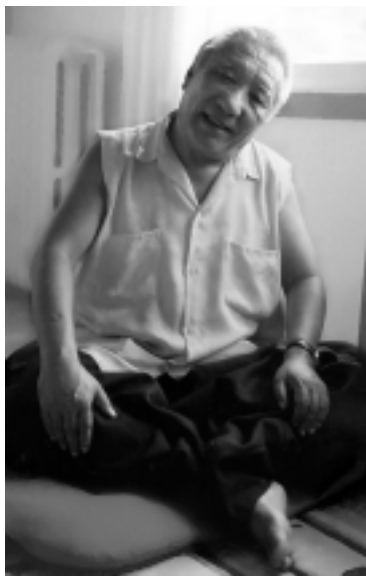


Shenpen Ösel

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

Volume 3, Number 2

October 1999



The Very Venerable
Khenpo Tsultrim
Gyamtso Rinpoche



The phenomena that appear to the mental consciousness,
the chief of them all,
Are conceptualized and then superimposed.
When this activity is abandoned, phenomena's lack of
self-essence is known.
Knowing this, meditate on the dharmadhatu.

—Nagarjuna, *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*



I do not see consciousness.
I see awareness.

—Milarepa

Know that perception involved with the duality of
perceiver and perceived is consciousness.
Know that awareness itself, liberated from perceiver and
perceived, is primordial awareness: the dharmadhatu.

—Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

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Contents

This issue of Shenpen Ösel is devoted to a series of teachings given by The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche in Seattle, Washington, September 18-24, 1998. In addition to the translated, transcribed, edited text of the teachings, we have included the songs that Rinpoche led. © 1998 Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche.

3 Introduction

6 *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, by Arya Nagarjuna

Commentary on *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu* by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

- 17 Nagarjuna's Commentary on the Intention of the Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma
- 29 Buddhahood Is the Result of Samsara, But Not Its Essence
- 36 Selflessness Is the Remedy for the Afflictions and Cognitive Obscuration
- 45 How Different Names Are Given to Different Modes of Completely False Appearance
- 51 At the Meeting of the Consciousness With Its Object, There Is No Real Arising
- 65 Buddha Mind Is Aware of Everything, No Matter How Much
- 75 The Dharmadhatu Unrealized Is the Basis of Samsara; the Dharmadhatu Realized Is the Basis of Nirvana
- 79 When We Can Take Suffering to the Path for the Benefit of Others, We Are Incredibly Fortunate
- 86 With Great Compassion and an Understanding of Emptiness, We Will Never Be Discouraged

Songs

- | | |
|---|---|
| 19 A Song of Meaningful Connections | 54 Selected Verses from Nagarjuna's <i>In Praise of the Dharmadhatu</i> |
| 25 Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition | 62 What it Means to be Lucky |
| 26 Profound Definitive Meaning | 72 Six Questions |
| 27 Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe | 73 Essence of Amrita |
| 52 Supplication to Guru Rinpoche | 80 Seven Delights |

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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 Karma Kagyu and the Shangpa 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 subscriptions and donations 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.

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Introduction

It is said in the Buddhist tradition that sentient beings suffer because they misperceive reality. Not seeing accurately what is, the minds of beings give rise to dualistic perception, ego clinging, and all the emotional afflictions that arise from ego clinging. Based on emotional afflictions they act, creating karmic latencies that ripen as suffering in their future. This process, and the solution to it, is stated clearly in the 43rd verse of Nagarjuna's *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*:

**The phenomena that appear to the mental consciousness, the chief of them all,
Are conceptualized and then superimposed.
When this activity is abandoned, phenomena's lack of self-essence is known.
Knowing this, meditate on the dharmadhatu. (43)**

The perceptions of the five sense consciousnesses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—are pure and unobscured, which means that they are free of any form of conceptuality. But unenlightened sentient beings do not experience that nonconceptual purity. Every moment of direct nonconceptual sense consciousness is followed instantly by a moment of direct nonconceptual mental consciousness, which is then instantly followed by a mental replica or image of that particular direct mental consciousness, which is not a direct experience, but has been called a vague approximation. We would probably call this vague approximation a projection, as in, “You are projecting.” It is this vague approximation or projection that forms the basis of the subsequent conceptuality that recognizes it as such and such, or good or bad and so on, which immediately ensues. In the words of Thrangu Rinpoche, this “. . . sixth consciousness . . . recognizes things, it brings concepts to bear upon experience and thereby confuses the experiences with the concepts about those experiences, including the confusion of a present experience with a past experience of something similar or apparently the same. So the sixth consciousness, which is conceptual, not only experiences the present, but brings the concepts of the past and the future to bear upon this present experience.”

The consequence of this process is devastating. It means that we are never experiencing accurately what is happening; we are always involved in some degree of conceptual misperception. And therefore our reactions and responses to what we experience are always going to be, even in the most ideal of circumstances, somewhat skewed. In less than ideal circumstances, our reactions can be catastrophic.

The whole purpose of dharma study and practice is “the abandoning of this activity,” which results in our recognition of the true nature of things, the dharmata. When we recognize the true nature of things, our responses to life are accurate, helpful, intelligent, and compassionate. But this recognition is not easy to come by. One must, in fact, deconstruct one's experience piece by piece. This process begins first by coming to understand the dilemma we are in. Once we have come to understand that our problems, and indeed the world's problems, result from ego-clinging, the next step is to develop the wisdom and the courage to recognize that there is no other purpose in life that even approaches in importance the deconstructing of ego and ego-clinging. Once one has developed that courage, one can gradually eliminate distractions and simplify one's life sufficiently to make the practice of dharma one's main concern.

The deconstruction of ego proceeds in stages. First we must let go of acting out our

emotional reactions to events; which is to say, we must purify the veil of karma, the push-button reactivity of our behavior. In order to do so we practice ngöndro. Next, we must allow the emotional confusion of our minds to subside, which means we must practice shamatha or the meditation of calm abiding. Next we must develop the clear seeing, or the superior seeing of vipashyana; we must come to see the true nature of our experience for what it is, and then we must meditate, resting in that state until all confusion and roots of confusion have been eliminated. Seeing through confusion is to see through the process of conceptualizing and superimposing our conceptual version of things onto our experience and then taking that as real. Truly knowing the truth of this process sets one free from it, and instantaneously “phenomena’s lack of self-essence is known.” The true nature of things, the dharmata, is known. The dharmadhatu, primordial awareness, the clear light nature of mind, is known. Knowing this, we meditate on the dharmadhatu, and this meditation leads directly to the full realization of buddhahood. This is the import of this issue of *Shenpen Ösel*.

The conceptuality that we superimpose upon our experience like plastic overlays in an anatomy text are better understood when we understand that there are four types of thoughts: the thought of “I,” the thought of “mine,” the thought that names, and the thought that attributes characteristics to what is named. It is our clinging to these that is the source of our problems. If we have a row with a friend, part of our suffering comes from the identification or naming of the person as our friend, and the expectations that this person will manifest the characteristics that we attribute to friends. Friends love you, they share your interests, and are supportive of you. Our anger with our friend during our row arises from the fact that their behavior is not consonant with these characteristics. If we did not think of the person as “friend,” their behavior would not be so distressing to us.

Deeper even than this level of conceptual designation is that we have identified this person as “our” friend, “my” friend. If someone else is having a row with “their” friend, it may not bother us at all; in fact it may even become a source of amusement and delight. If “our” children misbehave, we suffer; if someone else’s children misbehave, we may think it regrettable and be mildly sorry for it and concerned, but we will not suffer in the same way. If a salesperson drops an expensive Rolex watch on the floor, we will probably not suffer. But if we drop the same watch after having bought it, then we are likely to suffer considerably. Yet the watch is the same watch, the children and our friend are just people. The source of our suffering with respect to all of these objects is the fact that we think of them as “mine.” If we hear that a school bus has gone off the road and several children have been killed, one of which might be our own, we suffer tremendously. But the instant we discover that not our children, but someone else’s children have been killed, the greater part of our suffering is over. The identification of things as “mine” sets us up for suffering.

But without “I” there can be no “mine,” and without the fundamental misperception that splits our experience into two poles, a perceiver and a perceived, and the subsequent identification of the subjective pole of our experience as being of paramount importance, there can be no “I,” and thus no clinging to “I.” Without clinging to “I” there is utterly no suffering. Without clinging to our conceptual versions of perceiver and perceived, there is no misperception, and where there is no misperception, there is the clear light nature of mind and reality; there is happiness and all positive qualities.

The benefits to an individual of letting go of the activity of conceptualizing and superimposing are apparent. But the benefits to society at large are also immense. Where

there is no conceptual overlay, where there is no conceptual confusion and no ego-clinging, the confused energies of karma and klesha are transformed naturally, spontaneously, and effortlessly into the energies of wisdom, which radiate outward as warmth and light and blessing to all sentient beings. In the words of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, where there is no ego-fixation and no conceptual misperception, there is “radiation without a radiator.” This radiation of blessing, which is sometimes called the power of compassion, pacifies emotional affliction, enriches the minds and experience of sentient beings, magnifies their attention so that they can be taught the path to peace, and destroys their obstacles. This radiation strikes beings deep in their hearts and inspires them to drop their small-mindedness and to concern themselves with the benefit of others. For those who have been involved in social movements and politics and still aspire to bring peace, harmony, freedom, prosperity, and happiness to the world, the profoundest political act is, therefore, to meditate upon and realize the dharmadhatu. For in the words of Lao Tsu, “The wise person accomplishes everything by ‘doing nothing,’ and the people think that they did it themselves.”

It is important to point out once again that this path cannot be learned and practiced through the reading of books alone. The instructions and transmissions of a qualified lama are essential, for it is the lama who points out the true nature and then gives us the means to meditate upon it and bring the experience of it to fruition, which is the realization of buddhahood. The lama’s instructions might be exactly the same as what you have read in books, but the former carry with them the transmission of a lineage of enlightenment, while the latter is a mere shadow.



Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche presented the teachings of *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu* according to a commentary written by Shakya Chogden, entitled *Ascertaining the Dharmadhatu: An Explanation of Praise of the Dharmadhatu*. This commentary in turn presents the teachings according to an outline to which Rinpoche and the translator frequently refer during the course of the teachings. Based on these references, we have endeavored to make our own outline of Khenpo Rinpoche’s presentation (see page 92) for the benefit of those who might be confused by these references. This outline should not be taken as an accurate rendering of the original outline in the commentary. It is certainly incomplete, since Rinpoche taught only the first 43 verses of the 101 verses of the root text, and may also add items to and omit items from the commentator’s original outline. And it is certain that many of the headings will be found to be differently worded.

So, if you find the references to Shakya Chogden’s outline in Rinpoche’s teachings confusing, you might want to look at our outline before you read Rinpoche’s teachings. But if you are not distracted by these references and can simply read quickly through them, the teachings will present themselves clearly. ㊦

—Lama Tashi Namgyal

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu

1. There is something which as long as left unknown
Results in life's three planes of vicious circle.
Beyond all doubt, it dwells in every being.
To the dharmadhatu I devoutly bow.
2. When that which forms the cause for all samsara
Is purified along the stages of the path,
This purity itself is nirvana;
Precisely this, the dharmakaya, too.
3. As butter, though inherent in the milk,
Is mixed with it and hence does not appear,
Just so the dharmadhatu is not seen
As long as it is mixed together with afflictions.
4. And just as the inherent butter essence
When the milk is purified is no more disguised,
When afflictions have been completely purified,
The dharmadhatu will be without any stain at all.
5. As a butter lamp that burns inside a vase
Would not even be slightly visible,
As long as left inside afflictions' vase,
The dharmadhatu is not visible.
6. If one perforates the surface of the vase,
Whatever holes are made in whichever directions,
Through those and in precisely those directions
Light will shine, as is its nature to.
7. At the moment when the vajra-like samadhi
Is able to obliterate the vase,
At that very moment the light burning inside
Will shine throughout the reaches of all space.
8. The dharmadhatu was never born,
Nor will it ever cease.
At all times it is free of all afflictions;
At the beginning, middle, and end, free from stain.
9. As sapphire, the precious gem,
Shines with brilliant light all the time,
But when confined within a grosser stone,
We do not see its bright light shine,

10. Just so, although obscured behind afflictions,
The dharmadhatu has no trace of flaw.
While samsara blocks its light, it does not illuminate;
Nirvana gained, its light will brilliantly shine.
11. If the fundamental element is present,
Work will yield the sight of purest gold;
If the fundamental element were lacking,
The labor would produce no fruit but woe.
12. As kernels are not considered to be rice
As long as they are enveloped in their husks,
Just so the name of “buddha” is not given
To all of those whom afflictions still enfold.
13. And just as when loosened from the husk,
The rice itself is what appears,
Just so the dharmakaya itself,
When loosened from afflictions, freely shines.
14. It is said, “Banana trees are void of pith.”
One uses this example in the world.
But the fruit of such a tree has pith indeed;
When eaten, it is sweet upon the tongue.
15. Just so, samsara has no pith,
And if beings can remove affliction’s peel,
The fruit within is buddhahood itself,
The nectar for all corporal beings to taste.
16. And just as from a given kind of seed
A fruit results resembling its cause,
Who with common sense would seek to prove
A fruit exists without its specific seed as cause?
17. The basic element which serves as seed
Is seen as the support of all great qualities.
Through gradual refinement, step by step,
The stage of buddhahood will be attained.
18. Although the sun and moon are unstained,
Five veils exist which manage to obscure them.
These consist of clouds and fog and smoke,
The face of Rahu and dust as well.
19. And so it is, as well, for mind’s clear light.
Five obscurations manage to obscure it:
Desire, laziness, and ill intent,
And agitation too, as well as doubt.

20. And just as fire can clean a soiled cloth
Miscolored with various marks and stains,
And just as when submerged within the fire
The marks are burnt away but not the cloth,
21. In just this way the mind, which is radiant clarity,
Is soiled by desire and the other stains,
But the fire of primordial awareness burns up these afflictions,
Without, however, burning away the radiant clarity.
22. In the sutras of the Teacher,
In whatever ways the Victor described emptiness,
All of these ways can rectify afflictions;
None can diminish the potential.
23. Just as water deep inside the earth
Lies untouched and perfectly clean,
Just so can primordial awareness rest within affliction
And remain completely free of any flaw.
24. The dharmadhatu is not the self.
It is neither man nor woman either;
And being beyond everything perceivable,
Just how could it be thought of as oneself?
25. Within phenomena, all free of passion,
Male and female cannot be seen.
For the sake of taming those that desire blinds,
Terms like male and female are taught.
26. “Impermanent” and “suffering” and “empty”:
Three designations purifying mind;
But what refines the mind unto its utmost
Is the teaching that nothing has any self-nature.
27. As a child in a pregnant woman’s womb
Is there and yet is not yet visible,
Likewise when covered by afflictions,
The dharmadhatu is not visible.
28. From thinking “I” and “mine,”
And from thinking of names and grounds for these,
Four conceptual patterns come to be—
Due to elements and compounds too.
29. The buddhas do not perceive
Any characteristics of their aspiration prayers,
Because the buddhas are of the nature of self-awareness
And have their own permanently pure being.

30. Just as the horns on rabbits' heads
Do not exist except in the imagination,
Phenomena are all precisely like that,
Merely imagined, having no existence.
31. Because they are not made of solid atoms
The horns of oxen cannot be seen, either.
Since not even tiny atoms exist,
How could one imagine that something made of atoms exists?
32. Since arising is a dependent occurrence
And cessation is a dependent occurrence,
There is not one single thing that exists—
How could the naive believe that there is?
33. Using examples like rabbits' and oxen's horns,
The Thus Gone One has proven
That all phenomena are nothing other than the Middle Way.
34. Just as one sees
The forms of the sun, moon, and stars
Reflected in vessels of perfectly clear water,
So is the consummation of signs and characteristics.
35. That which is virtuous in the beginning, middle, and end
Is undeceiving and is marked by constancy,
And is free from self in this very way.
How could that be thought of as "I" or "mine"?
36. Just as water, during the summertime,
Is spoken of as being something warm,
And the very same water, throughout the winter season,
Is spoken of as being something cold,
37. Those ensnared in the net of the afflictions
Are referred to by the label, "sentient beings";
The very same when freed of states afflicted
As "buddhas" are revered.
38. When eye and form assume their right relation,
Appearances appear without a blur.
Since these neither arise nor cease,
They are the dharmadhatu, though they are imagined to be otherwise.
39. When sound and ear assume their right relation,
A consciousness free of thought occurs.
These three are in essence the dharmadhatu, free of other characteristics,
But they become "hearing" when thought of conceptually.

40. Dependent upon the nose and an odor, one smells.
And as with the example of form there is neither arising nor cessation,
But in dependence upon the nose-consciousness's experience,
The dharmadhatu is thought to be smell.
41. The tongue's nature is emptiness.
The sphere of taste is voidness as well.
These are in essence the dharmadhatu
And are not the causes of the taste consciousness.
42. The pure body's essence,
The characteristics of the object touched,
The tactile consciousness free of conditions—
These are called the dharmadhatu.
43. The phenomena that appear to the mental consciousness, the chief of them all,
Are conceptualized and then superimposed.
When this activity is abandoned, phenomena's lack of self-essence is known.
Knowing this, meditate on the dharmadhatu.
44. And so is all that is seen or heard or smelled,
Tasted, touched, and imagined,
When yogis [and yoginis]* understand these in this manner,
All their wonderful qualities are brought to consummation.
45. Perception's doors in eyes and ears and nose,
In tongue and body and the mental gate—
All these six are utterly pure.
These consciousnesses' purity itself is suchness' defining characteristic.
46. See how the mind has two aspects:
It can be worldly, it can transcend the world.
From clinging to a self comes samsara;
When there is self-awareness, there is suchness.
47. The ceasing of desire is nirvana,
As is stupidity's and anger's end.
For these to cease is buddhahood itself,
The refuge of ennobled beings.
48. One either proceeds with knowledge or proceeds without—
Samsara and nirvana both have their source in the body.
Either you are bound by your own thinking,
Or, if you know the true nature, you are free.

***Editor's note:** Here and in five other places in this translation, we have added the words in brackets "and yoginis" because it is clear from the Tibetan translation of the original text that Nagarjuna's intention is to describe the experience of both female and male practitioners.

49. Enlightenment is neither near nor far.
It does not go away nor come to you.
Right there within the cage of your afflictions,
Either you will see it or you will not.
50. Abiding in the lamp of prajna
Will lead to peace, the most sublime there is;
Examining for self is the way to abide.
This is taught in scores of sutra texts.
51. The strengths, all ten, assist the immature
With a blessing force like that of the full moon.
But as long as they are caught up in afflictions,
Beings will fail to see the Thus Gone Ones.
52. Just as those in hungry spirit realms
See the sea as dry before their eyes,
Just so with those in ignorance's grip
Who think the buddhas don't exist.
53. For lesser beings and those with lesser merit,
No matter what transcendent conquerors do,
It is like placing a precious jewel
In the hands of someone never known to see.
54. For beings who have amassed sufficient merit
The signs are radiant with shining light.
All thirty-two ablaze with brilliant glory—
Beings like these in buddhas' presence dwell.
55. The protectors inhabit forms of bodily dimension
For many kalpas, and many yet to come;
However, in order to tame disciples
They demonstrate different activities in the expanse that tames.
56. On definitely targeting its goal
Consciousness engages in its object,
Within the purity of self-awareness
The bodhisattvas' grounds all inherently abide.
57. The mighty lords' magnificent abode,
The beautiful domain of Akanistha,
And consciousness, the three of these together
Can be blended into one, I dare to say.
58. For the immature it renders total knowledge,
For noble ones affords variety,
To the mighty gods it grants long life,
It is the cause for life spanning kalpas' long march.

59. It is that which guards the outer realm of beings,
And preserves their lives as well through countless kalpas,
It is that which makes it possible for life
To persevere within all living beings;
60. This the very cause that knows no end;
The results of such a cause are endless too;
When imperceptibility is realized,
Prajna becomes the condition for nirvana's dawning.
61. Enlightenment should not be thought far off
Nor should it be considered close at hand;
When objects, six in kind, do not appear,
The genuine is known just as it is.
62. Just as milk and water mixed together
Are present in the very same container
But a crane would drink the milk and not the water,
The case of transformation is like this:
63. There is primordial awareness, there are covering afflictions,
Where both are found together in one body.
But the primordial awareness is what yogis [and yoginis] choose to take
And leave the ignorance behind.
64. For as long as "I" and "mine" are held to exist
And the outside is imagined as well;
When both forms of selflessness are seen
The seed of existence is destroyed;
65. The dharmadhatu is the ground
For buddhahood, nirvana, purity, and permanence;
The immature impute the two kinds of self,
And yogis [and yoginis] abide without these two.
66. In giving one endures a range of hardships,
And ethics gathers in the benefit of beings,
Through patience one performs the good of all,
These three will cause the potential to unfold.
67. Through being diligent in all the teachings
And steeping mind in meditative samadhi,
Through thorough reliance on prajna,
Enlightenment will grow and flourish.
68. Prajna endowed with skillful means,
Prayers of aspiration that purify,
The mastery of strengths, and thereby wisdom,
These four will cause the potential to unfold.

69. “Do not commit yourselves to bodhicitta”;
There are some who speak such dire word.
But were there no bodhisattvas to develop,
The dharmakaya would be out of reach.
70. One who throws away the seed of sugarcane
But wants to taste the sweetness its fruit yields
Will, without the seed,
Have no sugar at all.
71. When someone values seed from sugarcane,
Maintains them well, and works to make them grow,
A crop of sweetest sugar can be harvested.
And just as what has come about like this,
72. Through valuing the bodhicitta fully,
Maintaining it, and working with it well,
The arhats and pratyeka-buddhas arise
As so the perfectly enlightened buddhas.
73. Just as seeds of rice and other plants
Are treated by the farmer with great care,
Aspirants who wish to make the greatest journey
Are treated by their guides with greatest care.
74. Just as on the fourteenth day of waning,
The moon is barely visible at all,
For aspirants who wish to make the greatest journey
The kayas are but barely visible.
75. Just as the moon when it is new
Visibly grows larger bit by bit,
Those who have reached the bhumis
See the dharmakaya more and more.
76. Just as on the fifteenth day of waxing
The moon has reached completion and is full,
Just so for those who’ve reached the bhumis’ end point
The dharmakaya shines complete and clear.
77. The bodhicitta, perfectly engendered,
Through stable and consistent dedication
To the buddha, to the dharma, and to the sangha
Does not decrease, and develops more and more.
78. When the four meaner deeds have been relinquished,
And the four better deeds have been embraced,
Just then is thatness definitely realized.
This is what “the joyful” thoroughly signifies.

79. “The stained” are those whom shifting patterns mark
With the constant stains of desire and the rest;
Whoever has grown free of flaw is pure,
And this is what “the stainless” signifies.
80. Once afflictions’ net is rent asunder,
A flawless wisdom shines, and with its light
Purifies all darkness past all limit,
Removing it, and hence “illuminates.”
81. It shines with light that is always pure;
Primordial awareness, which eliminates diversion,
Is steeped in light which shines on every side.
This bhumi hence is known as “radiant.”
82. Since awareness, feats, and crafts are mastered here,
The range of meditative concentrations themselves,
And kleshas difficult to purify completely have been vanquished,
So “difficult to overcome” is its name.
83. With enlightenment of all three types included,
And everything perfected and complete,
With birth no more, disintegration finished,
This level is “directly manifest.”
84. Since the bodhisattvas’ web of brilliant light with its display
Reaches every point in their surroundings,
And since they have crossed samsara’s swampy ocean,
They are called “the ones who reach far.”
85. Definitively guided by the buddhas,
In contact with primordial awareness’s sea,
Spontaneous and free of any effort,
“Unshaken” by the maras’ echelons.
86. Since yogis [and yoginis] at this level have perfected
The dialectics used to teach all points
Connected with precise correct awareness,
It takes the name, “select intelligence.”
87. The body at this point is made of primordial awareness,
Is equal to an unpolluted sky;
The vigilance afforded by the buddhas
Forms the “cloud of dharma” everywhere.
88. The ground of the qualities of buddhas,
The fruits of training fully held in hand,
The transformation, when perfectly completed,
Is given “dharmakaya” as its name.

