devoid of any “this is it,” or
“this is not it.”

May this simple secret, this ultimate
essence of phenomena, which is the basis
of everything, be realized.

The Gyalwa Karmapa says that when one doesn't realize this, then one is in samsara, wandering in the ocean of samsara. If one does realize this, then there is nothing other than this that can be described as buddha. Buddha means the recognition and realization of the essence of the mind. Then he says that everything is beyond any kind of limitation of, “this is, or this is not.” There is no doubt, because the essence is the essence. There is nothing that can undo the essence, and there is nothing that can create the essence. It is always incorruptible and unchangeable, and there is no way to dilute it in its essence. So, it is totally pure in itself. Then he says, and this word is a little hard to translate because, directly translating the word, *tsang* means secret, and it even has an ironic interpretation, which is something like weakness. *Tsang* is a weakness. But here it doesn't mean the negative aspect of weakness. What Karmapa is saying is that it is so simple. It is the essence of everything. It cannot be corrupted; it cannot be diluted. It always is as it is. It is as simple as that. So he prays, may I see that most essential spot of the nature of mind, the simplicity of it. I think that a way to describe this

might be what we shared yesterday about Naropa. Naropa said, when he woke up enlightened after the “holy episode” with Tilopa [laughter], “I have known this a long time ago.” He says to himself, “I have known this a long time ago.” So, that is the secret, that is the *tsang*, the soft spot, a kind of spiritual acupuncture point . . . the eye of the storm, let's say, of the ultimate nature of mind.*

Prayers number five is about the total confirmation of the ground, the buddha nature, the nature of mind itself, which concludes this first section about the view. He writes:

Appearance is mind and emptiness is mind.

Realization is mind and confusion is mind.

Arising is mind and cessation is mind.

May all doubts about mind be resolved.

Karmapa says that whatever manifests and becomes apparent is mind. And whatever disappears and is empty is also mind. Once you understand and attain realization, that is mind. But if you don't realize the true nature of things and get carried away by illusions—everything becomes like an illusion—that is also mind. Whatever is born and whatever arises is mind. And whatever dissolves and dies and the cessation is also mind. Then he prays that all doubt about the nature of mind may be resolved, that it be confirmed that everything is just mind. This is the fifth and last prayer regarding the view of mahamudra.

The next section is meditation mahamudra and

for this Gyalwa Karmapa makes two categories, one general and one specific. The general section, regarding the meditation, he writes in four lines:

***Editor's note:** “Soft spot” is a term coined by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche as a way of describing a point from which to begin developing bodhicitta; ultimate bodhicitta, which is the fruition of training in relative bodhicitta, is the same as realization of the true nature of mind.

**Not adulterating meditation with conceptual
striving or mentally created meditation,
Unmoved by the winds of everyday busyness,
Knowing how to rest in the uncontrived, natural
spontaneous flow,
May the practice of resting in mind's true nature
be skillfully sustained.**

This is a very profound teaching about a particular kind of meditation, and one that could be applicable to any kind of meditation that you are doing. However, if you take this too literally with respect to your present meditation method, you might get a little confused. You have to understand that Karmapa is writing about a very specific level of meditation. It is about resting in the nature of mind, observing the nature of mind, which is considered the highest aspect of mahamudra meditation. So he is writing this verse according to that. If you are doing something that employs visualization, like prostrations, then you can also apply this, but not totally literally, because that is a slightly different approach from what he is describing here.

In the first line he says without being diluted. I don't know if I'm saying this correctly or not. If you put water in the milk, it gets diluted, doesn't it? Mentally created meditation involves dualistic effort. When you are really observing the nature of mind, you just observe. It does not involve mentally created meditation. That is very profound. If you are visualizing properly in the vajrayana tradition, you are not creating a new visualization. You are not adding some kind of Rolex watch to your guru's hand. [laughter] If you are doing guru yoga, or visualizing a buddha, you are not doing something like that. Therefore, you

are not adding anything. Whatever kind of meditation that you are doing, it is a mental activity. It is a creation of your mind. The visualization is a thought. And thinking a particular prayer is also a thought. So, if we compare this kind of meditation [involving visualizations and prayers, etc.] with the particular meditation that Gyalwa Karmapa is praying about here, then these more preliminary forms of meditation are mentally created. Even though we learn them from the lineage, still they are mentally created. We have

to work pretty hard to visualize, first the lotus, then the letters, then the deity, then the fountain of nectar, and all kinds of particulars. It is all created by mind. It doesn't just happen naturally up there. So, on a somewhat more subtle level it is considered a creation of the mind. But since this is not our own invention, it is not considered the same as one's own creation, like an architect drawing a new plan for a new house. Vajrayana visualizations are not the same as architectural plans, because they are from the lineage. You are following the method according to the precise instructions of the lineage, which has blessings and confers transmission. So that makes a difference. So, not diluted by the effort

of mentally created meditation.

At the same time, in the second sentence, he says, not being carried away by the winds of ordinary thoughts. That is quite simple. When you just sit there and try to observe the nature of your mind, and then a thought comes, the thought can carry you away. You can daydream there forever. It is the most convenient time and situation to daydream. One might take a happy ride and spend all one's meditation hours just daydreaming all sorts of wonderful things. Karmapa is telling us not to do that.

The third line of this verse is concerned with knowing how to place your mind in the unchang-

**If you are
visualizing
properly in the
vajrayana
tradition, you
are not creating
a new
visualization.
You are not
adding some
kind of Rolex
watch to your
guru's hand**

ing, original, natural state of mind itself. This doesn't mean that we have to let our habits take over. Karmapa makes it very clear in the second line that one is not to get carried away by thoughts and emotions. He is saying that, without following or developing any kind of particular procedures or means, such as visualizations or any other way of mentally creating anything, and at the same time, without getting carried away by regular thoughts and emotions that we naturally have, may one be able to rest in the nature of mind, placing it in its original, unchanged, undiluted, unaffected, natural state. May one just rest in its natural essence, as it is, and may one know how to go about just resting in that way.

In the last sentence, Karmapa says, may we be quite well acquainted with and know how to maintain this practice of the most essential aspect, the practice of the nature of the mind. Here it is very clear that The Third Gyalwa Karmapa is saying that resting in the nature of mind is the ultimate of all meditations, the essence of all meditation. We do all the other practices in order to be able to do that. We go through all the other basic processes of the accumulation of merit, the accumulation of wisdom, and learning about different methods of meditation such as breathing, physical exercises, visualizations, all kinds of practices, etc., etc., in order to reach that state. That is the most essential meditation, which is expressed in these four lines.

That is the general prayer concerning mahamudra meditation, after which The Gyalwa Karmapa writes six particular specific prayers on the same subject: The first one concerns *shamatha*; the second, *vipashyana*; the third, how to recognize, how to observe the nature of mind; the fourth, the great unity, the recognition of the nature of mind as great unity. The fifth deals with the *nyam*, [sometimes translated as "temporary experience"] that precedes realization of any kind. *Nyam* is a technical term implying some kind of indication, but then in Tibetan it is perhaps not that strong. *Nyam* means that you feel it, you have the experience or you feel the actual happening of the progress of

your meditation. We have an example. We say that when there is a storm coming, the top of the castle feels it first. It is like that. The real fruition of meditation is realization, the full maturity of the process is happening or has happened. But before that, something starts to appear in your life. So that is *nyam*. And the sixth one is *tokpa*, the actual realization, which is not *nyam*, but real awareness and realization that takes place. Karmapa writes six particular *shlokas*, praying one by one for each of these to happen properly. The first prayer concerns *shamatha*:

The waves of subtle and coarse thoughts calm
down by themselves in their own place,
And the unmoving waters of mind rest naturally.
Free from dullness, torpor, and murkiness,
May the ocean of shamatha be unmoving
and stable.

Here Karmapa compares the mind to an ocean. In the practice of *shamatha*, the subtle and also the more rough aspects of thought, which are like waves, naturally become peaceful. That is how we meditate; we just sit down and use any kind of breathing technique, or any other kind of method, and then the rough and subtle thoughts slowly settle down, and we feel peaceful.

In the next line, he says that the great water, the lake of the mind, which is the analogy, remains calmly and naturally without moving. That means, once you reach that level, then your mind becomes calm and steady and quite relaxed. As I mentioned yesterday, people who do meditation for stress management purposes achieve this state. They are very happy, because one day's job is done. You have got one day's hard work of worldly gain already, but then you have this price that you have to pay. You're really tensed and not so clear-minded. And if you go home you might get into an argument with your husband or your wife. You don't want that, so you do a little bit of meditation, and you calm down. So you get a double benefit. But mahamudra doesn't stop there, because that is not the only purpose of mahamudra.

The next line mentions three principal stains

or defilements of the mind that must be removed in the practice of *shamatha*. In Tibetan these are *jingwa*, *mukpa*, and *nyokpa*. You have an expression in English, “being spread too thin.” When one is spread too thin, one’s mind sometimes tends to “space out” and become totally ineffective and inadequate. That is what is meant by *jingwa*. When one is feeling very dull and heavy, and totally exhausted, that is what is meant by *mukpa*. *Jingwa* is a more outwardly oriented mental state, while *mukpa* is a more inwardly oriented mental state. And *nyokpa* means all mixed up and contaminated. *Jingwa* and *mukpa* are not necessarily mixed up; *nyokpa* is mixed up. These are three principal obstacles to meditation that good *shamatha* overcomes, and The Gyalwa Karmapa prays that we will overcome them.

The Gyalwa Karmapa says, may the ocean of *shinay* be stable, without moving and without being disturbed. The definition of *shinay* is a mental state of peaceful, stable, calm abiding. Now I would like to go on a little side-track here. The tremendous benefit of *shinay* is that during its practice our inner potential—the buddha nature, the essence, the limitless potential—somehow manifests itself temporarily. You could have been very confused and very disturbed and inadequate in many things. But then you might sit down and do a very good session of *shinay* immediately after that, and then feel more clear and see things more clearly. Even if you have made some mistakes, you see quite clearly where things went wrong and you are able to develop some perspective on everything more effectively. Of course, without stable realization, this is temporary. But it is all right there. The reason that that happens is that it is all within us; it is not coming from outside. The *shinay* does not add something to us from outside. It is letting our inner potential and its own natural remedies manifest, and is providing the space for it to manifest. Instead of our inner potential’s being imprisoned and then suffocated and being stepped all over, *shinay* lets the buddha quality manifest. For beginning practitioners particularly, *shinay* is an extremely effective means of meditation.

The next *shloka* is concerned with *lhaktong*, which is how Tibetans translate *vipashyana*. Of course, you know that in the Pali and Sanskrit traditions and translations of the Buddha’s teachings, there may be some slightly different definitions of *vipashyana* and *shamatha*. That’s not too important for us here right now, but it is good to know, because maybe you could get confused later. So, the next *shloka* reads:

Looking again and again at the mind which
cannot be looked at,

The meaning which cannot be seen is vividly
seen, just as it is.

Thus cutting doubts about how it is
or is not,

May the unconfused genuine self-nature be
known by self-nature itself.

A vajrayana Buddhist practices *shinay* not just to have some kind of convenient awareness, a handy awareness that one develops temporarily now and again; the purpose is to go further towards enlightenment. From that point of view, after one has developed the clear-minded condition of *shinay*, one can look at the nature of mind which is not an *object* and has no *objective* nature that you can look at, but that you nonetheless observe and observe again and again. Then you will see what cannot be seen from a dualistic point of view. But you will see it in a most natural and spontaneous, nondualistic way. See is a way of describing it; it’s actually realizing more than just seeing. The word “seeing” is used in many of the teachings, including here.

Then, in that situation, there is no doubt whether “this is it or this is not it,” because you feel it, you see it, you recognize it. You know, “this is it.” In the last line, Karmapa says, may the face of your own mind be recognized by your own mind itself. In vajrayana Buddhism there is particular terminology we use for this, which is the meeting of a mother and child after a long separation. When

they recognize each other, they become one. In this way, through dualism, we separate ourselves constantly from our true nature and essence. We can't separate, but we somehow have this situation: We call ourselves I, and then all of this [Rinpoche indicates through gesture everything else, which is the other], everything happens between them. But then, once we recognize the true face of our own mind, it is like coming back home, like mother and child recognizing each other and then becoming one and nondualistic, a total kind of oneness. That is described here in the last sentence, in which the essence of one's own self recognizes itself by its own self.

In the next *shloka*, the third prayer describes how a mahamudra practitioner at this level should look at everything else, look at the nature of mind, and look at the relations between everything:

Looking at objects, the mind devoid of objects is seen;

Looking at mind, its empty nature devoid of mind is seen;

Looking at both of these, dualistic clinging is self-liberated.

May the nature of mind, the clear light nature of what is, be realized.

I must tell you that when I was young, in those days when I was meditating, this particular sentence was extremely helpful for me. Maybe I had some problem with meditating and this way of seeing things, but then it was solved. I wanted to let you know. Karmapa says, look at objects, look at everything, and it confirms that they are just manifestations of mind, nothing more, nothing less. Then he says, looking inwardly at the mind you don't see any kind of dualistic entity [i.e., anything that is separate from what is looking and can, in that way, be looked at]. Inwardly, you don't see any dualistic entity. And between these two, observing them and being absorbed in

that observation, then the dualism between mind and objects and between the observer and the observed naturally disappears. When you look out, you see that everything is a manifestation of in here [indicating by gesture some internal space]; but when you look in, there isn't any kind of dualistic entity that you can hold on to. Between these two ways of looking and subsequent seeing, the real dualism is dissolved. What is left is the clear light, the nature of the mind. Clear light doesn't mean a kind of light. Clear light is used in the sense that it is everything; it is all-pervading, and it is not ignorance, it is wisdom. It is all-pervading, it is the essence of everything. Karmapa prays that one may recognize and realize this essence of everything. According to The Gyalwa Karmapa here, that is how we, as mahamudra practitioners, view outside and inside and their interrelationship.

Prayer number four discusses the unity of various paths leading to enlightenment. The Gyalwa Karmapa writes:

Free from mental fabrication, it is the great seal, mahamudra.

Free from extremes, it is the great middle way, madhyamika.

The consummation of everything, it is also called the great perfection, dzogchen.

May there be confidence that by understanding one, the essential meaning of all is realized.

Karmapa says, being beyond any kind of conceptual limitation is mahamudra. Being beyond any kind of extreme like nihilism, eternalism, etc. is the middle way, the great middle way. The essence of all together, the unity of everything, is called the great completeness, dzogchen. Then he says, by knowing one, all are realized. By knowing any one of these, one realizes the essence of everything. *Chik she* means knowing one, and *kun dön tok* means that the essence of all is realized. May one obtain this confidence.

When I'm traveling around, lots of people, I

guess mostly intellectuals, ask questions about what is the difference between *chak chen* [mahamudra] and dzogchen—which is better, and what’s the difference between those and madhyamika, and what’s the difference between shentong and rangtong—all kinds of philosophical questions. I think The Gyalwa Karmapa answers this very clearly in these four sentences. *Chakcha chenpo* [mahamudra], *uma chenpo* [madhyamika], and *dzokpa chenpo* [*maha ati, mahasamdhi*], all are the same. They all contain the essence of recognizing and realizing by which you attain the realization of buddhahood. If we don’t recognize that yet, then, if we are practicing mahamudra, we are mahamudra practitioners who are trying to achieve that realization. And if we are practicing dzogchen, we are dzogchen practitioners who are trying to achieve that same realization. And it is the same for the middle way as well. We are just students; we are just practitioners. But once one attains realization, then mahamudra realization is equal to madhyamika realization and dzogchen realization. Dzogchen realization is equal to mahamudra realization and middle way realization. The ultimate realization of any authentic system is the same. That is very clearly written here by The Third Gyalwa Karmapa, and he calls that oneness “unity.”

The next prayer is about *nyam* [meditative experiences of a temporary nature]:

Great bliss free from attachment is unceasing.

Luminosity free from fixation on characteristics is unobscured.

Nonthought transcending conceptual mind is spontaneous presence.

May the effortless enjoyment of these states be continuous.