89. Samsara's tendencies are ponderable,
Freedom from tendencies is not;
You are completely inconceivable.
Who could ever have the power to know you?
90. Beyond the pale of speech entirely,
And not an object senses' powers grasp,
Realizing you takes the mind's awareness.
I bow in praise of all that you embrace.
91. The illustrious heirs of the buddhas,
By following the path step by step,
With the primordial awareness that attends the "cloud of dharma,"
Can see emptiness, the pure mode of being.
92. As soon as mind has utterly been cleansed,
Samsara's caged confinement broken through,
These will then assume their rightful place,
Upon a wondrous lotus flower seat,
93. Utterly surrounded on all sides
By lotus flowers, many tens of millions,
Each endowed with tantalizing anthers,
Their leaves alight with many precious gems.
94. The buddhas with ten powers are replete.
Their fearlessness sets others' minds at ease.
Their qualities are inconceivable.
From simplicity's domain they never fall.
95. Through excellently practicing all paths,
They've gathered merit, garnered wisdom full.
So they are like the harvest moon on high
Surrounded by its court, the clustered stars.
96. With a hand like the sun,
Buddha holds a flawless gem with light ablaze.
With this the Enlightened One empowers the most senior heirs,
This abhisheka greatest of them all.
97. The mighty yogis [and yoginis] living on this plane
Look with god-like eyes on worldly beings,
Inferior because of mental blindness,
Whom suffering can frighten and distract.
98. And having seen them, light rays from their bodies
Shine, without the slightest strain at all,
And open up what gates there are for all
Who wander in their own confusion's dark.

99. Those who have reached nirvana with remainder
Believe they have reached nirvana that's without;
The nirvana that is reached in this tradition
Is a freeing of the mind of any flaw.
100. Sentient beings' essence free of substance
Is the sphere that is encountered on this plane.
Seeing this is the royal bodhicitta,
The dharmakaya free of every flaw.
101. When the dharmakaya is seen in all its purity
This is transformation, wisdom's sea,
And from its depths a wealth of precious jewels
Fulfill beings' needs as they have always wished.

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu composed by the great
Acharya Nagarjuna is hereby completed.

In cooperation with the Indian Khenpo, Krishna Pandita, it was translated
(from Sanskrit to Tibetan) by Lotsawa Tsultrim Gyalwa.

Based on teachings given by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche,
it has been translated from Tibetan into English by Jim Scott, April 1997,
and edited by Ari Goldfield, September 1998.



The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu

Nagarjuna's Commentary on the Intention of the Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma

In September of 1998, the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche gave a series of teachings in Seattle on Nagarjuna's In Praise of the Dharmadhatu. The following edited transcript is from the evening of September 18. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.

Rinpoche wishes a very warm *tashi deleg*, first to Lama Tashi, and to all of the members of the dharma center; and to everyone else he wishes a very warm *tashi deleg* this evening. Along with that he makes the aspiration that our wisdom—that results from listening to, reflecting on, and meditating on the teachings of the genuine dharma—will increase and increase.

Rinpoche came last year and saw many of you here, and he was very happy then; and he is very happy to be able to return this year and see you all once more.

And to get us all into a festive mood, on what is a very, very happy and festive occa-

sion, it would be very good if we sang the song of the lord of yogis, Milarepa, called *The Song of Meaningful Connections*. It is important that we recall what constitutes an auspicious connection and what its nature is.

[Students sing. See page 19.]

Rinpoche asks that before listening to the teachings, we give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, which means that we aim to attain the state of perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, who are limitless in number. In order to do that, we must listen to, reflect on, and meditate on the teachings of the protector, the great and noble Nagarjuna, and specifically on his *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, with all of the enthusiasm that we can muster in our hearts. This is the precious attitude of bodhicitta; please give rise to it and listen.

Last year we studied the teachings of the protector Nagarjuna that focused on the second turning of the wheel of dharma, specifically his teachings from the five collections of reasoning such as *The Sixty Stanzas on Reasoning*, *The Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, *The Refutation of Criticism*, and *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*. This year we will study the protector Nagarjuna's commentary on the intention of the third turning of the wheel of dharma, which is called *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*.

The first verse is a prostration to the dharmadhatu:*

**There is something which as long as left unknown
Results in life's three planes of vicious circle.
Beyond all doubt, it dwells in every being.
To the dharmadhatu I devoutly bow. (1)**

The commentary on this verse, written by Shaky Chogden, reads: "That which, as long as it is not known and not seen, results in the chariot of the kleshas' dragging sentient beings through the three realms of existence is the dharmadhatu. It definitely dwells or abides in

***Editor's note:** This term, which literally means "space of phenomena," has something like eight essential meanings and so is difficult to translate. Most translators wisely elect to use the original Sanskrit.

all sentient beings. When we explain it, if you say that it is a mere nonaffirming negation, meaning that it is mere emptiness, a vacuum, mere nothingness, emptiness alone, then it would be meaningless to say that sentient beings go around in samsara and it would be meaningless to say that the dharmadhatu dwells in all sentient beings. There are two reasons why this is the case. First, if the true nature of sentient beings were mere emptiness, they could never transmigrate through cyclic existence; and secondly, if the dharmadhatu were mere emptiness, then it would also exist in entities which are not sentient beings."

In short, this is a prostration to the true nature of the mind, the dharmadhatu, the mind itself, where there is nothing to prostrate to and there is no one prostrating.

The second verse begins the section in which the dharmadhatu is described:

**When that which forms the cause for all samsara
Is purified along the stages of the path,
This purity itself is nirvana;
Precisely this, the dharmakaya, too. (2)**

There are three causes of samsara. The first is karma, defiled action;** the second are the kleshas, the mental afflictions; the third is conceptual mental activity, conceptuality. The basis or the ground in which these three are purified is the dharmadhatu, which is primordial awareness, inherent awareness, originally present wisdom. The path of practicing the dharma is what purifies these three causes. It clears away all of the adventitious,*** fleeting stains that obscure the true nature of the mind but are not part of its true nature. When these adventitious stains are cleared away, what

****Editor's note:** Any action, bad or good, taken in a dualistic frame of mind. A "bad" action performed by a self in reference to an other leads to the lower realms of samsara; a "good" action performed by a self in reference to an other leads to the higher realms of samsara. Ultimately only "undefiled" actions, actions performed with three-fold purity—where there is no conceptual fixation on the notions of self, other, and the actions joining them—lead to liberation and buddhahood.

*****Editor's note:** Adventitious: something not of the inherent nature of something else.

A Song of Meaningful Connections

At your feet oh Marpa from Lhodrak I bow down.
Grant your blessing that this beggar will stay in natural retreats.

That you stalwart benefactors are so fondly gathered here
Makes the right connection for fulfilling the two concerns.
When this body hard to get that so easily decays
Gets the nourishment it needs, it will flourish and be full of health.

When the pollen from the flowers growing in the solid ground
And the honeydew of raindrops falling from the deep blue sky
Come together, this connection is of benefit to beings.
But what gives this link its meaning is when dharma is included, too.

When a body that's illusion by its parents nursed to life
And the guiding instructions from a lama who's reliable
Come together, this connection brings the practice of dharma to life.
But what gives this link its meaning is when persevering heart bone beats.

When a cave in the rock in a valley with no human being
And someone really practicing without hypocrisy
Come together, this connection can fulfill your every need.
But what gives this link its meaning is what's known as the emptiness.

When a Milarepa's practice of endurance in meditation
And those from the three realms who have the quality of faith
Come together, this connection brings about the good of beings.
But what gives this link its meaning is compassion in a noble heart.

When a skillful meditator meditating in the wilderness
And a skillful benefactor providing the wherewithal
Come together, this connection leads to both gaining buddhahood.
But what gives this link its meaning is to dedicate the merit.

When an excellent lama endowed with compassionate heart
And an excellent student with endurance in meditation
Come together, this connection makes the teaching accessible.
But what gives this link its meaning is the samaya it brings about.

When the gift of abhisheka with its blessing that works so fast
And the fervent trusting prayer where you're praying it will come to you
Come together, this connection gets your prayer well-answered soon.
But to give this link its meaning a little bit of luck might help.

Oh master Vajradhara, the essence of Akshobhya,
You know my joys and sorrows—and what this beggar's going through.

remains is pure primordial awareness. This is given the name nirvana. It is also given the name dharmakaya. This also tells us what the dharmadhatu is.

In short, what is the dharmadhatu? It is the very essence of our present mind, the very essence of this present moment of mind, which essence is radiant clarity.* It is completely free of any flaw; it is naturally perfect just as it is. Therefore, the true nature of mind is the ultimate thing to realize; it is the ultimate object of meditation. When purified of stains, it is nirvana.

In the extensive explanation of the dharmadhatu [the remaining verses of *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*], there are three main sections. The first describes the ground. It describes how, even during the time sentient beings are in samsara, the dharmadhatu is completely pure and naturally abides in a completely pure state of being. The second describes how, at the time of the path—which in this case refers to the time when a practitioner becomes a noble bodhisattva in the path of the mahayana**—what is called the dharmakaya, which possesses the two types of purity, naturally develops in stages. And finally, the third section describes how at the time of the fruition, when buddhahood has been attained, the three kayas*** and enlightened activity are spontaneously present.

In the first section, which describes the dharmadhatu at the time of the ground, when sentient beings are still in samsara, there are also three parts. The first part [verses 3-11] describes the dharmadhatu as being, by its very nature, radiant clarity. The second part explains

***Editor's note:** More frequently translated as clear light.

****Editor's note:** A practitioner becomes a bodhisattva *in training* when he or she first gives rise to *relative* bodhicitta, the aspiration that arises out of love and compassion for sentient beings to attain buddhahood in order to liberate all sentient beings from suffering; a practitioner becomes a *noble* bodhisattva when, through the sincere and diligent practice of the training of a bodhisattva, they develop *ultimate* bodhicitta, the two-fold recognition or vision of the emptiness of self and the emptiness of phenomena.

*****Editor's note:** dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya.

that because the nature of dharmadhatu is radiant clarity, it is possible to cleanse it of anything that might obscure it. And finally, the third part explains that in dependence upon the proper conditions, any sentient being's potential for enlightenment can awaken, and explains how, through this awakening of their potential, all of the stains can be cleared away.

The first part of this description of the dharmadhatu at the time of the ground teaches that even though the dharmadhatu or the true nature of mind of any sentient being is radiant clarity or primordial awareness, inherently existent wisdom, we do not necessarily see it; we do not necessarily recognize that wisdom. And then it refutes the objection that this wisdom does not exist at the time of the ground when sentient beings are confused in samsara.

That primordial awareness exists even though we might not necessarily see it, is taught by means of four analogies. The first analogy is that of butter and milk. Just as butter pervades milk, so primordial awareness pervades all sentient beings. The second analogy is a butter lamp burning inside a clay vase. Just as a butter lamp burns inside a clay vase, so primordial awareness, which is of the nature of radiant clarity, is always there in sentient beings, even though they might not be able to see it through the vase of the cognitive and afflictive obscurations. The third analogy is a sapphire encrusted in an ordinary stone. By this example it is taught that reaching the first bodhisattva bhumi clears away the darkness of ignorance that prevents one from seeing this radiant clarity, even though it is always there. And finally, by the example of utterly pure gold, it is taught that at all times this radiant clarity perfectly exists.

The analogy of the milk and butter teaches that the dharmadhatu exists even though we cannot see it, and that, when the stains are cleared away, it becomes evident:

**As butter, though inherent in the milk,
Is mixed with it and hence does not appear,
Just so the dharmadhatu is not seen
As long as it is mixed together with afflictions. (3)**

Butter always exists as the very nature of milk. But as long as the milk is mixed with the butter, you do not see the butter, even though it is, of course, there. Similarly, as long as the dharmadhatu is mixed with the mental afflictions in ordinary sentient beings, even though it is there, we cannot see it.

The true nature of mind—the dharmadhatu, radiant clarity—cannot be seen by ordinary beings, and there is a good reason for this. We are blocked by temporary stains from seeing it, just as milk prevents our seeing the butter that is present in it. Just as the milk obscures our vision of the butter, our afflictions and our concepts prevent our seeing the true being, the very nature of our mind, which is nonetheless present.

If the stains are cleared away, then we can see the dharmadhatu:

**And just as the inherent butter essence
When the milk is purified is no more disguised,
When afflictions have been completely purified,
The dharmadhatu will be without any stain at all. (4)**

Purifying or refining milk, which leaves only the butter inherent in it, exemplifies the purification of our own confusion, which, when complete, leaves only the mind's true nature, which is the dharmadhatu.

It is difficult for us to understand that inherent awareness or primordial wisdom can pervade and be equally present in all sentient beings. So examples are used. If we doubt that the nature of our own mind is the primordial awareness of the dharmadhatu, then we should think of this example of butter being present in milk, and that will help clear away our doubts.

The second example is of a butter lamp burning inside a clay vase, through which it is taught that the radiant clarity of the true nature of mind is always burning brightly, though we might not be able to see it. Nevertheless, it is always radiant clarity:

**As a butter lamp that burns inside a vase
Would not even be slightly visible,
As long as left inside afflictions' vase,**

The dharmadhatu is not visible. (5)

A butter lamp burning inside a clay vase might not be seen. But not seeing it does not mean that it is not there; it is there. So too the primordial awareness of sentient beings is burning brightly, though it is obscured by the vase of mental afflictions that encases it, and so it is not visible.

Even though the mind's true nature is radiant clarity, we cannot see it because it is obscured by mental and emotional afflictions. But the next two verses read:

**If one perforates the surface of the vase,
Whatever holes are made in whichever directions,
Through those and in precisely those directions
Light will shine, as is its nature to. (6)**

**At the moment when the vajra-like samadhi
Is able to obliterate the vase,
At that very moment the light burning inside
Will shine throughout the reaches of all space. (7)**

It is taught here by analogy that the vajra-like samadhi, which occurs on the tenth level of bodhisattva realization and ushers in buddhahood, obliterates the vase of adventitious and fleeting emotional and mental obscurations, allowing the radiant clarity of primordial awareness to blaze unimpededly throughout the infinite

***Editor's note:** It is taught that the first bhumi or first level bodhisattva's realization of the true nature of mind and the true nature of reality during samadhi is the same as a buddha's, except in extent. If a buddha's realization is like seeing an unclouded and unobscured, brightly lit sky, a first level bodhisattva's realization is said to be like looking at the same sky, except through a hole in a sesame seed. The essence is the same, but there is a difference in the vastness of realization. Thus the realization of bodhisattvas on the various bhumis would be analogous to vases perforated in varying degrees, while a buddha's realization would be analogous to a vase totally destroyed by the vajra-like samadhi.

Vajra-like is sometimes translated as adamant, diamond-like, or like a thunderbolt. The vajra-like samadhi of a buddha is therefore said to be indestructible, able to destroy all negative states of mind; it begins in an instant like a thunderbolt at the end of the tenth bhumi and marks the beginning of buddhahood. The vajra was the five-pronged weapon held by the Hindu god Indra, which opened when hurled, destroyed its intended target, and closed as it automatically returned to the hand of its wielder.

expanse of space.*

When we meditate on selflessness, on emptiness, on whatever type of meditation we do, the entire point is to obliterate this vase of the mental afflictions. There are many different ways of smashing this vase so that our radiant clarity can shine.

The next verse answers an argument raised in debate—that this radiant clarity arises newly from meditation, and therefore must be created anew. This assertion is incorrect, as Nagarjuna explains:

**The dharmadhatu was never born,
Nor will it ever cease.
At all times it is free of all afflictions;
At the beginning, middle, and end, free from stain. (8)**

Someone might ask, “Doesn’t this primordial awareness that arises at the stage of buddhahood come from meditating on the path, and therefore is it not absent at the time of the ground, when one is an ordinary sentient being?” The answer to this question is given in the following reasoning. The true nature of the mind is radiant clarity, which means that it is not produced by any cause or any set of harmonious conditions that brings it about. It is not created by causes or conditions. It is not something that newly arises in the absence of a previous continuum of it. It does not arise newly, for two reasons. First, it is not something that comes to a halt through the ceasing of some continuum.* And secondly, because at any time or at all times the true nature of mind has been completely free of the afflictions; the afflictions, in essence, have never arisen, they never really happen. And so, therefore, the true nature of mind is continually present.

The dharmadhatu is not an entity that somehow arises as a consequence of causes and conditions. It is not born of causes and conditions, nor is it created by causes and conditions. If the dharmadhatu were an entity, it would have to

***Editor’s note:** In order to understand this, or the necessity for asserting this, it is important to know that all prior Buddhist philosophical systems assert that mind is experienced by sentient beings as a succession or continuum of discreet moments of consciousness.

cease at some point. Anything that is born must also cease. It would have to come into existence and then go out of existence. It would have to become a nothingness. But the dharmadhatu is the basic nature of reality; it is not created by causes and conditions, so it never truly arises; and it never goes out of existence, either. So at the time of the ground (the beginning), at the time of the path (the middle), and at the time of the fruition (the end), it is always the same, in that it is always completely free of stain or obscuration. It does not arise freshly or new out of nothingness, it does not just come about or happen, because it is the dharmadhatu.

The third example—of the stone and the sapphire—also shows that the nature of the dharmadhatu is radiant clarity. But it is not until the first bodhisattva bhumi has been attained that the darkness that obscures it is cleared away. The verses read:

**As sapphire, the precious gem,
Shines with brilliant light all the time,
But when confined within a grosser stone,
We do not see its bright light shine, (9)**

**Just so, although obscured behind afflictions,
The dharmadhatu has no trace of flaw.
While samsara blocks its light, it does not illuminate;
Nirvana gained, its light will brilliantly shine. (10)**

Even though it is the basic nature of sapphire to be brilliant, when it is hidden inside a gross stone, we do not see that brilliance. In the same way, the nature of the mind is unimaginably pure. It could not be more pure. It is perfectly pure. But when our mental afflictions block it from our view, we do not see its radiant clarity. This is samsara; it is nothing more than that. Samsara is that condition in which one’s mental afflictions prevent one from seeing the radiant clarity of the true nature of mind. And nirvana ensues when these afflictions have been cleared away and what has been there all along, which is this radiant clarity of the true nature of mind, shines naturally and freely.

The fourth analogy—the example of utterly pure gold—again demonstrates that radiant

clarity exists at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the path. There are two sections to this, an assertion and a refutation of debate. In the first section it says, “If someone were to argue, ‘Well, at the time of nirvana, of course, there is radiant clarity; but at the time of the ground, when sentient beings are not buddhas, there is no radiant clarity,’ then the answer would be, ‘If it wasn’t there at the time of the cause, then how could it be there at the time of the result?’” The verse, which uses the example of refining gold from gold ore, reads:

**If the fundamental element is present,
Work will yield the sight of purest gold;
If the fundamental element were lacking,
The labor would produce no fruit but woe. (11)**

If gold is present in gold ore, then when you refine it to remove the stone, you will see only pure gold. If, however, you try to refine a rock without gold in it, then all your efforts will be meaningless.

The first part of the third section [verses 12-25 of *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*] refutes the three-pronged refutation of this point, that buddha nature is present in sentient beings. The first argument to be refuted is that, if the buddha nature or dharmadhatu were present in sentient beings, then sentient beings would be buddhas. The second argument is that, if the dharmadhatu were present in sentient beings, then they would have the buddha nature, they would have the buddha essence.* The third

***Editor’s note:** It is important here to understand that Nagarjuna makes a distinction between buddha essence or buddha nature on the one hand and buddha potential on the other. In Nagarjuna’s terminology, sentient beings have buddha potential—the potential to become buddhas—but not buddha nature, which here is synonymous with being a buddha or having buddha or buddhahood already present in sentient beings in an obscured way. In other texts like the *Gyu Lama, The Mahayana Uttara Tantra Shastara*, which is a treatise on buddha nature, buddha essence and buddha nature are not differentiated from buddha potential; they are just different names for the same thing. This is merely a difference in terminology, not in basic outlook.

****Editor’s note:** the transitory and adventitious obscurations of ignorant, dualistic, and klesha-ridden mind that obscure or hide its radiant clarity.

argument is that, by the antidote that clears away the fleeting stains,** the buddha potential itself could also be cleared away and made to vanish, which is saying that the detergent we use to get rid of the stains would also get rid of the cloth. All three of these assertions are refuted.

The first point tries to refute Nagarjuna’s assertions by saying that, since you say that there is no difference in the dharmadhatu between the times of the ground, the path, and the fruition, all sentient beings must be fully enlightened buddhas.

This assertion is answered with the following analogy:

**As kernels are not considered to be rice
As long as they are enveloped in their husks,
Just so the name of “buddha” is not given
To all of those whom afflictions still enfold. (12)**

Even though the dharmadhatu pervades all sentient beings, sentient beings are not given the name buddha because they are still enveloped by mental afflictions, just as a kernel is not given the name rice as long as it is still enveloped by its husk.

The next verse reads:

**And just as when loosened from the husk,
The rice itself is what appears,
Just so the dharmakaya itself,
When loosened from afflictions, freely shines. (13)**

When the husk drops away, what is left we call rice. And when one attains freedom from all of the mental afflictions, then what is left is the true nature of the mind alone, and that is given the name dharmakaya; it is also given the name buddha.

A very subtle point is being made here. Even though sentient beings are not buddhas, sentient beings still have the potential to become buddhas. The argument made here against this proposition is that, if it were the case that at all three stages along the path a sentient being’s nature were the same, then that sentient being would be a buddha, and would have the essence of a buddha at all three of these stages; or, if the

sentient being did not have the buddha essence, then the sentient being would have no potential to become a buddha. The example that Nagarjuna gives here is a banana tree:

**It is said, “Banana trees are void of pith.”
One uses this example in the world.
But the fruit of such a tree has pith indeed;
when eaten, it is sweet upon the tongue. (14)**

When you peel away the layers of a banana tree, there is nothing inside; nevertheless, the fruit of the banana tree is quite sweet. Similarly, at the time that one is an ordinary sentient being, there is no trace of a buddha nor anything resembling a buddha. Nevertheless, at the time of the fruition, the sweet fruit of buddhahood can be tasted. Even though the banana tree has no essence or core, because it has potential, it can grow a fruit that is very sweet to eat. Similarly, even though a sentient being does not have the essential nature of being a buddha—you cannot find any buddha in the sentient being—because the sentient being has the potential to become a buddha, then the fruit of buddhahood can come into being.

The banana tree itself does not resemble a sweet-tasting fruit, but it has the potential to produce a sweet-tasting fruit. Similarly, a sentient being does not have any essence that resembles a buddha, but a sentient being has the potential to produce buddhahood.

**Just so, samsara has no pith,
And if beings can remove affliction’s peel,
The fruit within is buddhahood itself,
The nectar for all corporal beings to taste. (15)**

So within samsara, which lacks any essence at all, which does not truly exist, is the fruit of buddhahood. If the peel of the afflictions is peeled away, then what remains can be enjoyed by everyone.

The commentary itself reads: “Even though ordinary sentient beings do not have the essence of buddha, they have the potential of primordial awareness. If they did not, how could buddhahood arise? A banana tree does not have the essence of being a sweet banana, but if it did

not have the potential to produce that banana, then from where could the banana come?”