Now Karmapa talks about three types of *nyam*: When, in the practitioner’s experience great joy becomes continuous without stopping, and without attachment to that joy, that’s one kind of *nyam*; when the clear light becomes continuous without the mind’s having ups and

downs [the mind sometimes being clear, sometimes being obscured by mental defilements] and without having a sense of clinging to the clarity, that’s another kind of *nyam*; and when the state of nonthought that transcends intellect or conceptual mind develops into spontaneity, which is beyond any kind of intention and effort, like the development of an involuntary spontaneity, that is another kind of *nyam*. He says, may these kinds of effortless experiences develop continuously. These are descriptions of the highest and most profound *nyam*.

Now, I must take a little side-track here. When a person is practicing very seriously, then they ought to have *nyam*; to do so is quite common. And when a person has *nyam*, that is actually a very good sign, but it is also a dangerous time for the practitioner, very dangerous. Therefore, our great masters always warn us about *nyam*. Actually, Karmapa says a few words about this later when he talks about *tokpa*, which is actual realization. So what happens with *nyam* is that up to that point of having *nyam* the practitioner, in fact all people, are involved with thoughts and emotions and reality from the standpoint of one particular kind of mind-set or set of concepts. We see this very clearly now, because the world is very open, and we can see everything, and we can read everything, and when we as people travel all over the world we can see this. Certain people are doing certain things very seriously, and they make such a big deal about it. It’s like a life-and-death matter. But for you it doesn’t mean anything; it’s so silly, as far as you are concerned. Then something that is really a life and death matter for you, if those same people were to look at it, they would find it very silly. It doesn’t mean anything to them, but for you your reality is real. For them their reality is real. Isn’t it? So, all the different kinds of sentient beings—and practitioners of course, are sentient beings—have all these different kinds of mind-sets, different kinds of conceptual understandings of reality. And we are set in them. And of course, the most basic and the biggest mind-set is the self. The self is *very important*. I. I comes first, me first, not you first.

You see? Me first is present in every single sentient being. It is a very strong instinct. And on top of that, then, every kind of culture, every kind of background, every kind of physical makeup has an impact on the mind—every imaginable kind of conceptual impact, every imaginable kind of environmental impact. There is so much there that it becomes a reality. Regardless of how unreal it is and could be seen to be, it is a reality to those people—and a very solid one. So it is possible that intellectually, through learning, you might overcome certain aspects of this mental conditioning, strictly based on the intellectual aspect of learning, but then on the subconscious or unconscious level, you might not change a bit. You might be a very great philosopher and really know a lot. And, maybe in peaceful situations, when conditions are positive, you might be able to do a lot of good things, but in a very difficult situation, one that really pounces on you, time after time, one thing after another, then you might lose everything, you might even go crazy. In that case, things might not really have changed very much or improved very much on the deeper level.

Through meditation, through practice, and especially through the practice of mahamudra, and when your meditation begins to get quite advanced, you will inevitably have *nyam* like this. If people who are not advanced try to have experiences like these, they will not be able to manage it, because they don't get it. They are right there, but it takes time and it takes effort. Just because you want to be something [i.e., just because you would like to have certain meditative experiences], you don't necessarily become something. You have to be that. That happens when it happens. It doesn't happen before it happens, does it? When a person is experiencing this level of *nyam*, that person's practice really works very, very deeply. It works even at the unconscious level and the subconscious level.

When one is practicing at this very deep level,

***Nyam* are a very important part of the practitioner's path, because they are very encouraging**

there is the breaking up of the external and the subconscious level, of the emotional level, and even of the physical level of the setting. And when that happens, you can have tremendous experience. And that can be totally mental; that can also be visual; that can also even be physical—all kinds of things can happen. And when that happens, if the person doesn't have good guidance, and if the person doesn't know that it is simply a *nyam*, if the person thinks it is real *tokpa*—genuine realization of buddhahood—then they might think, "I'm buddha already."

[laughter] Yes, yes. But when you are buddha, then you are buddha, aren't you? You don't have to think, "I'm buddha." You don't

have to think you are buddha, you are buddha already. But, before you are buddha, if you think you are buddha, it's quite something. [laughter] And it might be very inconvenient for you, that is, for the practitioner. Definitely.

When I was practicing, all of my great teachers always warned me about this. I can't claim that I had tremendous *nyam*; I'm not really a great practitioner—I must be honest. I do my best, but I'm not a great practitioner. So I don't have great *nyam*, but I had *nyam*. And because I knew what they were supposed to be, I did not manage to think that I was buddha. I'm not a buddha. I'm quite clear about that. So in this vein, *nyam* are a very important part of the practitioner's path, because they are very encouraging. They are really a kind of confirmation that your practice is going well. It is working. But this stage is also dangerous if you don't understand it deeply.

Nyam is described here by Karmapa in a most positive way, and he is describing the highest aspect of *nyam*, the continuation of great joy without any kind of clinging to it. Usually what happens, is that when you feel really good, you get attached to it. And then you talk about it. And you might write about it, might even make a

movie about it. [laughter] You might do all kinds of things. Then the *nyam* is gone. The *nyam* just ends right there. *Nyam* can never become *tokpa* if we announce the *nyam*. So, it is a dangerous threshold for the practitioner who is progressing rapidly.

Another term for that kind of situation is *barchay* in Tibetan, which means obstacle. And the greater the achievement, the bigger the obstacle, naturally. That doesn't mean somebody is waiting for you with different kinds of hammers, and if somebody is really progressing well, they use the bigger one. [laughter] It's not like that. But the bigger the positives in your practice, the bigger the negatives, naturally. Not all the way, but until a certain stage. It doesn't go on like that all the way to buddhahood. Then a buddha's negativity and a buddha's obstacle would be extremely big. Yes? The path to buddhahood doesn't go on to the very end that way, but until a certain level there is this kind of obstacle. We have a saying: "The brighter the light, the sharper the shadow." In the same way, obstacles come along together with the path and its *nyam*—like a shadow and the form it follows.

Having prayed for perfect *nyam*, The Gyalwa Karmapa in the sixth *shloka* prays for *tokpa*, actual realization:

**Longing for good and clinging to experiences
are self-liberated.**

**Negative thoughts and confusion purify
naturally in ultimate space.**

**In ordinary mind there is no rejecting and
accepting, loss and gain.**

**May simplicity, the truth of the ultimate
essence of phenomena, be realized.**

From one point of view, clinging to a *nyam* may be kind of nice, so you hold onto it. It's so

***Editor's note:** Here Rinpoche, by mentioning only fear among all negative thoughts and other aspects of confusion, in effect, narrows our focus to one of the principal high-level obstacles to mahamudra realization, which is fear. Another is hope, which is related to the attachment mentioned in the previous line.

precious, it is so great, you hold onto it. But that is attachment, and Karmapa says may this be spontaneously freed, and he prays that we never get attached to *nyam*; he prays that good *nyam* and any kind of attachment will be spontaneously freed.

In the second sentence, The Gyalwa Karmapa says that if the *nyam* is sometimes frightening and fears arise, not attachment, but fear, then may it dissolve into the ultimate space. May fear, the negativity aspect, also be freed.*

In the third sentence, Karmapa discusses ordinary mind, the nature of mind, the nature of this ordinary mind, free from accepting and rejecting. That means that even though we are ordinary sentient beings the nature of our mind is buddha. We don't have to be extraordinary in order for our true nature to be buddha. Even in the ordinary now the essence is buddha. Karmapa prays that we recognize and realize this.

In the last sentence, The Gyalwa Karmapa prays that one may realize the ultimate essence of everything beyond any kind of dualistic fabrication. That is total realization, which is *tokpa* in Tibetan, the realization that comes after the *nyam*. He prays for perfect *tokpa*, right after praying for perfect *nyam*. With this, the six particular prayers related to the meditation are complete.

The third section concerns the action—the *vi*_W,

the meditation, and now the action. The Third Gyalwa Karmapa writes prayers about mahamudra action, what takes place in the post-meditation experience, in two *shlokas*. The first *shloka* concerns compassion; the second concerns the unity of compassion and emptiness:

The true nature of beings is always buddha.

**Not realizing that, they wander in endless
samsara.**

For the boundless suffering of sentient beings,

**May unbearable compassion be conceived in
our being.**

This is regarding compassion. I think I spoke to you yesterday about compassion and devotion. The Third Gyalwa Karmapa writes very clearly about that particular point in these four lines. He says the nature of all sentient beings is always buddha. Every single sentient being is always buddha in their essence, always. Then he says, because of their lack of realization of this, they are wandering in samsara. They are wandering in samsara because they don't recognize their own true nature. Samsara is nothing more and nothing less than beings' not knowing and not recognizing that they are buddha. Until we fully realize that, we are in samsara; when we fully realize that, we are buddha. That is the definition of samsara here.

In the third line, Karmapa states that sentient beings in samsara are suffering without any end to their suffering. So long as we are in samsara suffering has no end. We will do everything to overcome our suffering, of course. If we don't have enough money, we might take out a loan and do all sorts of things. Some people even rob banks. People will do anything, but it does not solve their suffering. We want to have good health, of course, so we take good care of ourselves. Some of us have good health, some of us don't. But then somehow having good health does not solve the problem of suffering. Some people want power. They do this, they do that to obtain it. They stand for election; they stand for all kinds of things. And they may even get everything, but it does not solve their suffering. Looking at things from this perspective, the real suffering of sentient beings isn't hunger. Hunger is one kind of suffering, but suffering is not limited to the hungry and sick. Sometimes, when people talk about suffering, they think that suffering means pain, sickness, lack of money, and only these sorts of things. But, according to the Buddha's teachings on suffering, suffering is the struggle and the constant dissatisfaction of life. That is the suffering he's talking about. That will continue as long as we are in samsara.

In the last line, Karmapa prays that unbearable compassion may be born within us. Now, it sounds as though unbearable here means that

you're so compassionate that you can't stand it, and you scream and yell and jump up and down, something like that. But it doesn't mean that. *Zömay* means that we are unable to ignore the suffering. We will not just go about our own business. Because of knowing what the potential of all sentient beings is, because of knowing that every sentient being is, in essence, a buddha, then we put our own effort into realizing buddhahood in order to benefit all sentient beings. That is the idea of unbearable here. We can't afford to be lethargic. Compassion is so strong that it will not allow us to be lethargic. It will not allow us to be selfish. That is what unbearable compassion is.

The second particular prayer of this section is about the unity of emptiness and compassion, written in four sentences:

**When the energy of unbearable compassion
is unceasing,**

**In expressions of loving kindness, the truth
of its essential emptiness is nakedly clear.**

This unity is the supreme unerring path.

**Inseparable from it, may we meditate day
and night.**

The first sentence says that the strength and the power of this compassion, which he earlier described as unbearable, is always alive. Compassion never dies. It is always alive. And when this compassion manifests as loving kindness, the essence and the nature of it is the naked and bare manifestation of emptiness. That means that true compassion, which is not dualistic, compassion which is not stubborn, compassion which is not selfish, compassion which is empty and open, and is all-pervading, that is beyond any kind of limitation to compassion. When this compassion manifests as loving kindness, then its ultimate essence, which is emptiness, manifests as it is, without any cover, without any kind of skins on it, bare.

In the third sentence, he says that there is no way that the unity of compassion and emptiness can go wrong. *Golsa* means that there is a kind of way to go wrong. If you are traveling down a road

and come to a junction that has three or four different forks, then you can make a mistake. But there isn't any way to make a mistake if compassion and emptiness are in unity. Then nothing can go wrong. So, *golsa drelway* means that there is no way to get it wrong. He says, *lam chok*, which means the profound, the best, the correct path—the unity of compassion and emptiness. In the last line, he prays, may one practice this day and night, at all times. This completes the second prayer in the section on the action, regarding the unity of emptiness and compassion.

The last and fifth section is praying for the final accomplishment of the fruition, the unmistakable, correct fruition of the path. Actually, Karmapa writes it exactly as the fruition of the completion of the path, in four lines:

By the power of meditation arise the eyes and supernormal perceptions,

Sentient beings are ripened and buddha fields are perfectly purified,

The aspirations that accomplish the qualities of a buddha are fulfilled.

By bringing these three to utmost fruition—fulfilling, ripening, and purifying—may utmost buddhahood be manifest.

In these four sentences, The Third Gyalwa Karmapa describes the buddha, the final enlightenment of buddhahood, in a simple but comprehensive manner. He says that the result of the strength of meditation, which develops through

***Editor's note:** Such a bodhisattva can also see 100 different situations in perfect detail, such as 100 different buddhas set up in 100 different shrine rooms in 100 different locations, all at the same time. In the same way they can see all the virtuous and unvirtuous karma that they have performed in 100 previous lives and all that they will create in 100 future lives. There are twelve categories of these special powers of a bodhisattva, which gradually increase as the bodhisattva progresses from one level to the next. For further information, see Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, under the chapter on spiritual levels.

the practice of mahamudra, through the meditation on the nature of mind, is that one attains the "eyes." *Chen* in Tibetan means eyes. In Buddhism in general, and in mahayana and vajrayana Buddhism in particular, a buddha's qualities are described in this manner: five eyes and five *ngönshe*, which is hard to translate. Lots of people say something like clairvoyance. But I don't think it is the same thing. *Ngönshe* means knowing beyond the limitation of time and distance. Someone who has *ngönshe* will know the future, will know everything. That is what we call *ngönshe*. There are five aspects of *ngönshe*.

Our ordinary eyes see forms and colors of forms. Beyond this, Karmapa is describing how buddhas see everything—and these eyes represent five different aspects of seeing everything—*ngönshe*. It doesn't mean buddha has five eyes. But then, the Karmapa did not mention all the details here. So, the simple way to

look at this is that the eyes represent the omniscient quality of the buddha, which quality is the result of the power of meditation.

This *ngönshe* is gradually obtained with varying degrees of limitation. Before you attain the enlightenment of buddhahood you will have *ngönshe* to see the past, present, and future. etc. You will have the quality of these five eyes, but it will be limited. For example, a first-level bodhisattva can manifest in 100 physical forms in 100 physical locations all at the same time. That is one of the miracles of the first-level bodhisattva as far as physical form is concerned.*

The second-level bodhisattva has all of these special qualities and insights multiplied by 100. That means that the second-level bodhisattva can manifest 10,000 manifestations at the same time etc. In this way, the five eyes and the five *ngönshe* get more and more limitless, but at the beginning they are limited. Like people like me—I have a hard time even manifesting in one form correctly most of the time. [laughter] So, this is a way of describing enlightenment by referring to

The problem is that there is no power together with their kindness

these particular eyes and particular *ngönshe*. And The Third Gyalwa Karmapa is saying that as one progresses along the path these special qualities gradually develop from being limited to being limitless.

Then he says, may we benefit beings. However, for benefiting sentient beings, here he uses a very particular word, *min*, which means ripen. A fruit which is not *min* is a green one. You can't eat it, it is very sour, it is very hard. It is very hard to digest. Once it becomes *min*, then it is really good. It tastes good, it's soft, it's good for the health. I think a superficial word for that is to ripen. Karmapa says, ripen sentient beings. This means that, although you can't change sentient beings' essence, because they are all buddha and, therefore, don't have to change anything—they are good just as they are—still their essence has to ripen in its manifestation, because right now they don't talk like a buddha. They don't think like a buddha, they don't behave like a buddha. And sometimes they even do totally wrong things. That means they are not ripe. So, it is the compassionate aspiration and the compassionate activity of the buddha to make beings ripe, so that their inner essence may manifest and become more apparent—so that they may become more kind and more compassionate, and then have the ability to be more compassionate and kind, too. Many people would like to be kind, but don't exactly know how to. There is a very common saying, that kind people always suffer. They say things like that, that good people always suffer, which is not true. It doesn't have to be that way. When a good person suffers, that means the person has good intentions, but somehow things are not right, so that their kindness is not working. It doesn't mean that all kind people have to suffer, does it? The problem is that there is no power together with their kindness; there is kindness, but their kindness doesn't have power. So that when you do something, instead of other people really appreciating it and being happy and benefitting from what you do, they somehow

***Editor's note:** Bodhicitta: the altruistic mind that aspires to awaken in order to liberate all sentient beings from suffering, the awakening mind

resent it, and you get into trouble. Or something similar. So, *min* means everything, every aspect of the essential qualities of beings has to be ripened.