The next verse reads:

**And just as from a given kind of seed
A fruit results resembling its cause,
Who with common sense would seek to prove
A fruit exists without its specific seed as cause? (16)**

A seed has the potential to produce a particular kind of fruit; if it did not, then how could that fruit possibly come into existence? Similarly, sentient beings always have the potential to attain buddhahood.

**The basic element which serves as seed
Is seen as the support of all great qualities.
Through gradual refinement, step by step,
The stage of buddhahood will be attained. (17)**

The potential to attain enlightenment—here referred to as the basic element—is like the seed which produces buddhahood, and is asserted to be the basis for all the qualities of enlightenment. And through refinement of this potential, step by step, the state of enlightenment can be reached.

So we will stop here for tonight. There is quite an extensive commentary on these two verses, and Rinpoche says it would be better to pick that up tomorrow.

Now we will sing two songs by the lord of yogis, Milarepa, called *The Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition* and *The Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*. These songs are perfectly in harmony with the view that is taught in this text, *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*. In the first one Milarepa sings of how the true nature of mind is original wisdom or primordial awareness. He sings, “The view is original wisdom, which is empty.” Original wisdom and primordial awareness in Tibetan are called *yeshe*, which is the same as the dharmadhatu. The same term is used in *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* by Nagarjuna.

In the second song, *The Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*, Milarepa

teaches that the true nature of mind is radiant clarity, which is the same view expressed in Nagarjuna's *Praise of the Dharmadhātu*. It is important for us to see what Milarepa is talking about when he is singing about the true nature of mind as being either original wisdom or radiant clarity, and important to understand how this type of view is in harmony with Nagarjuna's view.

First we will sing the *Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition*.

[Students sing both songs. See below and page 26.]

Rest with a child's independence. Rest like an ocean free of waves. Rest with a butter lamp's clarity. Rest like a corpse, without arrogance. Rest like a mountain, so still.

[Students meditate with Rinpoche.]

Now we will sing Rinpoche's song called *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*. It is important for us to sing this song because the twentieth century is a century that has seen tremendous scientific advancement, tremendous achievement in terms of the increase in material prosperity and advance in technology, and it is very important for us to make aspiration prayers that all of these developments be boons to world peace and happiness and not adversaries to it. This will only come about if we aspire that it come about. And so it is important for us to sing this song.

[Students sing *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*. See page 27.]

Sarwa Mangalam. 

Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition

The view is original wisdom which is empty;
Meditation, clear light free of fixation;
Conduct, continual flow without attachment;
Fruition is nakedness stripped of every stain.

This view, the original wisdom which is empty,
Risks getting lost in just being talk and no more.
If certainty which is in touch with what's meant does not follow,
The words will not manage to free you of clinging to self.
And that's why definitive certainty means so much.

The meditation, clear light free of fixation,
Risks getting lost in just being settling.
If original wisdom does not emerge from within you,
You might settle steadily but this will not set you free.
But wisdom does not come of dullness and agitation.
And that's why nonwandering mindfulness means so much.

This conduct, continual flow without attachment,
Risks getting lost in only being a pretense.
If the view and meditation are not included,
The eight worldly dharmas may mix with your yogic pursuits.
And that's why the freedom from clinging and veils means so much.

Fruition as nakedness stripped of every defect
Risks getting clothed in the garments of attributes.
If delusion is not overcome from its source on the inside,
Your practice may aim very far, but fall very short
And that's why correcting delusion means so much.

The Profound Definitive Meaning

Sung on the Snowy Range

For the mind that masters view the emptiness dawns.
In the content seen not even an atom exists.
A seer and seen refined until they're gone:
This way of realizing view, it works quite well.

When meditation is clear light river flow,
There is no need to confine it to sessions and breaks.
Meditator and object refined until they're gone:
This heart bone of meditation, it beats quite well.

When you're sure that conduct's work is luminous light,
And you're sure that interdependence is emptiness,
A doer and deed refined until they're gone:
This way of working with conduct, it works quite well.

When biased thinking has vanished into space,
No phony facades, eight dharmas, nor hopes and fears,
A keeper and kept refined until they're gone:
This way of keeping samaya, it works quite well.

When you've finally discovered your mind is dharmakaya,
And you're really doing yourself and others good,
A winner and won refined until they're gone:
This way of winning results, it works quite well.

Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe

Namo Guru Hasa Vajra Ye!

You see that everything in samsara and nirvana
Is merely dependently arisen.
You see the dharmata, the true being,
That is the essence of all dependent arising.
The power of your great insight
Fills the universe with auspicious light.
Oh mighty Shepa Dorje,
Please rise up now from within my heart.

Ground's basic nature transcends conceptuality,
And like watermoons, appearances arise dependently.
May everyone realize that this is true
And dispel the darkness cast by doubt and wrong view.
And may their realization's auspiciousness
Light up the whole universe!

The vision of your wisdom is amazing.
You see just how things are, you see everything.
As parents love their children, so you love all beings.
You bring us benefit and happiness.
Your power makes disciples out of your enemies.
May your auspiciousness light up the universe!

For samsara's cause, clinging to "I" and "me,"
The dharma realizing selflessness is the greatest remedy.
May all beings use it to pacify
Their confused belief that there is an "I."
And by the power of this great happening
May auspiciousness light up the universe!

The ways of ordinary beings, you have left behind—
Noble ones who realize reality, the true nature of mind.
May you lead all ordinary beings,
Who have not yet entered, to the path of peace.
And by this may auspiciousness
Light up the whole universe!

May the yidams who bestow the siddhis
And the protectors who clear obstacles away
Eliminate all harmful conditions—
Everything adverse to the path.
And by this may auspiciousness
Light up the whole universe!

May the noble path of nonviolence
Flourish in all the worlds there are.
When beings meet and interact,
May the connections they make be filled with love.
And by this may auspiciousness
Light up the whole universe!

At the twilight of this century,
That has been one of such prosperity,
May struggle over wealth and gain
Disappear and not be seen again.
Free from strife and violence,
May all enjoy great abundance.
And by this may auspiciousness
Light up the whole universe!

This has been a century
When science has advanced incredibly.
Amazing and wondrous, these new machines
That have brought the gods' enjoyments to human beings.
May they be used with skill supreme
To end violence and cause peace to reign.
And by this may auspiciousness
Light up the whole universe!

May the sciences that explore outside
Be joined with the inner science of the mind
To excellently put an end
To mistaken views and confusion.
And by this may auspiciousness
Light up the whole universe!

The source of all this auspiciousness
Is the true nature of mind, so luminous!
So may realization of mind, just as it is
Set the universe ablaze with auspicious excellence!

Through all of this auspiciousness,
Wherever its light may be seen,
With the love and the compassion
That make bodhicitta mind supreme,
May this thought arise in everyone:
"Other beings' happiness is as important as my own."
And may excellent virtue and auspiciousness
Always increase, never diminish!

On December 29, 1997, in the Garden of Translation near the Great Stupa of Boudhanath, Nepal, this was spoken extemporaneously by the one only called "Khenpo," Tsultrim Gyamtso. Translated by Ari Goldfield.

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu

Buddhahood Is the Result of Samsara, But Not Its Essence

Continuing the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's teaching on Nagarjuna's In Praise of the Dharmadhatu, the following edited transcript is from the morning of September 19. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.

Sarwa Mangalam. Rinpoche wishes everyone the heartiest *tashi deleg* this morning, and he makes the aspiration that our ultimate bodhicitta, which cuts through the root of samsaric existence, and our relative bodhicitta, which slams the door to attachment to one-sided selfish nirvanic peace, will both increase and increase and result in our performing incredible benefit for all the limitless numbers of sentient beings.

It would be good to sing Milarepa's *Song of Meaningful Connections*.

[Students sing. See song on page 19.]

Since Milarepa's song called *Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition* is perfectly in harmony with the view taught by Nagarjuna in the text *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, it would be wonderful if we sang it now.

[Students sing. See song on page 25.]

In *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, Nagarjuna explains that the dharmadhatu is primordial awareness. Similarly, Milarepa explains that the ultimate nature of reality is primordial awareness. Therefore it is very important for us to see how these two explanations are in harmony with each other. If we ask what is original wisdom or primordial awareness, it is the inseparability, the undifferentiability of the expanse and awareness.

Now we need to sing Milarepa's *Song of the*



Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range. In *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, Nagarjuna teaches that the buddha potential, the buddha element, is radiant clarity. And in his *Song of the Profound Definitive Meaning*, Milarepa sings of this same radiant clarity, that is free of any clinging, free of any conceptual reference point, free of any focus.

[Students sing. See page 26.]

In this house, the singing sounds really good. We continue with the commentary that

follows the seventeenth verse, which reads:

**The basic element which serves as seed
Is seen as the support of all great qualities.
Through gradual refinement, step by step,
The stage of buddhahood will be attained. (17)**

This verse continues to point out that, although sentient beings* do not have the essence of buddha—you could not describe them as being enlightened—they do have the potential to become enlightened, which potential, when refined and cultivated, results in their enlightenment. When the sweet fruit is referred to in the previous example, we should not think that this sweet fruit is the *essence* of the banana tree. It is the *result* of the banana tree or it is what the banana tree can produce, but it is not the same thing as the banana tree. If it were the same as the banana tree, then it would be co-emergent with it. In other words, whenever there was a banana tree, there would be the fruit; as long as there was the fruit, there would be a banana tree. These two things could not exist apart from each other. But obviously that is not the case. Buddhahood is the result of samsara, it is the fruition of samsara, but it is not its essence; it is not the same thing as samsara. The reason that buddhahood is not taught as being the essence of samsara is that samsara has no essence; it has no pith, it has no substance. And so therefore buddhahood is not taught to be the essence of that which has no essence.

Then a question is raised, “It is true that it is taught that the banana tree has no essence—if you peel off the palms and the outer layers of the trunk, you do not find any core inside; and it is also taught that even though the banana tree has no essential core, it still has the potential to produce a result. So by that is it not taught, therefore, that the banana tree has some essence to it, by virtue of the fact that it can produce a fruit?”

***Editor’s note:** So long as sentient beings misperceive reality they are known as sentient beings; as soon as they no longer misperceive reality they are known as buddhas. Although in one sense buddhas are still sentient beings, for the sake of simplicity, sentient beings in this text always refers to ordinary, confused sentient beings.

And similarly, although it is taught that samsara has no essence, because samsara has the potential to produce enlightenment, then is it not taught that this potential is the essence of samsara, that this potential to produce buddhahood is the essence of samsara? Is that not true?” And the answer is yes, that is the case. But, when it is taught that sentient beings have the buddha nature or the buddha essence, what that means is that they have the potential to reach enlightenment. It is not the same as saying that the nature or the essence of sentient beings is the state of buddhahood itself. That is a distinction that we need to make. Because if it were the case that sentient beings had the very nature of a buddha, of buddhahood or awakening itself, then what would be the point of distinguishing the two? We would not be able to say there was any difference.

Then the commentary refutes the argument that the remedy that clears away the adventitious stains would also clear away the buddha potential. The argument states that if you say that the primordial awareness that is inherent at the time of the ground is itself not the same as the completely awakened state of buddhahood, but rather that buddhahood comes from this potential, then would it not be that the antidote which clears away all the stains would also clear away the potential? If it is not the same as enlightenment, and what is left over at the end is enlightenment, then the potential must disappear.

So how is this proposition answered? In two parts. The first part shows why it is necessary to clear away the stains that obscure this potential from manifesting completely, and the second part teaches why it is not necessary to clear away the potential itself. Then, in addition, there is an ancillary section that shows that this primordial awareness is not the same as a self, that it is not the same as the “I” to which we refer in our general way of thinking.

Within this first part there is a section that teaches what these obscuring stains actually are, and a section that teaches how these stains are cleared away:

Although the sun and moon are unstained,
Five veils exist which manage to obscure them.
These consist of clouds and fog and smoke,
The face of Rahu* and dust as well. (18)

And so it is, as well, for mind's clear light.
Five obscurations manage to obscure it:
Desire, laziness, and ill intent,
And agitation too, as well as doubt. (19)

The sun and the moon have no stain at all from their own side. The only reason why we sometimes cannot see the sun's and the moon's light is that things get in the way. But that does not mean that the sun and the moon have any defect or any lack of purity from their own side. It is the same with the mind's true nature, which is radiant clarity. The mind's true nature is never touched or flawed by anything, but when we have strong desire, ill intent (a mind that seeks to harm others), laziness, agitation, or doubt, then these five different types of stains or obscurations prevent our seeing the mind's true nature.

Just as something passing between our eyes and the sun or the moon prevents us from seeing them, and not because there is any flaw in the sun or the moon themselves, just so it is something adventitious that passes between our own intelligence or our own prajna and the mind's true nature that prevents our seeing the mind's true nature, not because there is any inherent flaw or imperfection in the naturally perfect radiant clarity of the mind.

It is difficult for us to understand how it could be possible that our minds are completely perfect while at the same time we are experiencing the presence of different mental afflictions. Therefore it is taught how something could be completely pure in its own nature and yet be hidden from view. The example of the sun and the moon makes it easier for us to understand that the mind can be perfect even while our view of it is blocked by transitory fleeting stains.

The next two verses teach how the stains are cleared away, but the buddha potential is not:

***Editor's note:** Rahu was thought to be a deity who ate the sun or moon during an eclipse.

And just as fire can clean a soiled cloth
Miscolored with various marks and stains,
And just as when submerged within the fire
The marks are burnt away but not the cloth. (20)

In just this way the mind, which is radiant clarity,
Is soiled by desire and the other stains,
But the fire of primordial awareness burns
up these afflictions,
Without, however, burning away the radiant
clarity. (21)

There are certain types of clothes of the deities which are impervious to being burned by fire. They are cleaned by putting them into fire, and the fire burns away the stains. This is the same principle as dry-cleaning; the fire and the heat can make the clothes clean without destroying the cloth itself. Similarly the mind can be stained by desire and other types of afflictions, but when primordial awareness purifies these afflictions, it does not destroy the mind's basic nature, which is radiant clarity. In fact, it allows the mind's nature to shine more brightly than ever before.

The antidote for the afflictions could not possibly clear away the mind's true nature, which is the potential for enlightenment. The antidote purifies the potential but does not destroy it.

**In the sutras of the Teacher,
In whatever ways the Victor described emptiness,
All of these ways can rectify afflictions;
None can diminish the potential. (22)**

The "sutras of the Teacher," which teach about emptiness, refers to the *Prajnaparamita* sutras of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, sometimes called the sutras of the great mother of the transcendent perfection of wisdom. There is an extensive version, a middle-length version, and a shortest version; and in these teachings the Buddha taught in a variety of ways that phenomena are empty, and all of these different ways of teaching about emptiness are antidotes to the mental afflictions, but none of them can destroy or diminish the potential for enlightenment. So, even though the afflictions are taught to be empty and things are taught to be empty, the buddha poten-

tial is never taught not to exist.

The next verse reads:

**Just as water deep inside the earth
Lies untouched and perfectly clean,
Just so can primordial awareness rest within affliction
And remain completely free of any flaw. (23)**

Water can lie in the middle of the dirty earth, but be completely clean. Like that, in the midst of all the mental afflictions, primordial awareness is always pure. It is never anything other than pure. Therefore there is no need to purify it or get rid of it; it is not something to be discarded, because its nature is pure before the beginning of the path, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end.

It is difficult for us to understand how it is that, within all of these mental afflictions, there can be a true nature of mind that is completely pure and completely perfect. It is difficult for us to separate these things out, difficult to understand that these afflictions are temporary and one thing and that the mind's true nature is completely pure and something else. That is why this example is taught. If we did not have these types of examples, it would be very difficult for us to understand.

The ancillary section teaches that the dharmadhatu is not the same as the self, not the same as the "I." Here it is taught that the dharmadhatu is primordial awareness, which is not to be given up. There is no need to clear it away. That primordial awareness is not the self is stated in the next verse:

**The dharmadhatu is not the self.
It is neither man nor woman either;
And being beyond everything perceivable,
Just how could it be thought of as oneself? (24)**

This verse is teaching in the form of logical reasoning. The proposition offered is that one cannot properly conceive of the dharmadhatu as being the same as a self. If it were the self, then it would have to be either male or female, because that is what sentient beings are divided into, generally speaking, and the dharmadhatu is neither male nor female. That is the first reason. And the second reason is that it transcends or is liberated from *all* conceptual reference points.

Conceptual mind cannot identify it as being this or that, one thing or another. So because it transcends *all* conceptual references, then just how could one possibly say that it is the self?

That dharmadhatu is beyond all types of conceptual reference has two meanings. First, conceptual mind can never grasp what dharmadhatu or primordial awareness is, because it is not an object that conceptual mind can focus on or grasp. Secondly, from the perspective of primordial awareness itself, *it* has no object of focus. It is nonconceptual awareness, without any specific reference point of itself. So it is neither something that can be focused on by conceptual mind, nor is it something that focuses on something else, or has any object of focus.

The next verse reads:

**Within phenomena, all free of passion,
Male and female cannot be seen.
For the sake of taming those that desire blinds,
Terms like male and female are taught. (25)**

In the true nature of phenomena, there is neither man nor woman. The true nature of phenomena transcends all conceptuality, transcends all conceptual reference points. Male and female are merely concepts that do not truly exist. And therefore phenomena are not actually truly existent objects of desire or objects of passion because their basic nature transcends conceptuality; in this sense their basic nature is simplicity. And therefore phenomena cannot be identified as either being men or women or male or female.*

Then the question is asked, why did the Bud-

***Editor's note:** Here the distinction between absolute or ultimate truth on the one hand and relative or provisional truth on the other must be born in mind. It is the realization of the ultimate truth, the absolute truth, or the true nature of things that liberates a buddha from all the passions and other kleshas that normally rule the relationship between men and women, indeed between all sentient beings; however, one should not imagine that a buddha would be confused as to which restroom to use. A buddha realizes both how things are and how they appear to be. One should also not imagine that the realization that liberates a buddha from the kleshas also has the regrettable downside of liberating him or her from pleasure. It only liberates from the concept of pleasure and pain, and thus from the "big deal" quality of pleasure and pain.

dha teach in terms of men and women and describe men and women? He did so in order to tame those who are blinded by their desire, blinded by passion, and therefore cannot see the true nature of phenomena for what it really is. Therefore the Buddha explained how men become blinded by desire for women and how women become blinded by desire for men. And the Buddha taught how through the practice of prajnaparamita, meditation upon emptiness, and through the practice of vajrayana, one can attain liberation from this type of desire. Thus the Buddha taught about men and women, not because men and women truly exist as such. The Buddha taught about men and women in order to tame sentient beings.

In the verse the words used are “man” and “woman.” These terms actually refer to male and female. From the smallest bug up to the highest deity, male and female have desire for each other. Males have desire for females; females have desire for males. This desire is not something we need to create or to try to bring about; it is natural, it just happens.

Desire and passion between male and female are dealt with in different ways at different stages of the Buddhist path. According to the tradition of the shravakayana,* desire is something that one just wants to get rid of, one wants to abandon. The practitioner does so by meditating on whatever is considered to be desirable as being filthy, disgust-

ing, and an object of revulsion. In that way one frees oneself from feelings of desire.

In the mahayana it is taught that the body of a woman or a man is just appearance and emptiness; it is like the reflection of the moon in water or like a rainbow. It appears but does not really exist; it is just a mere appearance; there is nothing more to it than that. And the mind of another being, whether man or woman, and one's own mind are clarity and emptiness. Then the other person, the object of desire, becomes an object of meditation. One just meditates; there is no need to try to get rid of anything—the other person, passion, desire, whatever—because everything is of the nature of emptiness. And so one uses the other person as a focus of meditation on emptiness.

And then in the vajrayana the practice is to meditate on the essence of the desire that arises between men and women. There are different ways of meditating on the essence of this desire in the four classes of tantra.** By meditating on the essence of the desire and passion that arises between women and men, one comes to realize that this essence is bliss-emptiness and radiant clarity, and through this practice the passion is purified.

The commentary on these two verses describing how the dharmadhatu is not the self first presents an opponent's proposition. If the dharmadhatu is present at the time of the ground,

***Editor's note:** The shravakayana, or the path of the hearers, in the nine-yana system, is the first of two yantras that are the equivalent of the hinayana in the three-yana system of hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana. The hinayana practitioner is principally motivated to attain personal liberation from suffering; the mahayana practitioner is additionally motivated to attain buddhahood in order to liberate all sentient beings from suffering; the vajrayana practitioner is motivated to do so in a hurry. These three yantras were all taught by the Buddha Shakyamuni in India. After his lifetime, the teachings of the hinayana, contained in the first turning of the wheel of dharma, spread throughout India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, and are sometimes referred to as Southern Buddhism. The Theravadan school of Buddhism is one such tradition. The teachings of the mahayana spread from India to China, Japan, Korea, North Vietnam, Tibet and Mongolia. The Buddhism in these areas is sometimes called Northern Buddhism. Zen and Pure Land Buddhism, and other forms of sutra Buddhism are mahayana traditions. The teachings of the vajrayana spread principally from India to Tibet and the other Himalayan

countries of Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim, Ladakh, and Mongolia, and to some extent to China and Japan. Now all three yantras have spread to the West, and mahayana and vajrayana Buddhism have spread to countries in Southeast Asia and Malaysia wherever Chinese people have moved.

The hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana are also regarded as stages of development in any given individual's journey to buddhahood. The practitioners of the latter two yantras always regard the teachings and the ethical and meditational disciplines of the prior yana or yantras to be the foundation for the yana they are practicing. In Himalayan countries, all three yantras were practiced. Thus, in his personal lifestyle, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a hinayana monk; his political and social manifestation in the world is very much in the gentle style of a mahayana bodhisattva; and in his personal spiritual practice and in his manifestation to his students he is very much a tantric master of the vajrayana.

****Editor's note:** action tantra, conduct tantra, yoga tantra, and anuttara yoga tantra or the highest class of tantra.

at the time of the path, and at the time of the result, and if it never changes in any of these three stages, then is that not the same thing as saying that there is somebody who is liberated, that there is a self which is liberated, that there is some unchanging self which is there at the time of the ground, which then practices at the time of the path, and which then is liberated at the time of the fruition? Is that not the same thing as asserting that there is a self?

The answer to this argument is that the primordial awareness that exists at the time of the ground is not the self, because it is the dharmadhatu. Then you might ask, why, just because it is the dharmadhatu, does that mean that it is not the self? And Nagarjuna answers that the dharmadhatu is not the self because all of these conceptual reference points like “self” and whatever else conceptual mind conjures up are completely imaginary, meaning that they are mere imputations [of confused minds functioning dualistically and conceptually]. They are mere conceptual fabrications, and do not truly exist. In the dharmadhatu there is no duality between a perceived object and a perceiving subject; therefore, there is no attachment to the idea of a self, because there is no duality of perception in the first place.

Now we move on to the part that describes the remedy for the stains or defilements. We have looked at what the stains are. We have looked a little bit at what these stains obscure. Now we go on to the section that describes the remedy. And this will be followed by a part that describes the result that arises from using the remedy.

In the description of the remedy there is a brief explanation and an extensive explanation. The brief explanation contains an explanation of the remedy that clears away the mental-emotional afflictions—which is the prajna, the intelligence, the wisdom that realizes the *selflessness of the individual*—and a description of the remedy that clears away the cognitive obscurations, the obscurations to omniscience, which is the prajna that realizes *the selflessness or emptiness of phe-*

nomena. Finally, there is a description of the remedy for both of these, which again is the prajna that realizes the *selflessness of all phenomena*.

The selflessness of the individual and the selflessness of phenomena are both taught in the next verse. The first two lines teach the selflessness of the individual, the second two, the selflessness of phenomena:

**“Impermanent” and “suffering” and “empty”:
Three designations purifying mind;
But what refines the mind unto its utmost
Is the teaching that nothing has any self-nature.
(26)**

These first three terms are the first three seals of the Buddhist doctrine. The first is that all composite phenomena are impermanent. The second is that all defiled phenomena are suffering, and the third is that all phenomena are without self, meaning the self of an individual.* So these three cleanse the mind of its belief in the self of an individual. And then the greatest of all things that purify the mind or refine the mind is the understanding that nothing has any self-nature, the understanding of the emptiness of phenomena.