At the same time, *sang gye shing rap jang* also has a very particular meaning. A great bodhisattva, after attaining realization, but before attaining buddhahood, receives direct transmission from all the buddhas. That is what we call *shing kam*, pure land. Superficially speaking, it is like pilgrimaging to all the pure lands. But it is not physical. It is the inspiration and blessing and transmission of all the buddhas to dispense empowerment. That's what it means. After that, gradually all the qualities of buddha, beyond any limitation, become complete: *sang gye chö nam drup pay mönlam dzok*. At that stage, the original aspiration such as, I wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, is fulfilled and completely accomplished.

In the mahayana teachings it is very clearly said that enlightenment won't happen without someone's first giving rise to enlightenment mind.* One has to first have the inspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Without this, true enlightenment won't happen by accident. So, in this way the original inspiration is being fulfilled, beyond any limitation.

Then Karmapa condenses the first three lines into one very short sentence. He says, *dzok min jang sum thar jin sang gye shok*. *Dzok* means all the qualities of buddha are complete; *min* means benefiting sentient beings, and *min* means benefitting oneself, also, ripening is complete; and *jang* means that the empowerment by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas is complete. So, The Gyalwa Karmapa prays, may one attain this total enlightenment of buddhahood—*sang gye shok*. That concludes the final part of the main body of the prayer.

One *shloka* is left. At the beginning, I mentioned that we have three parts to this text. The first part is the preparation, like the preliminary part of the prayer. Then there are the prayer itself and the conclusion. The conclusion has four

lines:

By the power of the compassion of the
Victorious Ones of the ten directions
and their sons and daughters,

And by the power of all the pure virtue
that exists,

May the pure aspirations of myself and
all sentient beings

Be accomplished exactly as we wish.

The conclusion to this whole prayer is actually very similar to the beginning of the prayer. At the beginning, Gyalwa Karmapa prays to all gurus, deities, buddhas, and bodhisattvas. At the end, he prays again that by their compassion, by the compassionate blessing of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three times, and by the power of all the positive, virtuous, good karma that exists—all the good things that any and all sentient beings have been involved in—may the pure aspirations of myself and all sentient beings be fulfilled as they are. Everyone’s aspiration, as a mahayana-vajrayana practitioner, according to mahamudra principles, is, “I wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.” And so, the last sentence is, may this pure aspiration be fulfilled just as it is, may we all attain the enlightenment of buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. That is the end and the completion of the *Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra* by The Third Gyalwa Karmapa.

I hope that my teaching on this prayer will be beneficial, not just here and now, but I hope that it will be continuously beneficial for you in your practice, and that it will be conducive to the progress of your practice. And I wish this not only for those of you who are practitioners of mahamudra, but, also and equally for those of you who are involved with Zen or with other lineages. Whatever lineage that you are involved with, whatever practice that you are doing, I pray that this will benefit you and be conducive to the progress of that particular practice that you are doing.

Question: Rinpoche, how can we keep ourselves from feeling discouraged or helpless when even advanced people like you who dedicate their lives to meditation and dharma practice are not even enlightened? [laughter]

Rinpoche: So, you would rather like me to say that I’m enlightened? Okay, if it makes you happy, I will say it, but it’s not true. Of course, I’m enlightened on certain things, you know. But I’m not buddha, definitely not. One simple thing—I don’t know how to drive a car. So, you are all much more enlightened in driving cars than I am, you see. Buddha means that one is enlightened as to everything. This is very clear. I am blessed by many great masters. I practice, doing my best, but I’m not 100 percent practicing all the time. I’m teaching, I’m traveling, I’m doing many, many things I have to do. And I’m not buddha. Definitely not. But don’t get discouraged. You might get enlightened before I do. Really. Why not?

Question: How do we overcome strong attachment to *nyam* which have already occurred?

Rinpoche: If you know it is a *nyam*, then I think you’re quite safe. If you know it is a *nyam* already, and know not to get attached to it, I think that is a good enough step. And then if you continue your practice, and try not to pay too much attention to what happens, then you should take *nyam* as an encouragement. That’s all. You don’t have to purposely think about it all the time, and you don’t have to not think about it, just appreciate it, and take it as an encouragement and take it as a reassurance that your practice is going well. And you can talk to your teacher about it, definitely. But don’t announce them to everybody. You just talk to your teacher, your master, and seek advice, and practice as usual.

Question: Rinpoche, could you say more about the experience of *nyam*? What are its indicators, how long does the experience last? Do they last for moments, for days, for weeks, for months?

Rinpoche: It could be anything. It could be anything, and what Karmapa is praying for here and what he wrote in his prayer is, may there be *nyam* forever—until the final realization—continuous. That is what he prays for. But it could be anything. It depends also on what is really

***Editor’s note:** Some eighty or ninety kinds of coarse emotions are abandoned permanently at the attainment of the first bhumi, the first level of enlightened bodhisattvahood. Rinpoche must here be referring to these emotions, for it is also written in the texts that it is not until the eighth bhumi that the bodhisattva is totally liberated from emotions, i.e., of all the remaining more subtle ones.

happening. Sometimes certain things really quickly transform. It could be tremendous, and it could last long, or it could be very short. It could be anything; no generalization is possible.

Question: Is the experience of realizing our true nature associated with an emotion, like bliss or exhilaration or joy? And is it as temporary as the emotion?

Rinpoche: Oh, definitely not if the realization of your nature of mind is the final one. But if it is a *nyam* of your nature of mind, then it will be like that [i.e., temporary], yes. Yes, yes. A buddha or a bodhisattva of the first level onward will not fall back, you see. Until you reach a certain level of realization, one can, how do you say . . . ?

Audience: Regress.

Rinpoche: Yes, yes, that sounds great. [laughter] Yes, yes.

Question: Can enlightenment be experienced without emotion, or with many emotions?

Rinpoche: The enlightenment of buddhahood is beyond all the emotions. The emotions are improved and transformed a long time before buddhahood, much before the stage of a first-level bodhisattva also. We all have emotions right now.*

Question: Rinpoche, I have a number of questions about His Holiness Karmapa. The first one is, did any of the Karmapas attain buddhahood?

Rinpoche: I believe so, yes. My guru, the supreme leader of the Karma Kagyu lineage and the Kagyu lineage at large, is the embodiment of Chenrezig, yes, yes.

Question: Can you say something about The Seventeenth Karmapa, how he's doing, what he's like, what his situation in Tshurpu is like, how his education is progressing?



The Seventeenth Karmapa

Rinpoche: Yes, I have had the great opportunity and privilege to see him about four times now in different situations. It was really an inspiration of the highest level. I don't want to go into detail about that, but, in general, His Holiness is physically extremely healthy, and mentally he is extremely intelligent. He has performed lots of miracles, although that is not very important.

But miracles have happened anyway. Tshurpu Monastery [the traditional seat of the Karmapas and the present home of The Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa] right now has over 400 monks. And Tshurpu's retreats—almost every one of the Karmapas had their own retreat in the mountains around Tshurpu, which range from something like 12,000 to 15,000 feet above sea level—most of these retreats in the mountains around Tshurpu are now occupied by very good practitioners, mostly by nuns, actually. Most of them are nuns coming from all parts of Tibet. And the monastery itself has two retreat centers, both having monks doing three-year retreats for quite some time now. His Holiness sees people every day. When I was there he was seeing people every day at two o'clock in the afternoon. And every day several hundred people were there to see him, coming from all parts of Tibet, from Europe, from America, from everywhere, Southeast Asia, everywhere. And then, from time to time, he also gave empowerments. And everything is really wonderful; really, really good. I must tell you that Tshurpu Monastery officially is allowed by the Chinese government to have only 100 monks. But, now there are 400 monks.

Question: Rinpoche, could you give a brief comment as to how one learns to rest in the pure nature of the mind? What advice or help can you give us?

Rinpoche: How to rest in the pure nature of mind? All right. If you're a *shamatha* practitioner, I think you know how to do it quite well, but at a beginner's level, if you're a beginner. If you're an advanced practitioner, then you know how to do it at an advanced level. So that—what level you practice at—is not something I can influence,

even if I try. Meditate using that basic *shinay* practice, breathing or visualizing or anything. Your purpose for doing that practice is to reach a peaceful and calm state of mind. Usually we have emotions, we have all kinds of things. Even physically, we can have disturbances. We have to let everything settle peacefully. When our mind reaches a state of calmness and peacefulness, then instead of just sitting there trying to enjoy it, we observe the nature of our mind without becoming involved in subject and object too much. At the beginning, it will be a little bit subject-object oriented, because you will have to say, “now I want to rest in the nature of my mind. It will be superficial from that point of view. But that will be the beginning. In that state of consciousness, your mind is quite calm, clear, and nonphysical, but limitless clarity, which doesn’t have any physical aspect, which is not simply empty, but is also endowed with clarity. There will be luminous clarity and even a little bit of joy in there. And then we rest in this state of mind, trying to maintain the awareness of itself, by itself. We try to maintain that for a certain period of time at the beginning. That will be somewhat close to what you’re asking, I think.

Once you get into this state of mind, then naturally there will be thoughts. There will be concepts arising, caused by anything and everything. Prompted by all sorts of outer and inner phenomena. When these thoughts occur, then you just realize it. “Oh, there is a thought happening.” Then, don’t make any further elaboration on it. Don’t try to stop it, don’t try to think it’s bad, don’t try to continue it. Just leave it there and rest again in that same state of mind. And the thought will dissolve into itself and go back to the original state of mind, if everything goes well. Otherwise, you might not manage to do that. And if that happens, it’s okay. Then, whatever other practice you have to do, you do. And if you’re not doing anything, then you dedicate the merit and, without disappointment, without being proud, you just happily draw the meditation to a conclusion and go about your life, but trying to maintain that awareness as a background in your post-meditation experience, in all situations if possible, but in a healthy, well-grounded, clear, mature way. Otherwise, if you try to meditate at times, in an immature and unclear and desperate way, it

Meditating on the nature of mind directly is the highest and most essential mahamudra practice

can be detrimental also. Not so good. The first thing that might happen is that it might cause an accident, if you’re driving. [laughter] Yes, really, maintaining awareness doesn’t mean that you have to be different. I hope that’s good enough for now. Then of course, whoever your real root guru is, talk to that person and try to receive further teachings.

Question: Rinpoche, what is the relationship between the practice of *ngöndro* and mahamudra experience, and what is the relationship between mahamudra empowerment and mahamudra practice?

Rinpoche: Mahamudra empowerment, what does that mean?

Lama Tashi: Well, I think maybe they are referring to something like Karma Pakshi Empowerment.

Rinpoche: Oh okay. The preliminary practices that our lineage does are actually “mahamudra preliminary practices.” In Tibetan we call it *chak chen ngöndro*, mahamudra preliminary practices. At the beginning of our talk, I think I said that mahamudra refers to everything that we practice. Meditating on the nature of mind directly is the highest and most essential mahamudra practice. Every practice of mahamudra is directed towards that. That seems also to be the general popular concept of mahamudra. When people say mahamudra they usually tend to exclude the *yidams*, exclude the empowerments, exclude *shinay*, exclude [*lhaktong*], exclude the four foundations [the four preliminary practices]; they just call this highest form of formless meditation, this most essential essence practice of the mahamudra lineage, mahamudra. It is correct to do so, but everything else is also mahamudra. Otherwise, there wouldn’t be any mahamudra, would there?

Mahamudra preliminary practices are directed towards two purposes: One is purification, the other is accumulation. The reason they are called preliminary is that many other practices are taught afterwards. Therefore, they are called preliminary. But each one of the four preliminary practices is a complete practice in itself. They are not just “good-for-nothing” practices. And they are not

just “good-for-one-thing” practices either. If one practices only prostrations forever, one can attain enlightenment through that. It is by itself a complete practice. Prostrations, Vajrasattva, guru yoga, mandala, all are complete practices. They are four totally self-contained and complete practices, organized as preliminary practices to go further into the teachings of the mahamudra lineage. These teachings are so abundant, therefore, this is how they are taught [i.e., in this kind of organized system].

Now, how these came to be divided into four practices was like this: In the beginning we have to purify our mental continuum of cognitive and emotional obscurations, don't we? We have to purify the negativity in our minds. After that, we have to accumulate positiveness, positive energies and positive mental attitudes and attributes. That is the ground or the basis of our practice. The prostration practice comes first, because beginners find it a little hard to sit. And also, physical purification is quite an effective form of practice for a person. You can really feel that you are practicing. And it is guaranteed that you will not fall asleep while doing prostrations. [laughter] You see? In that respect, it is a perfect practice for a beginner. Prostrations are practiced for purification, but not just for purification; they are also practiced for accumulation and also in order to attain realization. But the practice is more purification-oriented.

Vajrasattva is practiced second because it doesn't require so much physical activity. The activity is more mental and verbal. Its aim is the purification of more subtle, inner obscurations of mind. Then, the mandala offering is practiced for the accumulation of merit, because we have to accumulate merit in order to obtain wisdom. Without merit, wisdom is hard to obtain, relatively speaking. As I mentioned earlier, some people say that the more kind you are, the more problems you seem to get. And so one gets discouraged. But that doesn't mean that kindness brings problems. It means that merit is lacking and, therefore, there is no power behind it. Since the power of compassion principally arises from deep and extensive wisdom, we accumulate merit in order to obtain wisdom. So, in the mandala practice, we offer the whole universe to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. We

offer more than we can ever imagine, but with no strings attached. When we offer to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, the objects to whom we offer are beyond any limitation. Therefore, the merit is limitless. The mandala offering is practiced for the accumulation of merit and wisdom.

After the mandala offering we practice the guru yoga. One visualizes the buddha Vajradhara high above one's head, and in between, all the mahamudra lineage gurus, surrounded by all the sources of refuge. From all the buddhas, from all the bodhisattvas, from the protectors, from all the deities, and from the dharma, from all the sources of refuge, having supplicated them with great devotion, one receives empowerment. That process is practiced principally for the development of the wisdom accumulation. So, when there is the merit, then we receive the wisdom accumulation on top of it. In that way, first there is physical, verbal, and mental purification, and then the accumulation of merit and wisdom. That is how the four foundations are taught.

And deity empowerments like the Karma Pakshi Empowerment—which is actually a guru yoga empowerment, a deity empowerment, and a protector empowerment all in one—is also an aspect of the mahamudra tradition. When you look at mahamudra you have to see the whole thing. It is not just one essential formless meditation practice that is mahamudra. You can call that

mahamudra meditation, yes—observing the nature of mind, but starting from the four foundations of mahamudra and continuing all the way to the realization of buddhahood, all of the various practices are the practice of mahamudra in the mahamudra lineage.

Question: Rinpoche, having received this mahamudra teaching, how does one learn to practice?

Rinpoche: After receiving something like this, the most important thing to understand is that you have all the authority to say this prayer. I have read each sentence to you one by one.

And I can even read it one more time for everybody, because somebody might have missed part of it. So then, everybody who is here, if you get hold of the text, may say

It is guaranteed that you will not fall asleep while doing prostrations. . . . In that respect, it is a perfect practice for a beginner

the prayer. You have that authority. Then besides that, you know the meaning of the prayer. So, as you say it, try to remember it. Try to recollect the meaning and try to mean what you say.