The prajna that realizes the first three—impermanence, suffering, and emptiness—purifies the stains of the mental afflictions because it destroys the root of samsara, which is clinging to the self of the individual. The root of samsaric existence is belief in an “I,” and the prajna realizing the selflessness of that “I” clears away all mental afflictions. Once one realizes that there is no “I,” mental and emotional afflictions dissolve.

These three—impermanence, suffering, and emptiness—can also be said to be the four aspects of the First Noble Truth, the Truth of

***Editor’s note:** The first means that all phenomena that are made up of parts are impermanent; the second, that any phenomena that are in any way tainted by cognitive obscurations or mental/emotional afflictions are of the nature of suffering; and the third means that no phenomenon has an existence or identity independent of the causes and conditions that give rise to it. The fourth seal of the Buddhist doctrine is that nirvana is peace.

Suffering. Each of the Four Noble Truths has four parts. These four parts are impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and emptiness. And here selflessness is subsumed under emptiness, so it is not mentioned separately.

With respect to the second two lines of the verse, the commentary reads, “What refines mind to its utmost is the remedy for the cognitive obscurations, which is the prajna that realizes that phenomena have no self-nature. This prajna clears away the root of the cognitive obscurations, which is clinging to the belief that phenomena are real.” If we restate this slightly in the form of a reasoning, we would say, the prajna realizing the emptiness of phenomena clears away the cognitive obscurations because it cuts through the root of the cognitive obscurations; it destroys the root of the cognitive obscurations, which is the belief that phenomena have some type of true existence.

Last year, when we studied the view of the middle turning of the wheel of dharma from texts like Nagarjuna’s *The Sixty Stanzas on Reasoning* and *The Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, Nagarjuna wrote from the perspective of negation, from the perspective of saying that things do not exist and that they do not have any essence. This year, in explaining the teachings from the third turning of the wheel of dharma, Nagarjuna’s perspective is different. It is from the perspective of affirmation, of saying what is there, what does exist.



Rest with a child’s independence. Rest like an ocean free of waves. Rest with a butter lamp’s clarity. Rest like a corpse, without arrogance. Rest like a mountain, so still.

[Students meditate with Rinpoche.]

This way of meditating is to look at the mind nakedly—this is the view—and then to rest in its naturally exquisite clarity and radiance. It is the meditation according to the view that the mind’s nature is radiant clarity.

These thoughts that the mind’s nature is exquisite clarity or exquisite radiance are themselves only thoughts. They are thoughts about the experience in the meditation. But when they arise, if one rests relaxed within their essence, then these thoughts of exquisite clarity and exquisite radiance dissolve by themselves like waves dissolving back into the ocean.

In his song *The Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*, Milarepa sings, “When meditation is clear light river flow, there is no need to confine it to sessions and breaks. Meditator and object refined until they’re gone; this heart bone of meditation, it beats quite well.” Meditation is radiant clarity, clear light, and within this radiant clarity there is no object of perception or meditation, and there is no perceiver meditating. It is radiant clarity that is without reference.

Now let’s sing *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*.

[Students sing. See page 27.] 

‘Rest with a child’s independence.
Rest like an ocean free of waves.
Rest with a butter lamp’s clarity.
Rest like a corpse, without arrogance.
Rest like a mountain, so still!’

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu

Selflessness Is the Remedy For the Afflictions and Cognitive Obscurations

Continuing the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's teaching on Nagarjuna's In Praise of the Dharmadhatu, the following edited transcript is from the afternoon of September 19. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.



Sarwa Mangalam. Let us sing the *Song of Meaningful Connections*. [Students sing. See page 19.]

Before listening to the teachings please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, which means to aspire to attain the state of complete and perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, who are limitless in number as space is vast in extent. In order to fulfill this aspiration, we must listen to, reflect on, and meditate on the teachings of the protector Nagarjuna in his text *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* with great enthusiasm in our hearts.

We are on the third part of the brief explanation of the remedy, which describes the wisdom realizing the selflessness of phenomena, that is the remedy for both the afflictions and the cognitive obscurations. It explains that all phenomena are empty of essence, or selfless. In this third part there are two sections. One is the reason why it is necessary to understand that

phenomena are empty of existence, and the other is the reason why it is possible to understand that. The reason why it is necessary to clear away the notion that phenomena are true, itself, has two parts: an explanation of why it is necessary to clear away the kleshas, and an explanation of why it is necessary to

clear away thoughts, which are the conceptuality that form the cognitive obscurations.

So the next verse reads:

**As a child in a pregnant woman's womb
Is there and yet is not yet visible,
Likewise when covered by afflictions,
The dharmadhatu is not visible. (27)**

Until we clear away the afflictions, we will not see the dharmadhatu. If we change the words slightly, then we get a verse that tells us why it is necessary to clear away conceptuality: "As a child in a pregnant woman's womb is there and yet is not yet visible, likewise when covered by thoughts the dharmadhatu is not visible."

There are two kinds of thoughts. The first kind of thought thinks [pointing to a vase], "That is a vase." That type of thought is the thought that thinks of a name. When you think that that vase has a fat belly, then that is the thought that grasps

the characteristics of an object. The definition of vase, in Buddhist logic, is that it is something that has a fat belly and whose base is hidden. The belly is fat, the toes are hidden. Both these forms of conceptuality need to be purified. It is necessary to clear away the mental/emotional afflictions and the conceptuality, because both of these block our vision of the dharmadhatu.*

How we can come to understand that it is possible to clear away these two kinds of obscuration has two parts. The first is the actual explanation of how it is possible, and the second is an explanation of the actual remedy that clears them away. And in the first part, there is an explanation of how it is possible to clear away the thoughts of samsara, and in the second, how it is possible to clear away thoughts of nirvana.

As for clearing away thoughts of samsara, the commentary states that the antidote for the two types of afflictions or the two types of obscurations—meaning the [emotional] afflictions and the cognitive obscurations—is to realize that the elements—the four or five elements, meaning earth, wind, fire, water, and space**—and everything that comes from these elements, have no self-nature. They have no nature of their own; they are empty of essence. The verse reads:

**Thoughts of ‘I’ and ‘mine,’
Thoughts of a name and of characteristics,
All come from thinking that
The four elements and what comes from the
elements are truly existent. (28)**

Thinking “I,” thinking “mine,” thinking of a name, and thinking of the characteristics of an object***— these four kinds of thought—come from thinking that the elements and that which arises from the elements truly exist. It is necessary to understand that these things do not truly exist.

***Editor’s note:** The mental/emotional afflictions would be in this case, for instance, the anxiety and aversion one might experience if one needed a vase with a skinny belly.

****Editor’s note:** Four or five, depending on whether or not one considers space an element.

*****Editor’s note:** i.e. the characteristics of what is named.

As for thoughts of nirvana, a question arises about things that do not come from the four elements, like great compassion and all of the powers and good qualities that arise from making aspiration prayers. How does one get rid of the thoughts that these truly exist? The way to do that is to understand that the causes of enlightenment, which are the buddhas’ making aspiration prayers and the buddhas’ great compassion developed while they are bodhisattvas, have no self-nature. By understanding that, clinging to them as real is abandoned.

We can make aspiration prayers to be of great benefit to sentient beings in the future, but we need to understand that these aspiration prayers have no inherent existence. The mind that makes these aspiration prayers has no inherent existence. Similarly, when we have great compassion for others, and when we generate compassion for others who are suffering, we must also understand that this compassionate mind does not inherently exist; it has no nature of its own:

**The buddhas do not perceive
Any characteristics of their aspiration prayers,
Because the buddhas are of the nature of
self-awareness
And have their own permanently pure being. (29)**

The aspiration prayers that buddhas make when they are bodhisattvas, and the form kayas [sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya] and the appearances of buddha fields that arise as a result of those aspiration prayers, do not appear to the buddhas themselves. Buddhas do not perceive any of the characteristics which would demonstrate or would convey the existence of these things; they do not grasp onto those characteristics. That is one reason [that the merely superficial appearance of a buddha and the appearance of buddha fields do not appear to buddhas themselves]. The second reason is that buddhas are continually in a state of primordial awareness, which is self-aware; it is called distinctly self-aware primordial awareness. Primordial awareness is nondual. So there is no [conceptual] awareness of the characteristics; there is no separating out of the characteristics

of different things.* A buddha or the awakened mind that rests in meditative equipoise in this way is endowed with the permanent dharmata, the unchanging true nature of reality. That awareness is buddha.

On the other hand, the merely superficial appearance of a buddha that we see [the nirmanakaya] only arises from causes and conditions. So there is a difference between these two. When in the verse it speaks of this permanent true being that is enlightenment, then it is talking about the actual genuine nature of enlightenment, the actual genuine kaya or body or dimension of enlightenment, which is the dharmakaya. And therefore it is by implication taught that what appears to us as the body of buddha, as the form or appearance of a buddha [the nirmanakaya of a buddha], is just a superficial appearance; it is just an appearance of something which has no self-nature, does not truly exist. It is a mere appearance.** And therefore it is not taught that within the continuum of sentient beings is the fully enlightened buddha, because, first of all, there is no connection between the sentient being state and the state of complete awakening—they are two different things; and secondly, because to teach that would contradict the teachings that make clear that the buddha in sentient beings is not the buddha essence, the buddha itself or buddhahood itself, but the potential for enlightenment.

What this tradition is teaching is the way to eliminate clinging to the characteristics of the result, thinking that the characteristics of the result truly exist; and the way that that is done is by teaching that all of the appearances that go with the result are just superficial appearances

***Editor's note:** For example, seeing that which we call a vase, a buddha would not think or have the conceptual awareness of the vase as "vase," nor would a buddha think or have the conceptual awareness of the "vase" as "fat." The "vase" of course is only "fat" in comparison to a skinnier vase; in comparison to a fatter vase it is "skinny." Such conceptual characteristics have no actual existence; thus in the state of primordial awareness there is no conceptual grasping at the name or the characteristics of things. Nonetheless, a buddha would be able to see, when necessary, the potential functionality of such an object as flower vase, pencil holder, wine decanter, or bedpan.

that do not truly exist, that do not exist from the perspective of the actual genuine dimension of enlightenment, which transcends the duality of perceiver and perceived [or of any other duality, for that matter].

In short, the appearance of a buddha's kaya that we can physically see and the appearance of the buddha fields arise from two causes. One is the making of aspiration prayers, and the second is the play or the creative display of the dharmakaya, which is the buddha's actual and genuinely true dimension of enlightenment.

Then comes a part on how to clear away the cognitive obscurations.*** First it is explained that what are called abstract characteristics or abstract thoughts—the thoughts about all of the phenomena in samsara and nirvana—are merely imaginary; whatever characteristics we impute to phenomena are merely imaginary. Then it is taught with respect to the actual phenomena themselves, which are uniquely characterized by being unique phenomena that are different from all other phenomena, that their unique characteristics themselves also do not really exist, and therefore that to think that characteristics of phenomena do exist is not in harmony with how the objects really are. Then it is taught how the intention of the buddha is to teach that the true nature of phenomena is free from all extremes, and finally that it is impossible to describe what this freedom from extremes really is.

Then the question is raised: What is the antidote that clears away thoughts that cling to the

****Editor's note:** Thus someone who attains the dharmakaya of a buddha, the actual genuine dimension of enlightenment, might appear, in very rare circumstances, depending upon causes and conditions, as a supreme nirmanakaya, manifesting all the thirty-two major and eighty minor signs of perfection; or as an ordinary human being who might manifest as a spiritual teacher or an artist or a statesperson; or even as an animal, all dependent upon causes and conditions. In any such manifestation the nirmanakaya of a buddha would bring great benefit to sentient beings.

*****Editor's note:** Because the mental/emotional afflictions are totally dependent for their existence on the existence of cognitive obscurations; therefore, to remove the cognitive obscurations is to remove both the cognitive and afflictive obscurations.

true existence of the characteristics of phenomena, that cling to the thought that the characteristics we perceive phenomena to possess—including afflictions and karma on the one hand, and the buddhas' aspiration prayers on the other, both defiled and undefiled phenomena—are real? The next verse reads:

**Just as the horns on rabbits' heads
Do not exist except in the imagination,
Phenomena are all precisely like that,
Merely imagined, having no existence. (30)**

The horns on the head of a rabbit are obviously only imaginary; they are nonexistent. In the same way, the general characteristics or the abstract images and thoughts that constitute the objects of our thinking mind with respect to any particular phenomenon are merely imagined and do not truly exist. They are merely conceptual thoughts about conceptual objects. Thus the general or abstract characteristics of all phenomena of the ground, the path, and the fruition exist only in the imagination.* They do not exist as they are imagined.

What are general or abstract characteristics? When our thoughts connect any type of name with a particular object, that is a general characteristic. So, for example, if you think about "impermanence," this is only a general characteristic. And why is this considered a general characteristic? Because there are infinite kinds of impermanences. Every example of impermanence is different. But we grasp this as being only one thing. Our image of impermanence is that impermanences are all the same, all of the same quality, even though every single type of impermanence has its own unique quality. As another example, when we think "flower," the only thing that comes to mind is a general abstract image that has to cover every single flower in the universe, even though each one is unique. So flower is only a general abstract image. And these abstract images, which are all that our thoughts can con-

***Editor's note:** i.e. all thoughts concerning buddha potential, which is the ground; about the paths and stages and disciplines of the paths that lead to enlightenment; and about the qualities of buddhahood, etc.

ceive of, do not truly exist in any way outside of the mind.

In short, when we connect a name with an object, then that name that we are thinking of, the way that name causes us to think about that object, is a general characteristic, an abstract image which does not truly exist. If you think, "that is a person," then how many different kinds of people are there? There is an infinite variety of different kinds of "persons," so the name "person" can only be a very general image that has to account for all of those and make them all blend into one. But this type of image that appears to our conceptual mind does not truly exist.

We can think, "I am in pain; I am suffering." But really there are lots of different kinds of suffering. We can suffer because of people we do not like; we can suffer because of people we do like. We can suffer because of wealth; we can suffer because of an absence of wealth. So there are lots of different kinds of suffering that we can identify. But we do not differentiate among them when we just think, "I am in pain; I am suffering." And so this thought that blends and has to cover all these different kinds of suffering, can only be an abstract image that could never truly exist anywhere.

We could have suffering as a result of a boyfriend or a girlfriend. If we examine this particular kind of suffering, then the suffering of the past is completely finished, so it does not exist; the suffering of the future has not happened yet, so it does not exist; and the suffering of the present moment is not just one thing, because there is no one moment of suffering. Moments of experience are infinitely divisible, and fleeting. But what we do conceptually is lump the whole thing together into one big glob of suffering. In this way we have one abstract concept that covers all of these different things. But this concept is not real and does not truly exist. So suffering does not really exist.

Therefore, when we think, "I am suffering because of my friend," that is just a confused thought that clings to the existence of an abstract characteristic which does not truly exist. So the suffering does not really exist.

Therefore, all of our conceptual states of mind,

which cling to the true existence of these abstract images, are confused, because these abstract things do not exist anywhere.

Next the commentary examines what are called the specific or the unique characteristics of any phenomenon. For example, if we look at fire, then fire is just a name, right? But the characteristics of a fire are the actual thing that it is hot and burning. That actual thing that is hot and burning is unique, because there is only one phenomenon like it in the world; nothing else is exactly the same. That is what is being examined here. It starts out with the objection that the previous example about rabbit horns does not hold water, because there are no horns on a rabbit's head; these rabbit horns are not a uniquely characterized phenomena because there is no such entity. There is no such thing as a rabbit with horns. But what about an ox's horns? An ox really has horns, and those horns are uniquely characterized; similarly, all of the uniquely characterized objects in samsara and nirvana and all of their unique specific characteristics really exist. The answer to that is that the specific characteristics of the horns of an ox cannot be truly perceived either, for the reasons stated in the next verse:

**Because they are not made of solid atoms
The horns of oxen cannot be seen, either.
Since not even tiny atoms exist,
How could one imagine that something made of
atoms exists? (31)**

When you examine atoms to try to find out whether they exist or not, you cannot find any smallest unit of matter that is truly indivisible into ever smaller units of matter. By division atoms, the "smallest" units of matter, get smaller and smaller *ad infinitum*. You cannot find anything there at all. Therefore, how could you possibly say that bigger phenomena made up of these nonexistent atoms exist? How could you imagine that these horns have any true existence when the atoms which formed them do not even exist? Since there is no basis of imputation to which any name can be given, then even these specific unique characteristics do not exist,

because for something to have its own specific characteristics, there has to be something there. But since there are no atoms there in the first place, then how can there be any specifically characterized phenomena?

The next part of the commentary teaches how sentient beings are confused. Sentient beings are confused because they perceive things as being real. Because they perceive characteristics as being existent, their perception is not in harmony with the way objects really are. The commentary begins, "How could an immature being possibly realize the true nature of phenomena, the specific and abstract characteristics of phenomena, when there is not even one phenomenon that exists in the way that immature beings perceive them?"

There are three types of children, three types of immature or childlike beings. The first type is the worldly type of child, which is called a child in dependence upon there being somebody older. The second type is someone who is not learned when compared with someone who is; the person who is not learned is called childlike. And finally the third type is anyone who has not reached the first level of bodhisattva realization when compared to noble or enlightened bodhisattvas, who have. Because of the difference in perception of these two classes of beings, those who have not reached that level of realization of the true nature of things are thought to be and are referred to as childlike or immature. So in this case, when reference is made to immature beings, it is referring to the third type and includes all beings who have not yet reached the first bodhisattva bhumi.

To further clarify the point that is being made, we could say: The way that immature beings perceive—which is to cling to the characteristics of phenomena as being real—is confused because there is not a single phenomenon, either uniquely or generally characterized, that exists.

The next verse reads:

**Since phenomena arise dependently,
And since they cease dependently,
Not a single one of them exists.
How could the childlike think that they do? (32)**

Or as originally translated:

**Since arising is a dependent occurrence
And cessation is a dependent occurrence,
There is not one single thing that exists—
How could the naive believe that there is? (32)**

Phenomena arise in dependence upon causes and conditions—they do not exist from their own side, independent of causes and conditions—and phenomena cease because of causes and conditions. Therefore, since they are only dependently arisen, they do not truly exist. How could immature beings think that they do truly exist? And the very brief commentary on this says that phenomena cease in dependence on causes and conditions because they arise in dependence upon causes and conditions.

The example that makes this easy for us to understand is the example of the moon's reflection in a pool of water, a water moon. A water moon appears because of different causes and conditions, and then it disappears because of different causes and conditions,* but there is never really anything there—no real moon. And so there is no real arising and no real cessation; it was only a mere appearance and not something truly existent. If someone were to think that any particular water moon was a real object, and that its birth and cessation were real, then those would be confused thoughts. Similarly, no other phenomena can arise or cease in the way that immature beings think that they do.

The fourth part describes the buddhas' intention to teach the middle way that is free from all extremes. The Sugata, the one gone to bliss, proved that all phenomena are the middle way which abandons the two extremes:

Using examples like rabbits' and oxen's horns,

***Editor's note:** The conditions for the appearance of a water moon is a waxing or waning moon, in an unobscured sky, and a body of water; in addition the concepts of water and moon must be present, and a person with vision who is conceptualizing water and moon must be present. So long as these conditions appear the water moon appears; when any one of these conditions disappears or is blocked, the appearance of the water moon disappears.

The Thus Gone One has proven
That all phenomena are nothing other than the
Middle Way. (33)**

The commentary explains that the horns of a rabbit exist *in the imagination*. They can exist as an expression, and they can also arise as an image in our minds. [So we cannot say that the horns of a rabbit absolutely do not exist. Recognizing this we avoid the extreme of nihilism.] On the other hand, even something like the horns of an ox, which seem very solid, do not exist, because they have no essence, being made up of nonexistent particles. [Recognizing this, we avoid the extreme of realism.] So in this way, when we think intelligently about phenomena that we imagine are established as existent entities by virtue of their own characteristics, we see that nothing exists in this way at all. [On the other hand, we also see that we cannot say that phenomena do not exist altogether, for they do exist as mere appearance.] For this reason the Buddha taught that all phenomena are of the nature of the middle way, which is free from the two extremes of realism and nihilism.

If we were to apply this way of thinking to our planet, then we would think, since there is a right side up and an upside down to this planet, and since right now we in Seattle are obviously right side up, that the right side up must be like the ox's horns, and the upside down must be like the rabbit's horns, because we are all right side up. But what about people who are below, on the "down under" side of the planet? For the people down there, they are all right side up too. So for them right side up is like the ox's horns—that is the way things really are, they are right side up; we are not right side up, they are right side up. And the upside down for them—which is we who are in Seattle—is like the rabbit's horns. And so really what this shows is that neither one truly exists.

It is the same thing with our own thoughts of

****Editor's note:** There are two terms here being used interchangeably: tathagata, which is Sanskrit for the Thus Gone One; and sugata, Sanskrit for the One Gone to Bliss. Both are epithets for the Buddha.

clean and dirty. We think that what we think is clean is really clean, is really the correct point of view. Like the horns of an ox, this point of view is in some sense “real.” But then if somebody comes along and looks at something which we “know” to be dirty, and they call it clean, then they are obviously wrong. So their point of view is like the horns of a rabbit. Our own perceptions are right, and their perceptions are wrong. But really, if you think about it from an objective perspective, neither one is right; neither of these points of view truly exists as some sort of absolute.*

The next verse teaches how this freedom from extremes is inexpressible:

Just as one sees

**The forms of the sun, moon, and stars
Reflected in vessels of perfectly clear water,
So is the consummation of signs and characteristics.**

(34)

The commentary on this verse reads, “Imagine that if pure water were poured into a container made of silver, and then in this container one saw directly the reflections of the sun and the moon and the stars, one would see these mere reflections but not see anything that truly existed.” This is the consummation or the perfection of the characteristics of relative phenomena. This consummation is that all relative or superficial appearances are just appearance and emptiness; they are the undifferentiability of appearance/emptiness, which is something that can only be directly realized and experienced through meditation. If we just think that that is the case, then [the notion of the inseparability of appearance and emptiness] is simply another [conceptual] superimposition on the true nature of reality. Whatever we think about reality, it is a superimposition onto the true nature of reality, which transcends conceptuality. That is why this freedom from extremes that is the middle way is something that can only truly be experienced through the realization that comes from meditation. If we make it a mere object of

***Editor’s note:** As Lama Ganga once said, “In India, the sidewalks of America would be clean enough to eat off of.”

our conceptual mind, then it takes on the same characteristics as in the previous two examples, the horns of a rabbit and the horns of an ox; it is not something truly existent.

When we see the reflection of the moon’s appearance in a pool of water, what we see is just a mere appearance; but neither our dualistic consciousness nor our thoughts can perceive what the actual nature of that reflected appearance really is. What its actual nature is, and what the actual nature of all relative, superficial phenomena really is, is something that can only be experienced through the realization that comes from meditation.

The next verse is written to help us further understand this point:

**That which is virtuous in the beginning, middle,
and end,
Is undeceiving and is marked by constancy,
And is free from self in this very way.
How could that be thought of as “I” or “mine”?**

(35)

The dharmadhatu is virtuous in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. Since its nature is completely in harmony with the way that noble beings [bodhisattvas] perceive, then it is undeceiving. And at all times—at the time of the ground, the path, and the fruition—it does not change; it is marked by constancy. This dharmadhatu that noble beings see is selfless. So how is it that immature beings think that it is a self, perceive that there could be a self? This type of thought is confused; for as sentient beings perceive a self, this self that is perceived, either in individuals or in phenomena, does not truly exist.

When immature beings believe that genuine reality, the dharmadhatu, is either a self or a truly existent phenomena—in other words, when upon this genuine reality sentient beings superimpose the existence of a self or the existence of phenomena where there is neither self nor phenomena—then that thought is confused, because the noble ones realize directly the selflessness, the absence of true existence, of any conceptualized phenomena in the dharmadhatu.

This reasoning is analogous to the reasoning that says, “When young children see a movie and think that the images in the movie are real, that type of thought is confused, because older people know that the images in that movie are not real.”

We have now arrived at the extensive explanation of the dharmadhatu, which has two parts. First come the stages in which the Victorious One, the Buddha, taught the dharma of the definitive meaning, meaning the way genuine reality really is; and second, once we understand how the Buddha taught this definitive meaning in stages, we can understand how different names were given to genuine reality in the various stages of the teaching.

First comes the actual description of the stages, which begins with the following question. If it is true that the dharmadhatu, that primordial awareness, is perfectly present in all three stages of the ground, path, and fruition—or, as is explained in the treatise on buddha nature, *The Gyu Lama*, at the stages of impurity, partial purity, and complete purity—then why is it that the Buddha did not always talk about the dharmadhatu? Why, if it is present all along, is it mentioned in some places and not in others? The answer to that question is that, even though the existence of the dharmadhatu during all stages of the ground, path, and fruition is the definitive meaning, the Buddha purposely taught in stages that lead gradually to an understanding of the definitive meaning. And there was and there continues to be a necessity or reason for doing that. The reason is that sentient beings need to accumulate virtue in different stages or different levels of understanding.

At first sentient beings just need to accumulate merit; and at this stage it is taught that there is a self and there are phenomena in order that sentient beings may understand that the self will experience suffering as a result of negative actions and happiness as a result of positive ones.*

At the second stage, which is the second turning of the wheel of dharma, in order to lead sentient beings to accumulate the virtue that is in harmony with liberation—in other words, the virtue that understands the absence of reality of

the self of an individual and the absence of reality of the self of phenomena—the two types of selflessness are taught.**

And finally, in order to inspire and enable sentient beings to begin to purify the two types of obscurations and to gather and complete in an authentic way the two accumulations—the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom—the basis for purifying the obscurations and for gathering the two accumulations, which is the primordial awareness of the dharmadhatu, is taught. Primordial awareness is the base from which these activities are accomplished. And this primordial awareness—the inherent, original wisdom of the dharmadhatu—is present equally at the time of the ground, at the time of the path, and at the time of the fruition.***

All of the teachings of the Buddha, whichever they might be, are undecieving, because they have what is called the purity of the three types of analysis, which means that when you analyze them in one of three different ways, they are found to be authentic. What are these three different ways? First, if the object that the Buddha is talking about is something that is directly perceivable with the senses, then the Buddha’s teachings must not be contradicted by any direct valid cognition of the senses. The direct perception of your senses and the Buddha’s teachings must not be in conflict. If they are not in conflict, then that is the purity of the first type of analysis.

The purity of the second type of analysis concerns objects, like emptiness, which cannot be perceived with the senses, which can only be perceived through inference. And the Buddha’s

***Editor’s note:** These teachings belong to the first turning of the wheel of dharma, or the first cycle of the Buddha’s teachings, called the Dharmachakra of the Four Noble Truths, during which the Buddha taught the Truth of Suffering, the Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, and the Noble Eight-fold Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

****Editor’s note:** This cycle of the Buddha’s teachings is called the Dharmachakra of the Absence of Inherent Characteristics.

*****Editor’s note:** This cycle of the Buddha’s teachings is called the Dharmachakra of Thorough and Precise Distinctions.

teachings on objects that are hidden in this way, hidden from direct perception, are valid because they are not contradicted by one's own inferential reasoning process.

And the purity of the third type of analysis concerns things that are extremely hidden, which cannot even be perceived through inference. And the Buddha's teachings on this type of extremely hidden object are held to be valid because they are not contradicted by what is called the valid cognition of the scriptures, which means that, when the Buddha talked about these types of things, his teachings were not contradicted by anything else he had said before or anything he said afterwards.

Then the debate is raised that, if you believe that the last turning of the wheel of dharma—which asserts that the primordial awareness of the dharmadhatu pervades equally and in an unchanging way the ground, the path, and the fruition—is the ultimate word of the Buddha about the definitive meaning, about genuine reality, then that is just like the teachings of the non-Buddhists, who say that there is a truly existent self. What is the difference [between their truly existent self and your primordial awareness]? The answer to that is, how could the Buddha's teachings about the primordial awareness of the dharmadhatu be in any way similar to the teachings of other traditions which teach that there is a truly existent self? The Buddha, after all, taught in stages of understanding; and in the second turning of the wheel of dharma he had already finished teaching that there is no self. So how, in the subsequent turning of the wheel, could he have possibly taught that there is a self? He had already cleared away that issue. Had the teachings of the third turning been taught before the middle turning, then you might [legiti-

mately] assert that there was some potential for confusion there. But since the Buddha had already finished saying that there is no self, then how could his teachings about the dharmadhatu, about primordial awareness, be confused and asserted to be teachings that a self truly exists?

Now it would be good to sing the *Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition* and the *Song of the Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*.

[Students sing. See pages 25 and 26.]

Past thought is gone. The future thought has not arisen. Look nakedly at this very present moment of mind and rest, relaxed, within it.

The way to rest is to rest with a child's independence. Rest with the independence of not trying to stop anything nor trying to bring anything about.

Without any of the waves of thoughts of the three times, rest like an ocean that is unmoving.

Rest with a butter lamp's clarity or radiance. The feeling of stupor arises when our minds are dense and not sharp. Dullness arises when our minds are not clear. And drowsiness arises when our minds are neither clear nor sharp. So enhance the awareness and the brightness of mind by resting with a butter lamp's clarity.

Rest like a human corpse, without arrogance. To think, "I am a good meditator; my meditation is going really well," these are thoughts of arrogance; so rest like a corpse, without arrogance.

Rest like a mountain, so still. Whatever is happening around a mountain, whatever conditions are happening, they do not affect the mountain itself. Similarly, do not be affected by any conditions, either good or bad.

[Students meditate.]

So now we will sing *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*.

[Students sing. See page 27.]



In Praise of the Dharmadhatu

How Different Names Are Given to Different Modes of Completely False Appearance



Continuing the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's teaching on Nagarjuna's In Praise of the Dharmadhatu, the following edited transcript is from the morning of September 20. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.

Not leaving out any beings that we may not like, please aspire to attain the state of perfect and complete buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order to do that, we must listen to, reflect on, and meditate on the teachings of the noble protector Nagarjuna's text, *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, with great enthusiasm in our hearts. This is the precious

attitude of bodhicitta. Please give rise to it and listen.

We are on verse number 36, which begins the section that teaches why the dharmadhatu, primordial awareness, is called by different names at different stages:

**Just as water, during the summertime,
Is spoken of as being something warm,
And the very same water, throughout the winter season,
Is spoken of as being something cold, (36)**

**Those ensnared in the net of the afflictions
Are referred to by the label, "sentient beings";
The very same when freed of states afflicted
As "buddhas" are revered. (37)**

Depending upon the season and the state that the water is in, during the wintertime it can be called cold water, during the summertime warm water. Similarly, the dharmadhatu, primordial awareness, is given the name sentient being when an individual is still afflicted by kleshas, when kleshas still obscure the dharmadhatu from their vision. However, when the kleshas and the cognitive obscurations are all completely cleared away and primordial awareness manifests openly, unobstructedly, when primordial awareness is directly and perfectly realized, then the dharmadhatu is called buddhahood. What name is given to the dharmadhatu, either sentient being or buddha, depends on the state of this individual.

If it is true that the essential nature of all phenomena is the dharmadhatu, then, when there appear to be the twelve ayatanas or the twelve sources of consciousness,* is not the appearance of these phenomena some type of contradiction? On the one hand they are said to be all of the same nature, yet they appear to be different types of phenomena. How can it be said that their nature is all essentially the dharmadhatu, that they all have the same nature? Well, there is no contradiction here, and this is explained in the following verses.

What is explained here is how different names or different conventional terms are given to different modes of completely false appearance—the appearances of things which do not truly exist, but appear to exist to the confused mind. The first one involves the eye consciousness and what appears to it:

**When eye and form assume their right relation,
Appearances appear without a blur.
Since these neither arise nor cease,
They are the dharmadhatu, though they are
imagined to be otherwise. (38)**

Form and the other five outer sources of consciousness, making six altogether, do not appear

***Editor's note:** The ayatanas or the twelve sources of consciousness include the eye sense organ and its object, form; the ear sense organ and its object, sound; etc., including what we traditionally call the five sense consciousnesses, plus the mental faculty and its objects.

to conceptual consciousness as they really exist. If we examine the outer sources of consciousness down to the smallest atom, we cannot find anything. For example, if we examine an eye in very fine detail, in atomic and subatomic detail, we cannot find even an atom that truly exists.** The eye that perceives is not made of anything; it is just a mere appearance. Similarly, the form that appears to the eye sense consciousness is also not made out of any [truly existent] atoms; there is nothing substantially there at all. When these two things which are not composed of anything, which are just mere appearances, come together, then the eye sense consciousness that perceives form does so in a way that is nonconceptual. When the eye sense consciousness perceives a form, it is an experience of perfect clarity that is unmediated by concepts, that is not polluted by any concepts about what is there; it is just a pure experience of clarity, of vision. At that time, the appearance is not arisen truly, nor does it ever cease, and this appearance-emptiness, this appearance which is empty of arising and empty of ceasing, which is empty of any existent matter at all, this appearance-emptiness undifferentiable is the dharmadhatu. Later, when thoughts arise, we think, "Oh, this is form; and this is a nice looking form or this is an unpleasant looking form," or whatever thought might want to impute to the nature of that form. But its actual nature is appearance-emptiness.

To put this in the form of a logical reasoning, we would say that the eye sense faculty, the form it perceives, and the eye sense consciousness, these three are the dharmadhatu, because the form and the sense faculty are empty of atoms—they are not made of anything substantial—and the consciousness that perceives is unstained by conceptuality. It is the undifferentiability of clarity and emptiness. The example that illustrates this is the example of the meeting of the sense faculty, the form, and the consciousness in a dream.

So let's recite this verse three times.

[Students recite.]

****Editor's note:** cf. A Note on the Logic That Arrives at Emptiness, pg. 62, of Shenpen Ösel, Vol. 3, No. 1.

In connection with this, Guru Rinpoche composed seven supplications to himself for his students and later disciples to recite. One of these is called the *Supplication that the Host of Thoughts be Self-liberated*. The first verse of this supplication is very much in harmony with this particular verse from Nagarjuna's text:

**All these forms that appear to eyes that see,
All things on the outside and the inside,
The environment and its inhabitants,
Appear, but let them rest where no self's found.
Perceiver and perceived, when purified,
Are the body of the deity, clear emptiness.
To the guru for whom desire frees itself,
To Orgyen Pema Jungne I supplicate.**

Nagarjuna's next verse reads:

**When sound and ear assume their right relation,
A consciousness free of thought occurs.
These three are in essence the dharmadhatu,
free of other characteristics,
But they become "hearing" when thought of
conceptually. (39)**

Based on the coming together of sound and the ear, an experience of consciousness that is mere clarity, that is the mere experience of hearing the sound, occurs. This consciousness is pure. The reason why it is pure is that there is no conceptuality, there are no thoughts happening, and so the consciousness is pure. In the Tibetan it literally says it is pure of thoughts. So it is pure because there are no thoughts happening. It is a pure experience. At that time, this consciousness, to which this appearance is appearing so clearly, together with its object, are only the dharmadhatu and nothing else. They have no other characteristics; they have only the characteristics of awareness and emptiness undifferentiable, because no other characteristics exist. Later, when the thought process kicks in, we can think, "Oh, I just heard a sound." But that only comes after the actual experience and is not connected with it. It is only a label that thoughts put on it after it happens.

The sound, which is not composed of any atoms, is not made of anything. The ear sense

faculty is not composed of any "truly existent" atoms. And the ear sense consciousness is mere clarity that is not corrupted by any thoughts; it is not stained by any thoughts.* And the coming together of these three is just like their coming together in a dream. There is no difference. Their nature is the dharmadhatu. They have no characteristics [that exist] from their own side [independent of conditions from the "other" side]. They have only the characteristics of the dharmadhatu. But because we do not recognize what the dharmadhatu is, then thoughts arise and we think, "Oh, that was a sound." So thoughts prevent us from knowing what the true nature of that experience was. Our obscuring thoughts prevent us from seeing that it is actually the dharmadhatu and confuse us by labeling it as a sound, and then further labeling it is a "good" sound, a "bad" sound, or whatever.

When we hear something in a dream—before we conceptualize what it is that we are hearing—the sound and the sense faculty that perceives the sound are appearance and emptiness undifferentiable from each other. The sense consciousness that perceives it is clarity-emptiness undifferentiable, and it is all just the dharmadhatu. But then, because we do not recognize the dharmadhatu, we have a thought, "Oh, that is a sound"; and then we think, just as we do during the daytime, "That was a good sound, that was a bad sound," and we start to take action in response to that [conceptualized version of the] sound. We either try to do something to get more of that type of sound or to avoid that type of sound, all based upon this conceptual confusion.

In the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche* it says,

**All these sounds that appear for ears that hear,
Taken as agreeable or not,
Let them rest in the realm of sound and emptiness,
Past all thought, beyond imagination.
Sounds are empty, unarisen, and unceasing;
These are what make up the Victor's teaching.
To the teachings of the Victor, sound and emptiness,
To Orgyen Pema Jungne I supplicate.**

***Editor's note:** Perhaps "altered," "conditioned," or "colored" would help to understand the meaning here.

And the 39th verse of Nagarjuna's text reads:

**When sound and ear assume their right relation,
A pure consciousness free of thought occurs.
These three are in essence the dharmadhatu,
free of any other characteristics.
But they become "hearing" when thought of
conceptually. (39)**

So we will recite this together three times.

[Students recite.]

The essence of any experience of perception is the dharmadhatu. It is appearance-emptiness, clarity-emptiness. When we have a thought that this experience of dharmadhatu is a sound, and take that sound to be real, then that is samsara.

The next verse reads:

**Dependent upon the nose and an odor, one smells.
And as with the example of form there is neither
arising nor cessation,
But in dependence upon the nose-consciousness's
experience,
The dharmadhatu is thought to be smell. (40)**

The commentary reads, "In dependence upon the nose and an odor, there is smell; but in this appearance of form, there is neither any arising, there is neither anything happening, nor is there any ceasing of anything happening. And so the smell has no essence. But based on the experience of the nose consciousness, one thinks, 'I smelled something,' and the dharmadhatu is conceptualized to be odor."

Again, the dream is a very useful example for us to think about. In a dream, the experience of nose consciousness's perceiving odor is, from the perspective of consciousness, clarity-emptiness; the odor is appearance-emptiness. It is the dharmadhatu, but we do not recognize the dharmadhatu, so even though it is just a dream, we think that we smelled something. We are confused in the same way we are during the daytime. We think that the smell is either good or bad and that we have to take some kind of action of adopting or rejecting in response to it. We confuse the dharmadhatu to be smell.

So now we will recite this verse three times.

[Students recite.]

The next two verses teach about the tongue consciousness (taste consciousness) and the tactile consciousness of the body. The first one reads:

**The tongue's nature is emptiness.
The sphere of taste is voidness as well.
These are in essence the dharmadhatu
And are not the causes of the taste consciousness. (41)**

The commentary: "The tongue's nature is empty of essence. It has no existent essence. The sphere or the element of taste—that which is being tasted—also is void; it also has no truly existing essence. Both of these, the tongue and what is tasted, are of the essence of the dharmadhatu. And therefore they are not the cause of the taste consciousness. It is only that thoughts think that they are." We think that there is a tongue and that there is something that the tongue tastes, and as a result we experience taste, the sensation of taste, in our minds. But this is only our conceptual mind at work. This demonstrates how conceptual mind clings to things which are truly nonexistent as being the cause of an experience that, in turn, is also entirely conceptual.

The tongue itself is not composed of any existent atoms. If you look to see what the atoms in that tongue are made of, you cannot find anything. So it is empty of essence. It has no existent essence. Similarly, taste is of the nature of voidness or emptiness. We could think that we taste something and it tastes good or it tastes bad, but the same experience of taste can be thought of in different ways, in completely opposite ways, by different beings. Some beings taste one thing and it tastes very good, other beings taste the exact same thing and they experience it as a very bad taste. So what this taste is is not definite. It is of the nature of emptiness. And it is the dharmadhatu. When we are confused, we take the dharmadhatu to be something truly existent and call it taste.

[Students recite verse.]

The tongue has two functions. It functions both as the faculty of the taste consciousness and as a

faculty of the tactile consciousness. The middle part of your tongue feels form, experiences tactile sensation. The edges of it experience taste. It is important to know that our tongue has two functions.

However, these appearances—of a taste sense faculty and of a tactile sense faculty—are completely false appearances; neither of them truly exists. They are in essence the dharmadhatu.

The next verse is about the tactile consciousness, the body consciousness:

**The pure body's essence,
The characteristics of the object touched,
The tactile consciousness free of conditions—
These are called the dharmadhatu. (42)**

If one investigates, one finds that the body is pure (empty) of atoms. It is pure because it is not made of anything; there are no atoms there. The characteristics of the object that is touched are pure in a similar way because there are no atoms there either. And therefore the tactile consciousness—or literally the body consciousness—is liberated or free of conditions, the conditions that bring it about. Here, the two conditions referred to are called the focal condition and the empowering condition. The focal condition here is the object of touch, what the consciousness is focused on, and the empowering condition is the sense faculty, which is the body itself. Since these two conditions do not exist, the consciousness does not really exist either. Therefore, all three are the openness and spaciousness of the dharmadhatu, and nothing other than that.

So the body, the tactile sense faculty, and the form that is touched or felt, these are appearance-emptiness. The consciousness is clarity-emptiness. All are the dharmadhatu. But since we do not realize that, after the experience of touching something happens, we conceptualize it to be touch, and then we engage in all different kinds of activity, trying to get more of that type of feeling or trying to push away that type of feeling to get less of it, and that is samsara.

The actual experience of touch is the dharmadhatu, because the body is the dharmadhatu, that which is touched is the

dharmadhatu, and the consciousness experiencing it is the dharmadhatu. But an instant later our thoughts arise and identify it and reify it as an experience of touching something, and these thoughts are like iron chains that shackle us. The more we think about it, the more we get wrapped up and tangled up in it. That is the way it is most of the time. If somebody is tied up and they try to move around, they just get more and more tangled up. That is what happens when we do not realize the basic openness and spaciousness of the experience, when we do not realize the dharmadhatu.

It is just like an insect caught in a spider's web. First, it is not caught very much, just a little bit; but as it tries to escape and struggles, then the web wraps tighter and tighter around it, and it is much worse off.

In short, what binds us are our thoughts that the dharmadhatu is something real. There is nothing else that binds us. If we can understand what the essence of these thoughts really is, then they will be self-liberated.

[Students recite verse.]

The next verse reads:

**The phenomena that appear to the mental
consciousness, the chief of them all,
Are conceptualized and then superimposed.
When this activity is abandoned, phenomena's
lack of self-essence is known.
Knowing this, meditate on the dharmadhatu. (43)**

The commentary on the first two lines reads, "The completely false appearance of the mind and the phenomena that appear to the mind are what cause the mental consciousness to come into being. But the phenomena appearing to this mental consciousness are merely conceptualized, and once conceptualized are superimposed onto genuine reality as being existent, and are given whatever name we might choose to give them." First we imagine the existence of a phenomenon, then we superimpose that onto reality, and then we give it a name. But, as the final line of the commentary reads, "As it is superimposed, it does not exist." It does not exist as it is believed to.

In the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche*, it says,


**All these movements of mind towards its objects,
These thoughts that make five poisons and
afflictions,
Leave thinking mind to rest without contrivances.
Do not review the past nor guess the future.
If you let such movement rest in its own place,
It liberates into the dharmakaya.
To the guru for whom awareness frees itself,
To Orgyen Pema Jungne I supplicate.**

If we connect *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* with

the songs of Milarepa, we are joining *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* with the explanations of mahamudra. If we connect *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* with Guru Rinpoche's supplication, then we join *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* with the explanations of dzogchen.

Now we will sing *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*.

[Students sing. See page 27.]

Sarwa Mangalam. 



'In short, what binds us are our thoughts that the dharmadhatu is something real. There is nothing else that binds us. If we can understand what the essence of these thoughts really is, then they will be self-liberated.'

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu

At the Meeting of the Consciousness With Its Object, There Is No Real Arising

Continuing the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's teaching on Nagarjuna's In Praise of the Dharmadhatu, the following edited transcript is from the afternoon of September 20. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.

Sarwa Mangalam. Al la la ho. We will begin by singing the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche*.

[Students sing. See page 52.]

Now we will sing a verse from a song by Milarepa, the lord of yogis. This verse also describes how the six consciousnesses are self-liberated. So you should write this verse down on a piece of paper. It goes like this:

**The meeting of appearances of the six kinds
of consciousness,
This is the guide that turns adverse
conditions into a path.
Is there anyone here who is able to keep to
this path and follow it through?
The one for whom desire and craving have
been consumed is happy.
The rope that ties perceiver and perceived,
when cut, is E Ma Ho!***

[Students sing.]

Praise of the Dharmadhatu teaches how the meeting of the sense faculty, the object of the senses, and the sense consciousness, whichever particular sense it might be, is an experience that is self-

***Editor's note:** E Ma Ho is an expression of wonder and delight.



liberated, meaning that it is free by its very nature. This same point—that the six consciousnesses are self-liberated or self-liberating—is also taught in the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche*. We supplicate Guru Rinpoche by singing,

**Grant your blessing that purifies appearance
Of objects perceived as being outside;
Grant your blessing that liberates perceiving mind,**

Supplication to Guru Rinpoche

*The Prayer That Appearances Be Liberated As the Deity
That Sounds Be Liberated As Mantra
That Thoughts Be Liberated Into Pure Being*

All these forms that appear to eyes that see,
All things on the outside and the inside,
The environment and its inhabitants
Appear, but let them rest where no self's found;
Perceiver and perceived when purified
Are the body of the deity, clear emptiness—
To the guru for whom desire frees itself,
To Orgyen Pema Jungnay I supplicate.

All these sounds that appear for ears that hear,
Taken as agreeable or not,
Let them rest in the realm of sound and emptiness,
Past all thought, beyond imagination;
Sounds are empty, unarisen, and unceasing,
These are what make up the Victor's teaching—
To the teachings of the Victor, sound and emptiness,
To Orgyen Pema Jungnay I supplicate.

All these movements of mind towards its objects,
These thoughts that make five poisons and afflictions,
Leave thinking mind to rest without contrivances.
Do not review the past nor guess the future.
If you let such movement rest in its own place,
It liberates into the dharmakaya—
To the guru for whom awareness frees itself,
To Orgyen Pema Jungnay I supplicate.

Grant your blessing that purifies appearance
Of objects perceived as being outside.
Grant your blessing that liberates perceiving mind,
The mental operation seeming inside.
Grant your blessing that between the two of these
Clear light will come to recognize its own face;
In your compassion, sugatas of all three times,
Please bless me that a mind like mine be freed.

Spoken by Guru Rinpoche to Namkhai Nyingpo

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche and under the auspices
of Marpa Institute of Translation, translated and arranged by Jim Scott.

**The mental operation seeming inside;
Grant your blessing that between the two of these,
Clear light will come to recognize its own face.
In your compassion, sugatas of all three times,
Please bless me that a mind like mine be freed.**

And again, Milarepa sings of how the meeting of objects and their consciousnesses is also the dharmadhatu; it is self-liberated. So Nagarjuna, Guru Rinpoche, and Milarepa are teaching us the same essential point, which is profound and wonderful.