I have found a wonderful translation of this prayer; I think it's quite good. I don't mean to be presumptuous. This is done by our Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and the translation group that worked under him. So, this has a really wonderful blessing. You can even say it in English, but I don't have the transmission to give it in English. The transmission of the sound is actually in the Tibetan language. But the meaning is here in English. If in the future the English translation and transmission is made properly by one who has it, then it will be the most convenient for everybody. You will be able to say it in English and it will be full and complete. For now, you can learn about this as you have time to go through everything that you have learned. Try to understand it deeper and deeper, because the nature of a prayer is such that if you say it ten times wholeheartedly, each time you are saying it more deeply. And if you recite it a hundred times wholeheartedly, each time you understand it more deeply. There is no end. The simple prayer: "I take refuge in buddha, I take refuge in dharma, I take refuge in sangha"—I have been saying this since I was eighteen months old. That's when I was recognized as me. [laughter] What I'm supposed to be, I mean. Since then, I have been saying it, and I can't say that I have completed it, the ultimate way of saying it. I will complete the ultimate way of saying it when I attain realization—when I become a buddha. That will be the ultimate of my simple prayer. So each day I say it. And each day, if you say it wholeheartedly it goes deeper and deeper. There is much more in it than one first understands. Just the word "buddha" itself goes deeper and deeper. That's why we repeat it. Just to say it once is not enough. Of course, to get a Ph.D. degree, once will be enough. But to really get the real realization of it, it is not enough. One time is not enough. Even a million, ten million times is not enough. Each time one says it, one goes deeper into it. So that's how you can practice at the beginning.


You can do that on the side, even if you're doing some other practices, can't you? Then, if you want to be involved

in the mahamudra lineage and practice further, then I think you should do the four foundations first. You should learn about the four foundations, and do them clearly and carefully. Take all the time you need; there's no rush. If you try

to finish too quickly—prostrations, for example—it doesn't mean anything. Whereas, if you really do prostrations properly, that in itself is a complete practice. It's not a beginner thing. If your prostrations take ten years, it doesn't mean that you have to be ashamed. If your prostrations are finished in one month, that's fine. But the practice itself is a complete practice. You should look at it as a complete practice, not as some kind of kindergarten of vajrayana Buddhism. The prostrations are a total practice. Even if you just say, *OM MANI PEME HUNG*, which most people

overlook—they just think condescendingly that person only knows how to say *MANIS*—but, if they say many mantras, then that practice is a complete practice. If you just say, *OM MANI PEME HUNG*, it can lead you to enlightenment. In this way, every practice is total on its own.

Question: Rinpoche, have you ever known an advanced practitioner, a master, who admits to having experienced complete realization?

Rinpoche: Admits? I have met so many! [laughter] I have met so many who say they are buddha. Really, really. Lots of times people come to me, and they say, "I think I'm a first-level bodhisattva; what do you think?" [laughter] They are being very honest, very honest. I respect their honesty. But, then, I say, "Well, you know, I'm not a first-level bodhisattva. So how can I know whether or not you are a first-level bodhisattva, if even you don't know?" [laughter] Of course, with due respect, we all should have sacred outlook. We should never judge, definitely not. But then, when it comes to our own standard, then we have to be quite honest and quite sincere, and also humble. This is very important. In our heart, we know we are buddha, nothing less than buddha. So, there is nothing wrong with being humble. It doesn't make us less than buddha. All right, okay, let's dedicate the merit. 

The Prayer of Mahamudra was translated by Lama Tashi Namgyal.

༣༡། ཇི་རང་བྱུང་དོ་རྗེས་མཛད་པའི་རེ་ལོ་དོན་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོའི་སློན་ལམ་བརྒྱུགས་ལོ། །

༣༡། །འཛོལ་གྱི་སྤྱོད། །སྤྱོད་མཁུ་མཛད་པའི་དམ་དུ་ལྷོ་ལ་ལོ་རྒྱུ། །ཚོགས་བརྒྱུ་སྤྱོད་
གསུམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་བསྐྱེད་དང་བཅས། །བདག་ལ་བཟེང་དགོངས་བདག་གི་སློན་ལམ་རྣམས། ཇི་
བཞིན་འགྲུབ་པའི་ལུགས་འགྲུར་བྱིན་སྤྲོད་ལ་མཛོད། །བདག་དང་མཐའ་ལས་ལེ་མཐའ་ཅན་
མཐའ་ཅད་ཀྱི། །བསམ་སློབ་རྣམ་དག་གངས་རི་ལས་སྐྱེས་པའི། །ལོ་རྒྱུ་གསུམ་རྣམས་མཛོད་
དགོངས་ལ་རྒྱན་རྣམས། །རྒྱལ་བསྐྱེད་ལོ་རྒྱུ་མཛོད་འཇུག་སྤྱོད་ཅིག་ ཇི་སྲིད་དེ་མཐོ་
པ་དེ་སྲིད་སྤྱོད། །སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད་ལོ་རྒྱུ་ལྷན་སྤྱོད་ལས། །སྤྱོད་དང་སྤྱོད་ལྷན་སྤྱོད་ལས་མི་གྲགས་
ལེད། །མདེ་དགོ་རྒྱུ་མཛོད་དམ་ལ་སྤྱོད་པར་ཤོག། །དལ་འཇུག་མཛོད་མཐོ་དང་བཟོན་ལེས་
རབ་ལྡན། །བཞེས་གཉེན་བཟང་བསྐྱེད་གང་མཐའ་པའི་བཟུང་ཐོབ་ནས། །རྒྱལ་བཞིན་སྤྱོད་ལས་
བར་ཆད་མཐའ་ཆེས་པས། །ཆོ་རབས་ལྷན་སྤྱོད་མཛོད་སྤྱོད་པར་ཤོག། །ལུང་རིག་ཐོས་པས་མི་
ལེས་སྐྱིབ་ལས་གྲོལ། །མན་ངག་བསམ་པས་མེ་ཆོམ་སྤྱན་ནག་བཅོམ། །སློམ་བྱུང་འོད་གྱིས་
གནས་ལུགས་ཇི་བཞིན་གསལ། །ལེས་རབ་གསུམ་གྱི་སྤྱོད་བརྒྱུས་པར་ཤོག། །དུག་ཆད་
མཐའ་བྱ་པ་བདེན་གཉིས་གཉི་ཡི་དོན། །སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད་མཐའ་བྱ་པ་ཆོགས་གཉིས་ལམ་མཛོད་གཉིས།
སྤྱོད་ལོ་ལེ་མཐའ་བྱ་པ་དོན་གཉིས་འཇུག་ཐོབ་པའི། །གོ་ལ་འཇུགས་མཛོད་པའི་ཆོས་དང་སྤྱོད་
པར་ཤོག། །སྤྱོད་གཉི་ལེ་མཐའ་ཉིད་གསལ་སྤྱོད་རྒྱུང་འཇུགས། །སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད་ཕྱག་ཆེན་དོ་རྗེས་རྣམ་
འཇུག་ཆོས། །སྤྱོད་བྱུ་སྤྱོད་འཇུག་པའི་དྲི་མ་རྣམས། །སྤྱོད་ལས་ཤི་སྤྱོད་ཆོས་སྤྱོད་མཛོད་
སྤྱོད་ཤོག། །ཞེས་ལ་སྤྱོད་འོད་ཆོས་པ་ལྷ་པོའི་གདེངས། །དེ་ལས་ལེ་ལས་སྤྱོད་བསྐྱེད་པའི་
གནད། །སྤྱོད་དོན་ལྷན་ལ་ཆུ་པ་སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད་པའི་མཛོད། །ལྷ་སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད་པའི་གདེངས་དང་ལྷན་