The meeting of the sense consciousness, the sense faculty, and the sense object in the waking state is just as it is in a dream. When there is no conceptual consciousness thinking about what is going on, then the nature of this meeting is the dharmadhatu, and it is therefore said to be self-liberated, meaning that nothing needs to be done to change or alter whatever the experience is. It is free in and of itself. This experience is also said to be liberated through mindfulness. It is liberated through mindfulness because we tend automatically to have a thought about the experience following the nonconceptual experience. This conceptual thought is that something just happened. I saw something, I heard something, I touched something, and so forth. But if, at that point, we remember the dharmadhatu, we remember the natural state of this experience, then it is liberated through our mindfulness of it. When we think about experience, then this conceptuality is what binds us. But if we then look at the essence of that conceptuality, if we remember that the nature of the experience is that it is self-liberated, then we are liberated through this mindfulness of what the experience really is.

So now we will recite Selected Verses from Nagarjuna's *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*.

[Students recite. See page 54.]

From among the six types of consciousness, the five sense consciousnesses are always nonconceptual in the way they perceive their objects. They merely perceive them and do not conceptualize what they are perceiving. The mental consciousness has both a nonconceptual and a conceptual aspect to it. After the first moment of direct sense perception of any object

there is a moment of direct nonconceptual perception of the same object by the mental sense consciousness. But then after that moment, the conceptual aspect of the mental consciousness arises and begins conceptualizing about the object that is perceived. And these three instants of mind—an initial instant of nonconceptual direct sense perception, an instant of nonconceptual direct perception by the mental consciousness, and then an instant of conceptual mental consciousness—continue to follow one after the other with such speed that the experience becomes blurred and mixed together. So, for example, when we perceive an object before our eyes, the aspect of our mind that is the eye sense consciousness is perceiving it nonconceptually. Then instantly thereafter, each moment of nonconceptual perception by the sense consciousness is followed by a moment of nonconceptual perception by the mental consciousness; and then, immediately thereafter, the mental consciousness is thinking. And all of this is happening extremely fast to the point of being unnoticeable.

An example that shows that the five sense consciousnesses are nonconceptual in the way that they perceive is how our eye sense consciousness perceives all the people in this room. When we look at this room, then we can see everybody at once, and everybody appears very distinctly and individually. What appears are the uniquely characterized objects, the forms and the colors. But when our conceptual consciousness starts to work, then we can only remember one person's name at a time. We could never think of everybody's name at once. This shows how these two aspects of consciousness work differently. Eyes can perceive everything together very clearly, perfectly clearly, perfectly distinctly, but the conceptual consciousness can only have one thought at a time.

When the eye consciousness perceives, it is not obscured by conceptuality, by conceptual mental activity, so its vision is perfectly and exquisitely clear. It is an experience of exquisite clarity that is unmitigated by concepts.

As soon as we start to think about the ob-

Selected Verses from Nagarjuna's *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*

38. When eye and form assume their right relation,
Appearances appear without a blur.
Since these neither arise nor cease,
They are the dharmadhatu, though they are imagined to be otherwise.
39. When sound and ear assume their right relation,
A consciousness free of thought occurs.
These three are in essence the dharmadhatu, free of other characteristics,
But they become "hearing" when thought of conceptually.
40. Dependent upon the nose and an odor, one smells.
And as with the example of form there is neither arising nor cessation,
But in dependence upon the nose-consciousness's experience,
The dharmadhatu is thought to be smell.
41. The tongue's nature is emptiness.
The sphere of taste is voidness as well.
These are in essence the dharmadhatu
And are not the causes of the taste consciousness.
42. The pure body's essence,
The characteristics of the object touched,
The tactile consciousness free of conditions—
These are called the dharmadhatu.
43. The phenomena that appear to the mental consciousness, the chief of them all,
Are conceptualized and then superimposed.
When this activity is abandoned, phenomena's lack of self-essence is known.
Knowing this, meditate on the dharmadhatu.

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche,
translated by Ari Goldfield, September 20, 1998.

jects—give them names, assign terms to describe them—then we no longer are seeing clearly, we are no longer seeing with clarity. The mind cannot perceive concepts clearly in the same way that it perceives directly, because as soon as conceptual mental activity starts to happen, that begins to obscure the mind's natural clarity.

Among the sense faculties, the mental sense faculty is not a physically existent object as are the other five sense faculties. What it is is the very ceasing of the moment of sense consciousness that preceded it. It is not the sense consciousness before it stops, it is not the absence of anything that is happening after the sense consciousness stops; it is the very ceasing of the sense consciousness. So for example, if we were falling asleep, and as we were falling asleep we were to hear a loud noise, then there would be a moment of ear sense consciousness; then that would cease, and the very ceasing of that would allow for a moment of mental consciousness to perceive that sound directly and nonconceptually.

The mental sense faculty, and then the subsequent moment of direct nonconceptual perception by the mental consciousness, is what allows for the mental consciousness to then start to think about the object that is heard. So if we are just falling asleep, and everything is very peaceful and still, and there is no activity of any of the consciousnesses, and then if all of a sudden we hear a very loud bang, first we perceive that sound directly with our ear sense consciousness. Then the mental consciousness also has a moment of direct perception of that object without concepts. And then, based on that perception, the mental consciousness can start to conceptualize about that object and think, "Oh, what kind of noise was that? Maybe they are starting a war out there or something." And then all of our coarse conceptual activity begins.

The object of the mental consciousness that is perceiving directly and the object of the conceptualizing mental consciousness may seem the same, but what the direct valid cognition of the mental consciousness perceives is the uniquely character-

ized object itself. What the conceptual mental consciousness perceives is only an abstract image; it is the object connected with a name, with a term that describes it, some abstract general image of what it is. But the problem is that these moments follow each other very quickly. So there is a very brief moment of direct perception, and then a brief moment of conceptual activity, and then another brief moment of direct perception, then another moment of conceptual activity, and the whole thing just runs together.

This process is happening so fast that we confuse the uniquely characterized object to be the same as the object of our conceptual mind, the object that we are thinking about. But they are not the same. We do not realize that there are different stages of perception. There first has to be a moment of nonconceptual perception in order to have an object to start to think about. But because these things happen so fast, we unknowingly blend the whole thing together, and we think that the object we are thinking about is the same as the object that is really out there that is being perceived. But it is not; it is completely different.

According to the tradition of the Sautrantika, the Sutra School (*Do Depa* in Tibetan), this moment that is the ceasing of the sense consciousness, that is also the mental sense faculty, is extremely hidden, meaning that it is impossible for an ordinary being, an ordinary individual who is not an arya, who is not realized, to experience this, to see it happen. It is impossible because it happens so fast.

In the traditions that posit the existence of self-awareness, the mind experiences both the conceptual activity and the nonconceptual activity itself. In other words, there is a self-experience; the mind is aware of its own experience. And so, along with this conceptual and nonconceptual activity, there is also the experience of the awareness of that activity, the mind being aware of its own activity.

For example, if you eat a piece of candy, then one aspect of the mind is focused on the candy, is focused on perceiving the taste and the tactile sensation that the candy produces. But one aspect

of the mind is also facing inward and is experiencing that experience itself, which is the aspect of the mind that is self-aware, that is aware of what is happening. So one aspect is facing outward and experiencing the object; the other aspect is facing inward and experiencing itself.

When our bodies touch any given object, we experience it either as being something soft or as being something coarse and rough. Some sentient beings like the experience of soft, and others—elephants, oxen, pigs—like to feel very rough things against their skin. But whatever it is that we are experiencing, there are two aspects to the mind that experiences them. One aspect experiences the object itself and the other is facing inward; it is the mere clarity and the mere awareness aspect of the experience that is the mind experiencing itself.

So for those traditions that assert the existence of this self-awareness, then, for any moment of mind there is an aspect that is focused outward and an aspect that is focused inward and is aware of itself. But we should also understand that in essence these two aspects are not different from each other. They are the same in essence.

This way of explaining things is according to the tradition of the science of valid cognition, the tradition of Dignaga and Dharmakirti. And the reasonings used in this tradition are incredibly difficult to understand. They are quite complicated and require a lot of analysis.

In the tradition of valid cognition, what is discussed is how these consciousnesses arise; how does consciousness happen, and how does it work? It is not looking into whether or not the consciousness exists, whether or not it is absent of any truly existent essence, as *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* is teaching. *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* is teaching that at the very moment of the meeting of the consciousness with its object, these things are not really happening; there is no real arising. These phenomena have no existent essence. But our conceptuality blocks our view of that; it blocks our view of the fact that these events are really just manifestations of the dharmadhatu. They are nothing other than the dharmadhatu, the unborn, unceasing dharmadhatu.

When Milarepa sings of the meeting of the six kinds of consciousness, he is also singing that, when the consciousness and the sense faculty and the object all meet, experience itself never really happens. It is unarisen. It does not remain, it does not cease. It is the dharmadhatu. But our conceptual mind, which thinks there is something happening, prevents us from understanding that. However, if we realize the nature of this experience, we can meditate on the essence of conceptuality; we can look straight at the essence of this conceptuality, this thought, which is also the dharmadhatu. In that way our thoughts are self-liberated, and since the experience of the consciousness's perceptions are also self-liberated, are also the dharmadhatu, then whatever bad thing happens, whatever adverse condition happens, it does not matter. Whatever suffering we experience, it does not matter. Whatever adversity we run into, it does not matter.

The *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche* also teaches how the six consciousnesses are self-liberated, are the dharmadhatu; and it combines that teaching with a supplication to the lama, and so it is quite wonderful.

So now we will begin by reciting the Selected Verses from *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*," then we will sing Milarepa's verse, and then we will sing the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche*.

[Students sing. See pages 54, 51, and 52.]

Do you have any questions?

Translator: For all six consciousnesses, are the sense faculty and the object appearance-emptiness and the consciousness clarity-emptiness?

Rinpoche: Yes, the object of the consciousness and the sense faculty are appearance-emptiness and the consciousness is clarity-emptiness.

Question: Rinpoche, could you speak a little bit about Nagarjuna's switch between the second turning of the wheel and the third turning of the wheel? Which turning of the wheel of dharma did Nagarjuna regard as definitive? And, based on the assumption that Nagarjuna felt the third turning was definitive, why is there so little written by Nagarjuna about the third turning of the wheel

compared to the second turning of the wheel?

Rinpoche: The function of the second turning is to cut through all conceptual fabrications, to cut through all the different ideas about reality, and there are a great many of these ideas. There are many different views of reality held by other Buddhist schools and many different views of reality held by non-Buddhist schools, and Nagarjuna refuted all of them. So, for example, in *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, the *MulaMadhyamakakarika*, there are twenty-seven chapters, and in each chapter there is a different assertion that is refuted. So it takes that much to refute all those different kinds of assertions. And then in his other texts, too, he refutes even other assertions. That is the reason why there is so much written about the second turning.

The writings of Nagarjuna about the third turning of the wheel of the dharma are called the *Praises*, and *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* is one of these. By the time Nagarjuna wrote these praises, all the refuting had been done, so there was no more need to go through that. What is taught here is from the perspective of experience, from the perspective of practice, and so it is taught how the six consciousnesses at the very moment they meet their objects are self-liberated, and how to rest in that experience of self-liberation into the dharmadhatu, and so forth. It is all taught from the perspective of practice.

That is also why the explanations of how to rest the mind according to the traditions of dzogchen and mahamudra do not need to be incredibly extensive. There is no longer any need to refute anything, there is no need to use reasoning to negate anything; all of that work has already been completed in the teachings of the second turning. In the traditions of dzogchen and mahamudra it is just taught how to rest the mind in its own natural state.

Milarepa said to look at mind nakedly and rest, relaxed. All the work of analysis has been completed at that point. There is no need to refute other schools' views. There is no need to prove that phenomena are of the nature of emptiness. At this point we just need to practice, and we practice by

looking at mind nakedly or directly and resting, relaxed.

Question: What is the difference between consciousness and awareness?

Rinpoche: The difference between consciousness and awareness is easy to understand. Consciousness is confused. It is involved in the dualistic perception of perceivers, where there is a perceiver and there is something perceived, whereas awareness is primordial awareness or original wisdom that is self-arisen and self-aware, aware in a way that is nondual. [Rinpoche composes a two-line verse:]

**Know that perception involved with the duality of perceiver and perceived is consciousness;
Know that awareness itself, liberated from perceiver and perceived, is primordial awareness.**

Milarepa sang, "I do not see consciousness. I see awareness." When you examine consciousness, which is involved in dualistic perception, it is like looking for the core of a banana tree; you just keep peeling away the layers and you do not find anything on the inside. When we examine the nature of dualistic consciousness, we find there is nothing there. So Milarepa does not see it. What Milarepa does see is awareness, and this awareness is nondual; there is nothing to realize and no one realizing it, there is nothing to see and no one seeing it.

If we want to sum up the view of the Shentong madhyamaka, the "empty of other" school, then that verse, that one line sung by Milarepa, is the most important line of all. "I do not see consciousness. I see awareness."

Question: Could Rinpoche please repeat the verse that he said twice before we meditated? (The instructions given by Milarepa to Loden Gendenma.)

Rinpoche: The instructions are as follows: "Rest with a child's independence. Rest like an ocean free of waves. Rest with a butter lamp's clarity. Rest like a corpse, without arrogance. Rest like

a mountain, so still.”

Question: What is the difference between dharmadhatu and sunyata (sunyata meaning emptiness), and how do they relate to each other?

Rinpoche: Here the dharmadhatu is explained to be primordial awareness, awareness and emptiness undifferentiable. That is the explanation according to *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* and the third turning of the wheel of dharma. According to the second turning, the dharmadhatu is explained to be emptiness; it is explained to be simplicity or the freedom from all conceptual elaborations. There is not really any mention of awareness in the second turning as being part of what genuine reality is.

This awareness does not depend on any causes and conditions to bring it about. It is self-aware. It is nondualistically aware. And it is undifferentiable from emptiness, from the dharmadhatu. So there are two different terms. One is *rigtong yermed*, which literally means awareness-emptiness undifferentiable. The other term is *chöying yeshe*, which literally means dharmadhatu primordial awareness. These two terms mean exactly the same thing.

In his song, *No Birth, No Base and Union*, Milarepa sings, “Without any direction, clarity shines timelessly.” The clarity that is the true nature of the mind cannot be located in any directional point; it cannot be said to exist at any specific time. It is not locatable in terms of time or space. Therefore it is not an entity, it is not something that you can point to and say, “Oh, it is there, and it was there from this period of time to that period of time,” or “It is over there.” It is not like that. So then what are its qualities? In the next line Milarepa sings, “You cannot hold it, you cannot say what it is.” This is teaching that the nature of this awareness is simplicity, freedom from conceptual elaboration. It cannot be grasped, it cannot be expressed in terms of its nature. And so in these two lines Milarepa sings of the true nature of mind being clarity-emptiness undifferentiable.

Then there is the part of the song about

union. There are four different types of union or undifferentiability that describe the mind’s true nature. These are appearance-emptiness undifferentiable, clarity-emptiness undifferentiable, bliss-emptiness undifferentiable, and awareness-emptiness undifferentiable. These words are very important.

The explanation of the union of bliss and emptiness is part of the extraordinary explanation of the vajrayana. As Naropa said to Marpa Lotsawa, “Passion has bliss-emptiness for a heart.” So the essence of passion or desire is bliss and emptiness undifferentiable, which is why one’s meditation in vajrayana is to meditate on the essence of passion, which is bliss-emptiness.

Question: As there is an experience of direct valid cognition of the mental consciousness after a moment of sense consciousness, is there also a moment of direct mental perception after a moment of conceptual consciousness?

Rinpoche: First, the direct perception of the mental consciousness is unlike sense consciousness direct perception, because sense consciousness direct perception happens in a continuum—there are many moments of it—but there is only one moment of the mental consciousness’s direct perception, which is produced right after any given moment of sense consciousness direct perception. So a moment of sense consciousness direct perception happens, which gives rise to a moment of mental consciousness direct perception, and that is it.

The answer to your specific question is no, the mental consciousness that perceives directly perceives in a way that is free of concepts, that is nonconceptual, and so it cannot possibly experience an object of the conceptual mind. The object of the conceptual mind is called the generally or abstractly characterized phenomenon. And what direct perception, either of the sense consciousnesses or of the mental consciousness, perceives is only the uniquely characterized object, the specifically characterized object.

According to the Sutra School, there are four

types of direct valid cognition: unconfused, nonconceptual perception of the sense consciousness is called sense direct valid cognition; unconfused nonconceptual direct perception of the mental consciousness is called mental direct valid cognition; unconfused nonconceptual self-experience (the mind experiencing itself) is called self-aware direct valid cognition; and unconfused nonconceptual perception that arises as the result of meditation is called yogic direct valid cognition. But the key to all of these is that they are all nonconceptual; direct valid cognition is always nonconceptual.

According to the tradition of the Vaibhasheka or the Particularist School, which is a lower school than the Sutra School, there are only three kinds of direct valid cognition: the sense consciousness valid cognition, the mental consciousness valid cognition, and yogic direct valid cognition. They do not assert the existence of self-aware direct valid cognition.

The reason why both the Sutra and the Particularist schools assert the existence of sense direct valid cognition and mental direct valid cognition is that they assert that there are outer objects to begin with. And so, [according to their view,] since there are truly existent outer objects, then there can be an unconfused perception of these objects by sense direct valid cognition and mental direct valid cognition.

According to the Mind Only School, the Cittamatra, outer objects do not really exist; they are just a result of confused habitual tendencies. And therefore, since there are no real outer objects, then there can be no unconfused perception of outer objects. And so they do not assert that perception of outer objects is in any way valid cognition; it is not valid cognition. And so the only two types of direct valid cognition that they assert are self-aware direct valid cognition and yogic direct valid cognition.

Question: How do the Madhyamaka or the Middle Way schools explain direct valid cognition?

Rinpoche: The explanations of valid cognition are mainly from the perspective of the sutra and the

mind only schools, the Sautrantika and the Cittamatra. The middle way or the Madhyamaka schools say that since there is not a single phenomenon that truly exists, then there is no such thing as valid cognition. They do not assert anything; they do not have any of their own assertions from their own perspective, because there is nothing to make any assertions about. There is no one to make any assertions, so how could there be any assertions? But they do explain things from the perspective of others. So they explain valid cognition from the perspective of how it is thought of in the world.

In terms of the four types of direct valid cognition, if we are not analyzing to see whether or not these things really exist, then we can accept them all, because they are sort of in harmony with how we experience the world. Once we start to analyze, we cannot find any of them existing, and that is called “from the perspective of slight analysis.” And then “from the perspective of thorough analysis,” genuine reality transcends both the existence and the non-existence of all of these different types of perceptions. So that is the most profound view of the middle way consequence school or the Prasangika Madhyamaka, which is that you cannot say they exist, you cannot say they do not exist, they are neither existent nor are they non-existent. [Nor are they both existent and non-existent, nor are they neither existent nor non-existent.]

That is why the Middle Way Consequence School is given that name “consequence,” because they do not make any assertions of their own, they only show the absurd consequences of everybody else’s assertions. They refute everybody else’s view; and if they themselves were to posit a view, then their own reasoning could refute that view. So they do not have any view; they do not assert anything. The Prasangikas know that, if they start making assertions, it would just be evidence of their own confusion.

Question: What is the difference between self-aware direct valid cognition and yogic direct valid cognition?

Rinpoche: Self-awareness, in this case, refers to the mind's own experience of what is happening in the mind, of its own feelings of happiness and suffering. So for example, if you experience happiness or suffering, you do not need somebody else to come and tell you that. Nobody else comes and says, "Oh, you are happy now," or "You are sad now." You know it yourself. No one else has any ability to know that or to make it one way or the other. So the mind knows itself; it experiences its own sensations and its own emotions, its own experiences. So that is self-awareness or self-aware direct valid cognition, the mind's experience of itself. On the other hand, yogic direct valid cognition is the experience of genuine reality that arises out of meditation. And so there is a very big difference between these two.

There are three parts to the definition of yogic direct valid cognition. It is unconfused, nonconceptual, and arisen from meditation. So the third part is what separates it, distinguishes it, from the other three types of valid cognition. Because the other three are all unconfused and nonconceptual, but only yogic direct valid cognition arises from meditation.

Also in the definition of self-aware direct valid cognition there are three parts: It is unconfused, nonconceptual, self-experience. So the third part, that it experiences itself, is what separates it from the first two types of direct valid cognition, which experience outer objects: sense consciousness direct valid cognition and mental consciousness direct valid cognition.

The definition of mental direct valid cognition is that it is the unconfused, nonconceptual experience of the mental consciousness. So since it is the mental consciousness, that separates it from sense consciousness direct valid cognition, which is experienced by the sense consciousnesses.

And then sense consciousness direct valid cognition is the nonconceptual, unconfused perception of the sense consciousnesses, which eliminates the possibility that it is mental direct valid cognition, because the sense consciousness is not the mental consciousness.

It is very important to know the difference

between yogic direct valid cognition and self-aware direct valid cognition. Yogic direct valid cognition arises from meditation at a very high level. It is possible, indeed easy, to be confused and to think that one's own experience is the same as yogic direct valid cognition, that what one experiences oneself is what yogis and yoginis experience, and that is not the case. So we have to know that these two are different.

But if one meditates on one's own experience, on the essence of what one's own experience is, then it is possible that that will transform into yogic direct valid cognition. But the key is, you need to meditate on it.

For example, when one experiences happiness, the mind's experience of that happiness is self-awareness; it is the mind experiencing itself. If we can meditate on the essence of what that experience is, then it can become yogic direct valid cognition.

If you do not meditate, then you can experience happiness, but it is not yogic direct valid cognition.

Question: Does yogic direct valid cognition include the other three kinds of direct valid cognition, once you realize their essence?

Rinpoche: Actually, there is no meditation on the essence of sense consciousness direct valid cognition, because that is just a mere clarity and nonconceptual; and so what one meditates on is the essence of mental direct valid cognition and self-aware direct valid cognition. When you meditate on the essence of those two experiences of the mental consciousness, the sense consciousnesses are just free all by themselves.

The explanation of mahamudra sheds some light on this, because according to mahamudra, the mental consciousness is of the nature of what in Tibetan is called *ösel*, which we translate as clear light or radiant clarity. So the mental consciousness is of the nature of radiant clarity. And the sense consciousnesses are the creative play or the energy of that radiant clarity. So there is no need to meditate on them separately. Once you realize the nature of the radiant clarity, then

the creative play of that radiant clarity is also self-liberated.

In the tradition of vajrayana, the meditations on the heat of *tummo* and so forth are meditations on the mind's own experience of bliss and emptiness. These are like meditating on the essence of self-awareness. They are not called that specifically, but if you joined these two explanation—the explanation given in *Praise to the Dharmadhatu* and the explanation given in the tradition of vajrayana, then you would say that those meditations are like meditation on self-awareness.

Bliss-emptiness is the mind's own experience of itself; and to meditate on that, focus on that bliss-emptiness, and then to rest, relaxed, within it, is to meditate within self-awareness.

Other questions?

Question: Is liberation through mindfulness as easy as just being aware of the conceptual process happening, of labeling the object?

Rinpoche: When we see this cup, that experience is nonconceptual; but then we think, "That is a cup." That is conceptual mental activity. Then to look at the essence of that thought is the self-liberation of the six consciousnesses. When we think "cup," it is that thought that binds us. But when we look into the essence of that thought, it just disintegrates and we are free, and it is very open and spacious and relaxed.

So we are not meditating on the cup here; the cup is not the focus of our meditation. The focus of our meditation is the thought that thinks that there is a cup. And so we look at the essence of that thought, and that essence is openness and spaciousness and relaxedness.