ལུ་མཚོང་། །ལེས་ས་ལ་བལྟམ་པས་ལེས་ས་མེད་ཅོ་བོས་སྤོང་། །གཉིས་ལ་བལྟམ་པས་གཉིས་
 འཛིན་རང་ས་ལ་གྲོལ་། །འིད་གསལ་ལེས་ས་གྱི་གནས་ལུགས་རྟོགས་པར་ཤོག། །ཡིད་བྱེད་བྲལ་
 བ་འདྲི་ཞི་རྒྱལ་རྒྱ་ཆེ། །མཐའ་དང་བྲལ་བ་དཔུང་མ་ཆེན་པོ་ཡིན། །འདྲི་ཞི་རྒྱུན་འདུས་ཚོགས་ཆེན་
 ལེས་ཀྱང་བུ། །གཉིས་ཤེས་རྒྱུན་དོན་རྟོགས་པའི་གཤེད་ཤོག་ཤོག། །ཞེན་པ་མེད་པའི་བདེ་ཆེན་
 རྒྱུན་ཆད་མེད། །མཚན་འཛིན་མེད་པའི་འོད་གསལ་སྐྱིབ་གཤིགས་བྲལ། །བྲོལ་ས་འདུས་པའི་
 མི་རྟོག་ལྷན་གྱིས་གྲུབ། །རྫོག་མེད་ཉམས་མྱོང་རྒྱུན་ཆད་མེད་པར་ཤོག། །བཟང་ལོན་ཉམས་ལ་གྱི་
 འཛིན་པར་ལ་ལ་གྲོལ། །རྣམ་རྟོག་འབྲུལ་པ་རང་བཞིན་དུ་བྱིད་ལ་སྤྲད། །ཐམས་ཤེས་པ་
 སྤང་བྲལ་བྲལ་ཞོབ་མེད། །སྤོམ་བྲལ་ཆོས་ཉིད་འདེན་པ་རྟོགས་པར་ཤོག། །འགྲོལ་པའི་རང་བཞིན་
 རྟལ་དུ་མངས་རྒྱལ་གྱིང་། །མཚོགས་དབང་གིས་མཐའ་མེད་འཁོར་པར་འབྲུམས། །རྟལ་
 བལྟམ་སྤུ་མཐའ་མེད་པའི་ལེས་ས་ཅན་ལ། །འཛོང་མེད་སྤྱིང་རྗེ་རྒྱུད་ལ་སྐྱེ་བར་ཤོག། །འཛོང་
 མེད་སྤྱིང་རྗེའི་རྒྱལ་ཡང་མ་འགགས་པའི། །བརྗེ་དུས་དོ་བོ་སྤོང་དོན་རྗེན་པར་ཤོག། །བྱང་
 འཇུག་ལོ་ལ་ས་བྲལ་བའི་ལམ་མཚོག་འདྲི། །འབྲལ་མེད་ཉིན་མཚན་རྒྱུན་དུ་བསྐྱོམ་པར་ཤོག། །
 སྤོམ་སྤོབས་ལས་བྱང་རྒྱུན་དང་མེད་ཤེས་དང་། །ལེས་ས་ཅན་སྤྱིན་བྱས་སངས་རྒྱལ་མེད་རབ་
 རྒྱུད་ས། །མངས་རྒྱལ་ཆོས་རྣམས་འགྲུབ་པའི་རྫོན་པམ་རྗེས། །རྗེས་སྤྱིན་རྒྱུད་ས་གསལ་
 མཐའ་རྫོན་པམ་རྒྱལ་ཤོག། །རྫོགས་བརྗེའི་རྒྱལ་བ་སྤུས་བཅས་སྤྲལ་ས་རྗེ་དང་། །རྣམ་དཀར་
 དགོ་བ་རྗེ་སྤྱིད་འོད་པའི་མཐུས། །དེ་ལྟར་བདག་དང་ལེས་ས་ཅན་མཐའ་ཅན་གྱི། །སྤོམ་པམ་
 རྣམ་དགའི་བཞིན་འགྲུབ་གྲུར་ཅིག། །རྗེས་དོན་རྫུ་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོའི་རྫོགས་མཆོས་བྱེད་རྗེ་ལ་རང་བྱུང་དོན་
 མང་དུ་ལོ། །འཕེབས་རྫོད་རྒྱུ་པ་དང་རང་བྱུང་རྗེ་ལོ། །འདེན་རྒྱུ་རྫོན་པའི་རྫོགས་འདྲི་དུ་གྱང་། །མཚོང་ལོན་དབྱེད་དཀོང་གཤེད་
 རྫོགས་རྒྱུན་དགོག། །འགྲོ་རྣམས་སྤྱི་བའི་འཛིན་པའོགས་མེད་བྲལ་། །ལེས་པར་རྫོང་རྫོན་པོ་ལེ་ལོ་རྗེས་རྫོགས་དོན་ལེ་
 དབྱེད་པུར་ཅིག། །མཐའ་ལོ།

Thrangu Rinpoche to Teach Naropa's Mahamudra Instructions

The Very Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche will be teaching in Seattle June 2-9. His subject will be the mahamudra instructions of the great Indian *mahasiddha* Naropa. Naropa was the guru of Marpa, who was the guru of Milarepa. Watch these pages for further information or contact:

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ltashi@worldnet.att.net



Photo by Ryszard K. Frackiewicz

The Very Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche

Would You Like to Transcribe?

It is said in the dharma that the greatest act of generosity is to give the dharma, because it is by understanding and practicing the dharma that, in the short run, our lives are improved and we enjoy greater happiness, and, in the long run, we are liberated entirely from suffering and its causes and are then able to be of great benefit to others. If there are any among our readers who would like to contribute to Shenpen Ösel's efforts to make the dharma available to practitioners by transcribing, please let us know. You would need to have access to a computer that is wired for e-mail and a transcribing machine, but it wouldn't matter where in North America you live. We can send you the tapes and you can attach your finished product to an e-mail message and send it to us. Transcribing is a very good way to learn the dharma and be of benefit to others at the same time.

New KSOC Meditation and Class Schedule

SATURDAYS

8-10 a.m.

Guru Rinpoche practice

10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Formless sitting meditation and teaching (Lama Tashi is currently teaching *The Essential Points of Creation and Completion That Will Benefit the Beginner Who Has Entered the Path* by Jamgön Kongtrul the Great.)

1:30-3:00 p.m.

Chenrezig practice

SUNDAYS

9-11 a.m.

Chenrezig practice

11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Formless sitting meditation and teaching (Lama Tashi is currently teaching the *Bodhicaryavatara*, in English, *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, by Shantideva, as freshly translated by the Padmakara Translation Group.)

Subscription Policy

Shenpen Ösel began as an additional way to publicize the upcoming visits of visiting lamas. In order to entice people to attend and receive the benefit of these wonderful teachings, we began printing excerpts from their teachings in our publicity mailings. Then we started sending out entire transcripts of teaching, all free of charge, to people who had attended previous teachings sponsored by Kagyu Shenpen Ösel Chöling and to the entire mailing list of the Northwest Dharma News. Then we began adding mailing lists, which brought the total circulation of our last issue to just short of 5,500 copies, all sent free of charge.

It has been our hope that in this way we could reach, first, as many people in the Northwest of North America who are truly interested in receiving these teachings, and gradually all the people in North America and the West in general who might be interested in them. This effort has been subsidized by many kind people.

It has been our intention to send Shenpen Ösel free of charge three times to everyone on each mailing list that we have been able to add to our own. So, for instance, we have now three times sent a complimentary copy to everyone on the Northwest Dharma News mailing list, and it is not impossible that, in connection with publicizing other upcoming visits of visiting lamas, we will do so again. But in the meantime, we will discontinue sending the magazine on a complimentary basis to the names on this list. And the same will be true for people on other mailing lists who are now receiving complimentary copies. After three mailings, we will cease to send them free to those lists.

So, if you have been receiving and reading and appreciating Shenpen Ösel, and would like to continue to do so, we urge you to subscribe and/or contribute by filling in the form on this page and returning it to us with your check. If you would like to continue to receive Shenpen Ösel, but really can't afford to subscribe, please write telling us so, and, to the extent that we can manage to do so financially, we will continue to send the magazine free. All of the time and energy that goes into recording, transcribing, editing, laying out, printing, addressing, and mailing Shenpen Ösel is entirely voluntary, and so your subscriptions and contributions are used solely to cover printing and mailing costs.

We have received many requests for back copies of Shenpen Ösel, and we are happy to send them, except, since we have to photocopy them when we don't have any left in print, and because we have to send them first class, they are relatively expensive to send. So, if you would like back copies and can afford it, please enclose a contribution of \$5.00 for the first copy, and at least \$3.00 for each additional copy. Thank you very much.

May there be virtue and happiness, and may everything be auspicious! *Sarva Mangalam!*

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF SHENPEN ÖSEL

**The Very Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche
on Tantric Meditation**

**The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim
Gyamtsö on Madhyamika
(the Middle Way)**

**More from His Holiness, Lord of Refuge
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**'In the *Prayer of Mahamudra*,
The Third Gyalwa Karmapa
writes about almost every
important point of dharma—
not only of mahamudra, but
of whatever level of dharma
that you can think of.'**

**—His Eminence
Tai Situ Rin-**

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