This liberation through mindfulness only happens for yogis and yoginis who have directly realized the true nature of mind. Those who have not attained this realization can use this meditation, but it does not actually truly liberate them. What has to come first is the realization or cultivation of an understanding of what the true nature of mind is. Then one can use this meditation to great effect.

This type of liberation through mindfulness

is just like having a dream and knowing that you are dreaming. If you know you are dreaming, then as soon as you remember, "Oh, I'm dreaming," then all the confusion of taking everything in the dream to be real disappears.

If you look at a cup in this dream and you think, "Oh, there is a cup," and you look at a flower and say, "Oh, there is a flower," but then you remember, "Hey, I'm just dreaming," then you are free of all that, and it does not hurt, does not confuse any more.

That is an example of liberation through mindfulness. But you still have to use this method. There is no catch.

Question: What is direct valid cognition?

Rinpoche: Direct valid cognition is defined as being nonconceptual and unconfused.

In some traditions of the science of valid cognition, all types of direct experience are not direct valid cognition. But we are not making that distinction here; we are not making a distinction between direct experience and direct valid cognition.

Both parts of this definition are very important. The part that says that it is nonconceptual eliminates other types of valid cognition, which are called inferential valid cognition. Through inferential valid cognition one comes to a correct conclusion, but through the use of thoughts and reasoning. So it is not direct. The part that says that it is unconfused eliminates the types of mental states that are also nonconceptual but are not valid cognition, as, for instance, if you look at snow mountains and they appear to be yellow because of some problem with your eyes. Or it is said that if you take some kinds of medicine, then you can see flowers in the sky and all different kinds of things, but that is not an unconfused perception, and so it does not count as direct valid cognition.

Question: [Inaudible.]

Translator: Yes, cognition means perception of the mind.

Rinpoche: So we will stop here for today; and there will be time for questions tomorrow. There are a lot of questions and they are very good, but we've heard a lot of questions and explained a lot, so it is good to stop here for now.

So now we will sing Milarepa's songs, *Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition* and also *The Song of the Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*. And since we have a new song here, which is Rinpoche's song called *What it Means to be Lucky (The Excellent Path laid with Precious Gems)*, we will also sing that.

When we have faith in the dharma, intelligence, and diligence that gives us the energy to

practice, then we are incredibly lucky, and we have to remember that. It is very important to remember that, and so this is what we sing about in this song. The tune is the same as the tune for *Auspiciousness that Lights Up the Universe*.

[Students sing all three songs. See pages 25 and 26 and see below.]

So now we will sing *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*.

[Students sing. See page 27.]

So for those of you who had questions that we didn't have time to answer today, please keep them in mind, refine them, and there will be time to answer them tomorrow.

Sarwa Mangalam. ㊦

What it Means to be Lucky

The Excellent Path Laid with Precious Gems

E ma ho!

Now you have got what's so hard to get,
The precious freedoms and advantages.
This one life alone means so little.
So why be so obsessed with it?
If to do some good for yourself and others too,
You listen to dharma, and then reflect,
Then you are so fortunate—
This is what it means to be lucky.

This life is quite impermanent;
It will definitely disappear.
You think everything will stay just as it is—
How to come out from this confusion into the clear?
Cut the root of samsara's confused appearances
By meditating on the meaning of what you've heard.
If you do this, you are so fortunate—
This is what it means to be lucky.

If you do good, you'll be happy.
If you do bad, you'll suffer pain.
Think well about how karma works
And you'll gain certainty that it's an unfailing law.
If then you act in a rightful way,
Doing what you should do and giving up the rest,
Then you are so fortunate—
This is what it means to be lucky.

The nature of samsara is the three sufferings.
When you know this in your heart, and it's not just something you say,
And so you can free yourself and others from samsara's ocean,
You cut off suffering right at the root.
If you can do that, then you are so fortunate—
This is what it means to be lucky.

Meditating on impermanence
Cuts off attachment to this life.
Thinking over and over of samsara's suffering
Makes you realize how worthless samsara is.
This gives you the determination
To strive for nirvana's liberation
If you do this, you are so fortunate—
This is what it means to be lucky.

Knowing samsara's cause is belief in "I,"
You know its remedy to be selflessness.
So if you apply scripture and reasoning
To gain certainty that there is no self,
And if you meditate on selflessness, you're so fortunate—
This is what it means to be lucky.

All beings have been your father and mother.
Knowing this, you train your mind in love and compassion.
This makes you stop worrying so much
About your own comfort and happiness.
When you give rise to supreme bodhicitta—
This is what it means to be lucky.

Everything in samsara and nirvana,
Without exception, is neither one nor many
So all phenomena are empty of essence.
And knowing that, if you meditate on profound emptiness,
Then you are so fortunate—
This is what it means to be lucky.

Meditating on emptiness cuts the root of existence.
Love and compassion free you from the extreme of peace.
When you bring together wisdom and means
That are stuck in neither existence nor peace's extremes,
Then you are so fortunate—
This is what it means to be lucky.

When you've made the mahayana path your sturdy base,
And you know so excellently
The way that the totality of appearance
Is an infinite expanse of purity,
Then the four empowerments
Will ripen your continuum.
When you practice profound creation and completion—
This is what it means to be lucky.

The fruit of this creation and completion
Must ripen at the appropriate time.
This depends on your pure vision
Of your vajra brothers and sisters—it must increase!
So if pure vision dawns in your mind—
This is what it means to be lucky.

Another reason you might be lucky—
The freedoms and resources, this excellent base,
Is hard to find, and what's harder than that
Is using it to practice dharma correctly.
So if you are on the path of correct practice—
This is what it means to be lucky.

Knowing what it means to be lucky
Day and night, without distraction
In order to accomplish great benefit
For the teachings and for all beings
May all of us practice
The dharma of the lucky ones.

On December 27, 1997, in the Garden of Translation near the Great Stupa of Boudhanath, Nepal, this was spoken extemporaneously by the one only called “Khenpo,” Tsultrim Gyamtso. Translated by Ari Goldfield.



‘These three instants of mind—an initial instant of nonconceptual direct sense perception, an instant of nonconceptual direct perception by the mental consciousness, and then an instant of conceptual mental consciousness—continue to follow one after the other with such speed that the experience becomes blurred and mixed together.’

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu

Buddha Mind Is Aware of Everything At the Same Time, No Matter How Much

Continuing the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's teaching on Nagarjuna's In Praise of the Dharmadhatu, the following edited transcript is from September 21. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.

Let us sing *What it Means to be Lucky: the Excellent Pathway Laid with Precious Gems*.

[Students sing. See page 62.]

Now we will begin by reciting the verses on the self-liberation of what are called the twelve sources of consciousness or the twelve *ayatanas* from *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, which we passed out yesterday under the title, Selected Verses from Nagarjuna's *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*.

[Students recite. See page 54.]

If people have questions about any of the verses that Rinpoche has explained up to this point, now would be a good time to ask.

Question: [Inaudible.]

Translator: So the question is about the explanation in the text that sentient beings and fully enlightened buddhas have no connection in terms of being of the same essence. The text explains that they are not of the same essence.



Rinpoche: We need to understand the conventional terms and how they are applied in this way of explaining. The text literally says that sentient beings do not have the heart of the buddha. This term—*sangye nyingpo*—is usually translated as buddha nature. So what does it mean in this explanation that they do not have buddha nature? It means that they are not the same as enlightened buddhas. But it does not mean that there is no

connection between sentient beings and the buddha. Sentient beings have what is called buddha potential. What these two terms are describing are different stages of the dharmadhatu. At the stage that the dharmadhatu is covered over by obscurations, then it is called buddha potential; it is not called the buddha essence. At the stage the stains are completely cleared away, then the dharmadhatu is called the buddha or the buddha essence. So it is that difference in terminology that we have to pay attention to. Unenlightened beings have the same dharmadhatu nature all along; it is just a matter of whether or not it is covered over by stains. The example that is given to show why they are not the same as the buddha, but have the buddha potential, is again the example of the banana tree, which is not the same in essence as the

banana but has the potential to produce the sweet fruit of the banana.

And similarly, dharmadhatu, primordial awareness, when obscured, when covered over, is called the buddha potential; when it is free from stains, when it is no longer obscured, then it is called buddhahood or nirvana.

The reason that this distinction is made—that the buddha potential is not the same as enlightenment—is that there is a philosophical tenet held by the non-Buddhist Samkhya school that asserts that the result exists at the time of the cause, and that all that happens in any situation of cause and result is that the result, which is there all along, simply becomes manifest. But the whole result, according to this school, is there all along. But the Middle Way schools refute this view, saying that it is impossible for the result to exist at the time of the cause. So if they asserted that a fully enlightened buddha existed at the time of the potential, then that would reflect the same view as the Samkhya School and the Middle Way schools would then no longer be able to refute that view.

So, to distinguish this presentation from the presentation made by the Samkhya School, it is explained that the buddha potential is there in sentient beings, but not the result of complete enlightenment. But then, when the stains are cleared away, the buddha nature completely manifests, and then there is full enlightenment.

Question: In the *Prayer of Mahamudra*, by Rangjung Dorje, it says that beings by nature are continually buddha. Is there a difference in explanation from a tantric perspective on this? Because they seem to be asserting that the actual buddha is present. Is this way of explaining that sentient beings have the buddha potential but not the buddha essence in any way contradictory to an explanation of the tantric view that the nature of sentient beings is always buddha and never changes?

Rinpoche: The important thing here is to distinguish two different perspectives. From the perspective of primordial awareness itself, primordial

awareness is never stained. From its own perspective, it is always completely free of any flaw. And so from that perspective then, it is unchanging, and it is the same at the time of the ground, the path, and the fruition. This is called naturally, completely pure nirvana, and is explained as one type of nirvana—naturally, completely pure nirvana: *rangshin namdak nyangende*. The other type of nirvana is called *lobur dridral nyangende*, and that means the nirvana that is free from fleeting adventitious stains, which is, in other words, the manifestation of actual enlightenment. This type of nirvana is explained from the perspective of sentient beings and the stages of the path. So if you say these two are the same, according to Shakyas Chogden in this commentary, the problem you run into is that you are then saying that the cause and the result are exactly the same thing. That is why they distinguish between these two types of nirvana and distinguish between [viewing the question] from the perspective of primordial awareness itself, and from the perspective of sentient beings and the stages of the path.

Also, it is possible that if people thought, “Well, my nature is buddhahood, so I’m enlightened,” that would be an arrogant way of thinking. And so, in order to prevent people from having that type of belief, which would just be arrogant [and therefore detrimental to them], it is said, “No, you are not enlightened yet; you have the potential to become enlightened, but it is not the same as saying that you are enlightened.” So it is probably important that that be done.

Question: In *What it Means to be Lucky*, in the fourth section, what are the three sufferings?

Rinpoche: The first kind of suffering is when we have an actual experience of pain, either mental or physical, which is called the suffering of suffering. The second kind of suffering is the fact that whenever we are happy, it changes. We could be happy in terms of our body being healthy, or we could be experiencing a mental state that we find enjoyable, but it does not last. And so that is the suffering of change. And finally, the third type of

suffering is what is called the all-pervasive suffering of the aggregates. And this is just the fact that as soon as you have these aggregates, these five skandhas, you are suffering; they just go together. But this is not something that we perceive in terms of a direct feeling of suffering.

The literal translation of the third type of suffering is the all-pervasive suffering of what is composite. The aggregates are composite, which means that they are a result of causes and conditions, and they have no power to remain, even for an instant; they are constantly decaying. And there is nothing that anybody can do about it. So this suffering results from the fact that, even if you wanted them [the aggregates] to stay around, there is nothing we can do about it.

For example, this body is changing moment by moment, and nobody can do anything about it.

And mind too is changing moment by moment, and there is nothing we can do about that either; it just happens. The five aggregates are always changing, moment by moment.

So samsara is of the nature of the three sufferings, but according to the mahayana these sufferings are appearance-emptiness; they are not real. For example, you could be dreaming that you were burning in a fire; that would be the suffering of suffering. You could also go to a great party [in your dream] and something could go wrong; that would be the suffering of change. But neither of them is truly existent. According to the explanation that we are studying here, it is all the dharmadhatu. It is only because we do not realize that it is the dharmadhatu, that we think that it is real. But that does not mean that it is real. It is the dharmadhatu.

**When eye and form assume their right relation,
Appearances appear without a blur
Since these neither arise nor cease, they are the
dharmadhatu,
Though they are imagined to be otherwise. (38)**

The eye sense faculty and the form [which is seen] have no atoms at all; they are not made of anything. There is not a single, present, existent, even tiniest, tiniest atom of any material thing, of any matter. There is nothing substantial there at

all. And when these two things which are not made of atoms meet, they produce a perfectly clear moment of eye sense consciousness perception. But this moment of eye sense consciousness perception never really arises, and it never really goes out of existence either. It is the dharmadhatu; and the only reason why it appears to us to be otherwise is that we think that it is something else. We just think that it is something else. There is no other reason why it should be like that. This vision is not something truly existent; it is just something that we imagine in our thoughts.

It is just like in a dream. If you see something in a dream, there are no atoms there or anything. And similarly, the eye is not made out of anything. And the consciousness that experiences this perception is just mere clarity; it is exquisite perfect clarity, clarity and emptiness. The form is appearance-emptiness, the sense faculty is appearance-emptiness, and the sense consciousness is clarity-emptiness; so it is all the dharmadhatu. But then our thoughts come along and say, "Oh, no, that is not the dharmadhatu; I just saw something." This is a dream, remember? It is just a dream. There is nothing there to see and there is nothing to see, but we still think that there is. And it is also like that during the daytime, there is no difference.

When our thoughts still think that there is something happening, then we still only have the potential. When we are free of these thoughts, then that is enlightenment, that is nirvana. This makes a very good connection, actually, between the stage of enlightenment and the stage of being a sentient being, because we can see exactly what the connection is and what the difference is. This is according to the tradition of the great pandit Shakya Chogden. So let's recite this first verse together.

[Students recite.]

Question: Is it possible to relate to a sound that you hear that is a word, or to a form that you see that is a word, in the dharmadhatu? How would the buddhas understand anything, if they are always nonconceptual?

Rinpoche: This is how it is for us. If we do not

have concepts, if our conceptual mind just goes blank, then we cannot understand anything; we cannot converse, we cannot read. That is true. But a buddha is not operating with what is called consciousness, *namshe*. A buddha is operating with what is called *yeshe*, primordial awareness; and specifically it is called the primordial awareness that is omniscient, that knows all aspects. An example that is given to help us understand this is that, if you had a forest with countless trees in it and a mirror big enough, then all of the trees would shine in the mirror at the same time, no matter how many trees there were. And similarly, the buddha mind is aware of everything at the same time, no matter how much it is. How does this work? Well, we cannot really conceive of how it works, because we can only operate with conceptual mind. So this literally is called something that is difficult to deduce, because our reasoning cannot conceive of this type of omniscience, which is a function of a buddha's primordial awareness. Because we are operating with consciousness, and a buddha is not. So that is the main difference.

You cannot see a very small atom with your naked eye, but if you build an electron microscope, you can start to see atoms and subatomic particles. You cannot see a star that is very far away with your naked eye, but if you build a very large telescope, then you can start to see distant stars. Similarly, our consciousness does not have the ability to relate to how a buddha's wisdom actually works, because a buddha's wisdom is like this huge microscope that is much more powerful than our ordinary consciousness. So we cannot really conceive of it; all we can understand are examples such as these of how perception can be limited but then enhanced with these different types of machines. Through realization, one starts to uncover a buddha's omniscience, but in terms of how it works, we cannot conceive of it, because our minds are too narrow in their focus.

If you are standing on your roof trying to have a conversation with someone even one house away, it is difficult. But if you have a telephone, then you can talk to anybody anywhere in the world. If you send a letter, it might take a couple of weeks to get somewhere, but if you use a fax

machine, then you can send it anywhere in the world and no matter how near or far you are from that place, it takes virtually the same amount of time to get there. If we stand up on our roof, we cannot see very far, but if we have a television set we can see what is happening anywhere in the world without leaving our own home. Our own physical components of perception and communication are limited in their power. But we can increase and enhance their power immensely by connecting them with other types of substantial things. By these examples we can understand that, although our own minds are very limited in their abilities, a buddha's mind is infinitely vaster and more powerful, and can perceive things in a radically different way. Through these types of examples we can understand how a buddha's wisdom is really inconceivable in terms of the difference in ability and power when compared with our own consciousness.

There are four things that are explained to be difficult to understand. "Difficult to understand" means inconceivable. So there are four things which are inconceivable. The first one groups together two things, the power of mantra and the power of medicine. That reciting mantras makes sicknesses go away and has many other kinds of extraordinary powers, and medicine's ability to change things, these two are [in the final analysis] inconceivable as to how they actually work. The second inconceivable is emptiness. Emptiness is not something that we can understand with our conceptual mind. Until we realize it directly, we really have no idea of what it is. The third one is a buddha's omniscience. The fourth one is the particularities of karma—what action is going to lead to what result at what particular time. These four things are inconceivable; there is no way that we can know them conceptually.

Nowadays, when scientists talk about the inconceivable energy of matter that allows different things to function, like faxes and telephones and things like that, then that is included in the first one. It is called the inconceivability of the power of substantial matter.

Question: Is meditation alone sufficient means to allow one to realize suffering to be dharmadhatu, or do you need other means as well?

Rinpoche: Meditation is the best method for realizing the nature of suffering. But we also need other methods too, in particular and mainly the path of conduct, meaning the accumulation of merit. Accumulating merit is like gathering the wood that will make the fire of wisdom burn very brightly. If we do not gather merit, then the wisdom fire is not going to burn very brightly at all. Actually, you can look at it also as two different stages of meditation. One stage of meditation is when you are sitting in meditative equipoise; the other stage is when you are in what is translated as “post-meditation.” The word in Tibetan that is translated as “post-meditation” is *jetop*; it literally means “subsequent attainment.” So it means the attainment after you are meditating. When you are not meditating formally, if you are viewing the world as an illusion, you are also increasing your realization. That is also a stage of meditation. And as you are viewing the world as an illusion, then you are also accumulating the merit that allows the fire of wisdom realizing emptiness to burn increasingly brightly.

Sometimes they say that the point of deity meditation is to meet the deity face to face, to really see the deity. But it is not always the meditation practice that allows you to do that. Sometimes it is great compassion that allows you to do that. So, for example, the noble Asanga meditated on Maitreya for twelve years and did not see a single sign of him. But then [in post-meditation] he developed great compassion, and then he saw Maitreya face to face.

The mahasiddha Tilopa meditated for twelve years in the western monastery called Sumapudey, with iron chains shackling his legs so that he would not get up and go elsewhere. There is such a tradition of meditation. You can tie yourself with a meditation belt so that you do not move; and then, so that you do not run away, you can bolt yourself to the ground. Tilopa did that for twelve years. He meditated on the creation stage; and he actually perfected the

creation stage practice, in terms of the clarity of the deity, but he did not realize mahamudra through that practice. Then he got up—he must have unshackled himself—he got up and he went to town, and he got a job pounding sesame seeds and working as a bartender; and then through that he realized mahamudra.

Actually, he was not even the bartender, he was the assistant to the bartender. Tilopa was from the class of kings and as a result had a lot of pride. And so he took a job as a bartender’s servant and a sesame seed pounder to get rid of his arrogance. There is no way that you can be arrogant and proud thinking, “Oh, I’m a great prince,” when you are sitting there banging sesame seeds. And he also worked to eliminate his pride of being a really great meditator. Because it is also difficult to have pride in your meditative accomplishment as a famous meditator, when you are working as a servant, as a waiter, as a bartender, and as a sesame seed pounder. As a result of this menial work his pride decreased, and he was able to realize mahamudra.

That is why, if you meditate while working, if you can work and meditate at the same time, it is actually possible to completely realize mahamudra. It is possible.

Question: My question is about the view of the Rangtong or Empty-of-Self School, which comes from the second turning of the wheel of dharma, and the view of the Shentong or the Empty-of-Other School, that comes from the third turning of the wheel of dharma. Which of these teachings is definitive? It seems to be a matter of debate, which is very subtle and complex. If we do not know all of the subtleties and complexities of this debate, then what is the best way to think about how these two schools relate to each other?

Rinpoche: In order to refute assertions, in order to destroy conceptual reference points or conceptual reference, the Rangtong is better. For meditation, for resting in meditative equipoise, Shentong is better. So actually we need both. This is the way that Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye explains it.

People have many different views about the true nature of reality. To refute these views, the best way is to use the different reasonings of the Rangtong, of the Empty-of-Self School, because there are so many, and because any type of assertion about reality as being this or that can be refuted by the Rangtong reasonings. If you just believed in the Shentong alone, and you left the Rangtong somewhere else, then you would have a difficult time with those assertions, because Shentong does not really address them; it is just about meditation, just about how to rest in meditation. So both are very important.

So when you say, as the Shentong does, “Oh, the buddha nature is spontaneously present in every sentient being,” then all of a sudden you have an assertion. And if you have an assertion or assertions, then it is difficult to start refuting other people’s assertions [with the kind of logic that demonstrates that any conceptual understanding of the nature of reality is false and misleading].

If you say that sentient beings have the buddha essence or the buddha nature spontaneously present within them, then it is difficult, for instance, to refute the Samkhya School’s view that the result is present at the time of the cause. This is why the people who stick only to the Rangtong and refuse to accept the Shentong view [as definitive] do not like the Shentong. They say, “Well, if you say that primordial awareness is at all times naturally present in sentient beings, then what is the difference between your view and the Samkhya view? There is no difference. If one accepts your view, there is no way to refute their view; and there would be no need to refute their view, either. Your view is the same as the view of this Hindu school.” And so that is why they do not like the Shentong.

The refutation of the Samkhya School’s view that the result is present at the time of the cause is very clearly made by Shantideva in his text *The Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*, where he says, if the result exists at the time of the cause, then when you eat food you are eating shit. Because the cause of shit is food. So if the result exists at the time of the cause, then when you

eat food you are eating shit; there is no difference. And also, if the result existed at the time of the cause, he said, then people would just buy cotton seeds and would wear them, because they would be the same as clothes. So it does not make any sense.

That is why in this commentary, Shakya Chogden says that at the time sentient beings are obscured from seeing the dharmadhatu, they do not have the enlightened buddha essence; what they have is buddha potential. And then, when all obscurations have been cleared away, then they have the enlightened buddha essence.

Therefore, when you are refuting someone else’s view, the view of the Consequence School, Rangtong, is better; but when you are meditating, the view of Shentong is better.

When meditating, you do not need to engage in refutation of others’ views. All you need to do is rest in your basic nature. Our basic nature is the basic nature of mind, which is clarity and emptiness or awareness and the expanse undifferentiable. [Once it has been pointed out,] we just rest in that; and that is it. So Shentong is better for that.

That is why Milarepa sang, “The view is original wisdom, which is empty; meditation, clear light, free of fixation; conduct, continual flow without attachment; fruition is nakedness stripped of every stain.” That view is in harmony with the Shentong view.

It is important for us to do research on and to see what Milarepa had to say, what the Rangtong view is, and what the Shentong view is; we have to look into these questions. Research into the view is the most important kind of research we can ever do.

So we will sing Milarepa’s song, *Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition*.

[Students sing. See page 25.]

This song of Milarepa’s is completely in harmony with the view of Shentong, and there is no more profound explanation of the Shentong view than is found in this song. So you should memorize it. So now, please ask your question.

Question: Is Shentong the same as Cittamatra?

Are the Shentong and Cittamatra views the same?

Rinpoche: Those who assert the Rangtong view throw the Shentong down with the Mind Only, the Cittamatra view, and they say that they are the same. But those who say that the Shentong view is the highest view lift the Shentong up, and place Rangtong in the middle, between the Cittamatra and the Shentong.*

We have to understand what this means. If you say that the Shentong view and the Chittamatra view are the same, then what you are saying is that the highest view is the Rangtong; and if you say that the Shentong view is the highest view, then you are saying that there are stages in the development of the view that go from Chittamatra or Mind Only to Rangtong to Shentong.

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye explained it like this: If you say that *consciousness* that is empty of duality truly exists, then you are a Mind Only School proponent; if you say that *primordial awareness* empty of duality truly exists, then you are Shentong. There is a difference. So we have to examine exactly what that means.

That is the most important statement out of the root text of *The Treasury of Knowledge*. It explains the difference. There is a root text and then there is commentary.

Question: Is the Shentong view the basis of dzogchen?

Rinpoche: It is not explicitly stated like that, but it is the case that the views of mahamudra, of dzogchen, and of Shentong are in harmony with each other. So we need to do research into this; we need to look and see what words the Shentong school uses to describe ultimate reality, what words mahamudra uses to describe ultimate reality, what words dzogchen uses to describe ultimate reality.

***Editor's note:** According to Khenpo Rinpoche's teachings in the *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, the principal Buddhist views in ascending order are the hinayana schools of Sautrantika and Vaibashika (the Sutra School) and the mahayana schools of Cittamatra, Rangtong Madhyamaka (Svatantrika Madhyamaka and Prasangika Madhyamaka), and Shentong Madhyamaka.

According to dzogchen, genuine reality is alpha** pure primordial awareness or awareness that transcends mental operations—*semde gyi rigpa*. This is the same as what Milarepa is singing about in the last song.

Question: Rinpoche, would you give a little commentary on the notion that fruition risks getting clothed in the garments of attributes? What exactly does the “garments of attributes” refer to?

Rinpoche: The “garment of attributes” refers to the spontaneously present qualities of enlightenment. But if one becomes attached to these qualities as being real, then they are not qualities any longer; they become clothing that covers over the nakedness of the fruition. The attributes of the fruition are spontaneously present, but if one fixates on them as being real, then they become clothing and thus an obscuration.

These attributes that are spontaneously present are inconceivable; what they are cannot be conceptualized. When we start to conceptualize them, saying, “Oh, they are this quality or that quality,” then that all of a sudden covers them over. And that is why in his song *No Birth, No Base and Union*, Milarepa sings:

**Even confused thoughts themselves are clear light
that shines so brilliantly.
Experience is so bright like sun and moonlight.
Without any direction, clarity shines timelessly.
You cannot hold it, you cannot say what it is.**

These last two lines, about clarity's shining timelessly without any direction, that you cannot hold or say what it is, point to the inconceivability of the fruition and to the inconceivability of primordial awareness, which cannot be described or grasped with conceptual mind.

Question: Please explain the line in the song, “If certainty, which is in touch with what is meant, does not follow.”

****Editor's note:** In the Tibetan, *ka dak*, *ka* is the first letter of the Tibetan alphabet as *alpha* is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. The idea in both cases is pure from the beginning, or originally pure.

Rinpoche: We need to have certainty about what reality is. If we do not have certainty, we have doubt. Doubt and certainty are completely opposite to each other. If we still have doubts, then it is impossible for just the words to free or liberate us from our clinging. So we should have certainty as to what actual reality is. If we do not have certainty and just go around saying original wisdom is empty, then it will not help.

So now we will sing the *Song of the Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*.

[Students sing. See page 26.]

Now it would be good if we sang the *Six Questions*.

[Students sing. See below.]

Rinpoche has composed his own commentary to this song, called *The Essence of Amrita: a Commentary on the Meaning of the Six Questions*, and he will

now give us the reading transmission for that.

The first line is a prostration. It says, “Namo Guru Hasa Vajra Ye.” *Hasa Vajra* is the Sanskrit name for Shepa Dorje, or Laughing Vajra in English, which is another name for Milarepa.

So we will sing this song together. The tune is the same as the tune for the original song.


[Students sing. See page 73.]

Now, whatever thoughts arise, look at them nakedly. Rest, relaxed.

Even if kleshas arise, mental afflictions arise, just look at them nakedly and rest, relaxed. Let them be self-liberated as is described in the song, *Six Questions*.

Now let us sing *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*.

[Students sing. See page 27.]

Sarwa Mangalam. 

The Six Questions

Mind has even more projections than there are dust motes in the sun.
Is there an accomplished yogi here or a yogini
Who sees the appearance of things laid bare in the very bed where it lies?

The basic nature of things is not produced by cause or condition.
Is there an accomplished yogi here or a yogini
Who gets to the very bottom of this, cuts down to its very root?

Mind's impulse to sudden thought cannot be stopped by hundreds with spears
Is there an accomplished yogi here or a yogini
Who sees that attachment can dissolve, be freed in and of itself?

The movement of thinking mind cannot be locked in an iron box
Is there an accomplished yogi here or a yogini
Who sees that discursive mind itself is empty in itself?

The sensory enjoyments even wisdom deities do not shun
Is there an accomplished yogi here or a yogini
Who's able to see through the transparency of the process of consciousness?

What about the appearance of the six kinds of objects that go with the consciousnesses?
Not even the hands of Victorious Ones can put a stop to that.
Is there an accomplished yogi here or a yogini
Who can see there is no object there behind the appearances?

The Essence of Amrita

A Commentary on the Meaning of the Six Questions

Namo Guru Hasa Vajra Ye!

You realized genuine reality
And by the power of your realization
You taught your disciples, your daughters and sons,
Not to try to make thoughts go away
Because thoughts are already liberated
In the very spot where they are.
Oh great one, Shepa Dorje,
I bow at your feet, respectfully.

Limitless numbers of thoughts come out of habitual tendencies' spring.
So if you don't know how to self-liberate thoughts
Without trying to make them go away,
You'll never be free of getting rid of your thoughts
As they come up one after the other!
Thoughts self-liberated, not given up, is
Definitive meaning's profound point.

The basic nature of things is not produced by cause or condition.
If you can't cut through your subtle ideas
About the way things really are,
Your own theories about reality
Will shackle you in chains.
So baselessness and rootlessness are
Definitive meaning's profound point.

"Mind's impulse to sudden thought cannot be stopped by hundreds with spears."
This is how Milarepa sang it and so
There must be another way—
It's attachment dissolving naturally,
Free as soon as it dawns.
This way of liberation is
Definitive meaning's profound point.

Thoughts' movement between the three times cannot be locked in an iron box.
So know that conceptuality
Is the great self-emptiness.
Self-liberation of your thoughts is
Definitive meaning's profound point.

Form, sound, smell, taste, and touch and the qualities they possess—
Even wisdom deities
Don't refrain from enjoying them.
The six consciousnesses self-liberated
Is spacious relaxation.
Taking sense-pleasures to the path is
Definitive meaning's profound point.

What about the appearance of the six kinds of objects that go with the consciousness?
There isn't anyone, whoever it may be,
Who can put a stop to that.
So knowing that the object appearing there
Has no substantial existence
And taking appearance to the path is
Definitive meaning's profound point.

So that's the way of definitive meaning—it's incredibly profound.
And since samsara and nirvana are not different things—they're equality,
And since rejected and gained are nondual—they're equality, too
Definitive meaning's profound way is present naturally.

May you find doubt-free certainty in profound definitive meaning,
And get used to not taking one thing up
And abandoning another,
And get used to not practicing one thing and
Giving up something else.
And may the benefit of self and other be
Accomplished naturally.

On December 28, 1997, in the Garden of Translation near the Great Stupa of Boudhanath, Nepal, this was spoken extemporaneously by the one only called "Khenpo," Tsultrim Gyamtso. With thanks to Jim Scott for his translation and arrangement of Milarepa's song, *The Six Questions*, it was translated by Ari Goldfield. Revised February 10, 1998.

Vajra Songs of the Indian Siddhas

The Dharmadhatu Unrealized Is the Basis of Samsara; The Dharmadhatu Realized Is the Basis of Nirvana



On the evening of September 22, the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche taught the Vajra Songs of the Indian Siddhas. The following edited transcript is from that evening. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.

Let's sing the *Song of Meaningful Connections*. [Students sing. See page 19.] Now, not leaving out anybody we don't like, for the benefit of all sentient beings please aspire to attain the great state of enlightenment, which depends on the realization of equality for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order to do that, we must listen to, reflect on, and meditate on the vajra songs of the great siddhas with all the enthusiasm we can muster. This is the precious attitude of bodhicitta. Please give rise to it and listen to the teachings.

You have all received a book entitled *Vajra Songs of the Masters* from *Mahamudra, The Ocean of Certainty*, also known as *Mahamudra, the Ocean of Definitive Meaning*. First Rinpoche will give us the reading transmission for these songs, and then we will

recite them together.

The first song is Tilopa's. Tilopa was the king of yogis and yoginis, the greatest siddha of India, and also the founder of the Kagyu lineage:

**For example, the nature of space [is] beyond color and shape;
Unstained by black and white [clouds], [it is] unchanging.
Like this, your own mind, the heart [of a buddha], transcends color and shape
And will not be stained by the phenomena of white virtue [and] black negative action.**

**For example, although you apply the verbal convention "emptiness" to space,
You cannot say about space, "It is like this."
Likewise, although it is said that [the nature of] your own mind is radiant clarity,
The verbal convention that says, "It exists like this," has no basis of imputation.
From time without beginning, the true nature of the mind is like space.
There is no phenomenon that is not included in this [expanse].**

**If the mind has no object of focus, that is [ultimate] mahamudra.
If you become familiar with this and used to it, you'll attain unexcelled enlightenment.**

"The verbal convention that says, 'It exists like this,' has no basis of imputation," means that you could say something about the mind, but there is no object to which you can impute that name [or attribute]; the object that is the basis for giving a name does not exist.

These words are very much in harmony with *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*. Just as the nature of space or the sky cannot be described as having color or shape and is never truly stained by thick black clouds or by white clouds and is unchanging, so also the true nature of the mind has neither color nor shape and is not stained by either positive action or negative action.

That virtue is something that helps and that non-virtue is something that harms only depends on thoughts. These are just conceptual notions. In the true nature of mind there is neither

virtue nor negative, harmful action.

And just as space is inexpressible, because you cannot really find anything there to describe, similarly the mind, radiant clarity, is inexpressible; you can never find words to describe exactly what it is.

The final two lines say, "If the mind has no object of focus, that is ultimate mahamudra. If you become familiar with this and used to it, you'll attain unexcelled enlightenment." The highest form of meditation is meditation without conceptual reference, which is called mahamudra. If there is a focus, then the focus obscures; if there is grasping or effort, then that binds. Where there is no reference point whatsoever for the mind is mahamudra.

The next verse is the speech of the great siddha Saraha, which we will read together:

**Mind [itself] is the basis of samsara and nirvana.
Once you realize [its nature], rest in the ease of non-meditation.
Other than within yourself, to look for it elsewhere is completely deluded.
There's nothing of "It's this." "It's not this."
Everything [abides] within the natural state.**

In *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, Nagarjuna writes that the dharmadhatu is the basis for samsara when it is not realized and is the basis for nirvana when it is realized. Here Saraha says the same thing, that the mind is the root of both samsara and nirvana. If one realizes the nature of mind there is no meditation; everything is just relaxed. And there is no need to look for enlightenment anywhere outside of the mind's true nature. Enlightenment is present within the mind.

When the mind's true nature is realized, there is no meditation. So then what does one do? One just rests, relaxed.

The next verse is from Shantarakshita. Let's recite it together.

**Not moving from the expanse of equality, various magical creations are shown.
Diverse rivers, [large and] small, [enter] into the ocean, [taking on] the same salty taste.
The multiplicity of [phenomena] have one taste:**

there is no difference.

Since the taste of the natural state pervades all [appearances and] all [concepts, there is] bliss.

The true nature of reality is the expanse of equality or the dharmadhatu, equality being the dharmadhatu. And from within this expanse, and not moving from this expanse, appearances arise like magical emanations. When beings take these appearances to be real, then they are confused.

There are many different kinds of phenomena, but they are all of the nature of equality. From within this equality, many phenomena arise. So they are equal; and from within equality, many different appearances can appear.

If you dream a dream, and in your dream it happens to look like this, then what is that, one or many? How is it? Is it many or one?

Many different things appear in this dream, but their nature is that they are all the same. In actual reality everything is of one taste.

Now from the Indian siddha Nyimai Tsal, whose name means the play of sunlight:

**These various [appearances are] the magical creations of mind[’s true nature].
Mind cannot be pointed out by saying, “It’s this.”
Therefore, samsara and nirvana have no root.**

Many different appearances appear before us, but they are all just the magical display of the mind’s intrinsic radiance. What is mind? You cannot say what mind is. Mind is inexpressible, it is indescribable. Therefore, samsara and nirvana have no root, and this is the dharmakaya, it is the dharmadhatu; the dharmakaya and the dharmadhatu are the same.

Everything we experience is just the magical display of the mind, and its true nature is equality. Its true nature is all the same, the dharmadhatu. This explanation is also in harmony with *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*. So let’s recite this again three times.

[Students recite.]

The next verse, which is from Dhombipa, Dhombe Heruka:

Samsaric existence and nirvanic peace [have the nature of] equality, free of conceptual

complication.

Straining for achievement, you’re exhausted for no reason.

To grasp the transparent nonduality of body and mind

As separate brings nothing but affliction.

To grasp the nonduality of self and other, the dharmakaya,

As good and bad is cause for compassion.

Since samsara and nirvana are of the nature of equality, the freedom from all conceptual elaboration, then to exert oneself trying to get something and trying to eliminate something else is a waste of time.* It is tiring.** Since actually body and mind are a transparent mixture of nonduality, then to take body to be one thing and mind to be something else is the cause of mental affliction.*** Since self and other are actually genuinely of the nature of nonduality, the dharmakaya, then to think some are good and others are bad is mistaken. Equality is the dharmadhatu.

[Students recite again three times.]

Now we will read from Nyima Bepa, the Hidden Sun:

**By looking at the body, [you’ll see it’s] unborn.
By looking at the mind, [you’ll see it’s] free of conceptual complication.**

The real nature of this nonduality transcends the mind.

I’ve understood nothing at all.

When we look at the body [in meditation], we see that it never comes into existence, it never

***Editor’s note:** One should not adopt this line as justification for not exerting oneself in the practice of dharma and in the effort to benefit others. This instruction is not designed for those whose minds are locked in dualistic perception. This type of instruction is appropriate for those whose experience of nonduality is sufficiently strong that if they stop exerting themselves in the practice of dharma the process of mental purification, of the accumulation of merit, and of benefiting beings will continue automatically and even more powerfully.

****Editor’s note:** Because at this point, to continue to make effort is like swimming upstream the river of one’s own imminent mahamudra experience.

*****Editor’s note:** And also the cause of unnecessary expense and time wasted in the doctor’s office and going to and from the doctor’s office.

really happens. When we look at the mind, the mind's true nature is the freedom from all conceptual fabrication. The real nature of this nonduality, the nonduality of body and mind, transcends thinking mind, conceptual mind. "I've understood nothing at all"; I don't know anything.*

This teaches that the true nature of reality transcends thinking mind. All [subjects and] objects of thinking mind are completely false.

[Students recite three times.]

The next verse is from Maitripa, Marpa's main teacher of mahamudra:

**All phenomena are empty of a self-essence.
The mind grasping them as empty is pure in its ground.**

**Free of intellect, with no object for the mind,
This is the path of all buddhas.**

All phenomena are empty of themselves.**
And then there is the mind that thinks, "Oh, phenomena are empty." But this thought itself is naturally pure in its own ground, in its own place, [exactly where it was thought]. Because its true nature, the true nature of mind, is free of intellect, meaning it is free of conceptualization. There is no object for the mind, which means that the true nature of mind is inconceivable; it cannot be an object of conceptual mind. This is the path of all buddhas.

[Students recite three times.]

Tonight, Rinpoche has given us the transmission, and we have recited the verses, of the great Indian siddhas; tomorrow Rinpoche will give us the transmission, and we will recite the verses, from the Tibetan siddhas. Now let's recite all of the verses for which Rinpoche has given us the *lung* tonight.

[Students recite.]

As the mahasiddha Tilopa said, "If the mind has no object of focus, that is ultimate

mahamudra. If you become familiar with this and used to it, you will attain unexcelled enlightenment."

Rest with a child's independence. Rest like an ocean, free of waves. Rest with a butter lamp's clarity. Rest like a corpse, without arrogance. Rest like a mountain, so still.

[Students meditate.]

We should recite the verses from the Indian siddhas again from the beginning; and then, when we get tired, we should just rest a little bit in meditation.

[Students recite and then meditate.]

Rest with a child's independence. Rest like an ocean free of waves. Rest with a butter lamp's clarity. Rest like a corpse, without arrogance. Rest like a mountain, so still.

[Students meditate with Rinpoche.]

One should all recite all of these verses 108 times, and then they will be memorized.

Now let us recite the six verses from *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*. We have to recite these six verses to see what in these verses is similar to the view of the siddhas and what, if anything, may be different.

[Students recite Selected Verses from Nagarjuna's *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*. See page 54.]

Guru Rinpoche was an Indian siddha, so we should sing the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche*, then *The Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*, and then *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*.

[Students sing. See pages 52, 26, and 27.]

Sarwa Mangalam. ॐ

***Editor's note:** If there is an "I" that knows "something," that is duality.

****Editor's note:** Empty of anything that is essentially themselves and that therefore differentiates them individually and permanently from the rest of what is.

Vajra Songs of the Tibetan Siddhas

When We Can Take Suffering to the Path for the Benefit of Others, We Are Incredibly Fortunate

On the evening of September 23, the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche taught the Vajra Songs of the Tibetan Siddhas. The following edited transcript is from that evening. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.

Sarwa Mangalam. First we will sing *Seven Delights* by the Tibetan siddha Götsampa. [Students sing. See page 80.]

This is a song about taking difficult circumstances to the path. There is no way to get rid of sickness, to get rid of old age, to get rid of dying, to get rid of difficult circumstances that we meet in life, but we can take them to the path,* embrace them, and see their true nature.

Götsampa himself had many difficult circumstances when he was practicing in retreat. He got sick very often. But he took his sickness to the path and as a result attained realization. And so he sings many songs about taking illness to the path.

When difficult things happen to us, if we say, “Well, I’m just going to clear away these difficult circumstances, I’m just going to wipe them out, and then everything will be okay for me,” that type of thinking is a product of ego-clinging. Instead we need to take difficult circumstances to the path. We have to develop the notion that, “For the benefit of other sentient beings, I’m going to suffer some difficult things on this path—for their

***Editor’s note:** To take something to the path is to incorporate it into one’s dharma practice so that, rather than becoming an obstacle, it becomes the focus, however temporary or long-lasting, of one’s dharma practice and a means to purify mental defilements and to gather the accumulations of merit and wisdom, thereby hastening one’s path to buddhahood and the ultimate benefit of beings. To see the true nature of old age, sickness, and death is to accomplish all of these ends.



benefit.” When we are able to take suffering and difficult circumstances to the path for the benefit of others, we are incredibly fortunate.

We need to remember all the different ways that we are fortunate; so let’s sing *What it Means to be Lucky, the Excellent Path Laid with Precious Gems*. [Students sing. See page 62.]

Before listening to the teachings, please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, as has been instructed before and as is the tradition of the great vehicle.

From the fifty-eighth teaching session of *Ngedön Gyamtso, The Ocean of Certainty or The Ocean of Definitive Meaning*, the words of the siddhas, last night we studied the words of the great Indian siddhas. Tonight we will study the words of the Tibetan masters. So let’s read Götsangpa’s words together:

Look nakedly at [the essential nature of] your mind.

Seven Delights

Namo Ratna Guru

When thoughts that there is something perceived and a perceiver
Lure my mind away and distract,
I don't close my senses' gateways to meditate without them
But plunge straight into their essential point.
They're like clouds in the sky, there's this shimmer where they fly;
Thoughts that rise, for me sheer delight!

When kleshas get me going and their heat has got me burning,
I try no antidote to set them right;
Like an alchemistic potion turning metal into gold,
What lies in kleshas' power to bestow
Is bliss without contagion, completely undefiled;
Kleshas coming up, sheer delight!

When I'm plagued by god-like forces or demonic interference,
I do not drive them out with rites and spells;
The thing to chase away is the egoistic thinking
Built up on the idea of a self.
This will turn those ranks of maras into your own special forces;
When obstacles arise, sheer delight!

When samsara with its anguish has me writhing in its torments,
Instead of wallowing in misery,
I take the greater burden down the greater path to travel
And let compassion set me up
To take upon myself the sufferings of others;
When karmic consequences bloom, delight!

When my body has succumbed to attacks of painful illness,
I do not count on medical relief
But take that very illness as a path and by its power
Remove the obscurations blocking me,
And use it to encourage the qualities worthwhile;
When illness rears its head, sheer delight!

When it's time to leave this body, this illusionary tangle,
Don't cause yourself anxiety and grief;
The thing that you should train in and clear up for yourself is—
There's no such thing as dying to be done.
It's just clear light, the mother, and child clear light uniting;
When mind forsakes the body, sheer delight!

When the whole thing's just not working, everything's lined up against you,
Don't try to find some way to change it all;
Here the point to make your practice is reverse the way you see it,
Don't try to make it stop or to improve.
Adverse conditions happen, when they do it's so delightful—
They make a little song of sheer delight!

Composed by the Lord Gotsampa, translated by Jim Scott/Anne Buchardi, August 2, 1996, Karme
Chöling, Barnet, Vermont

Through looking, you won't see [it, for it is] not a thing.

We need to look at what our mind really is;
and since our mind is emptiness, there is nothing to see.

Lingje Repa said:

**If you do not rest [within] the mind just as it is,
A remedy won't fix things.
Therefore, throw away your doubts about [the mind] as this or not this; let them disappear.**

The meaning of this is that there is no way to fix or repair the mind. In [mahamudra] meditation, we just rest naturally.

Tsangpa Gyare:

**Resting [within] the mind just as it is, [is] the dharmakaya.
Thoughts created by the intellect are liberated in their ground.
Practice the inconceivable—ultimate reality.**

Since there is nothing that needs to be done to the mind—it does not need to be fixed or changed in any way—then the meditation is just to rest in

the mind just as it is. This is the dharmakaya. Thoughts created by the intellect are liberated in their ground.

Practice the inconceivable, ultimate reality. The true nature of the mind is beyond being an object of thoughts, so one cannot conceive of what it is.

From Orgyenpa:

**There is nothing that is not an appearance of mind.
Delusive ideas, [arising through the power of] habitual patterns,
Are not established as truly [existent] things;
All [appearances and ideas abide] in a state equal to the dharmakaya.
The essential nature is empty within its own ground;
The unborn is like space.**

**If you see all phenomena that are like a reflection,
To be truly existent, you are deluded by your own [mind's] appearance.**

**If you cling to all possible appearances, the play of the mind,
As [existent] objects, you are deluded by your own mind's appearance.**

If you cling to all illusion-like [phenomena],

magical creations,
As [real] things, you are deluded by your own
mind's appearance.

Orgyenpa, beggar from the land of snow, [says]:
“Train in primordial wisdom, the reality of the
natural state.

Through being blessed by the glorious lama,
The delusions of habitual patterns return to their
ground.

Train in the nonduality of samsara and nirvana.
[Through] everything appearing as dharmakaya's
play,

Dualistic fixation is brought to extinction.
There is no suffering [and] I'm delighted.”

Kyeme Shang or Shang Rinpoche:

The instant of directly recognizing [the true
nature of] a thought is called “realizing
mahamudra.” [It is also] called “the birth of
samadhi in one's mindstream” [and “direct valid
perception or noble primordial wisdom] arising
from meditation.” This very instant of recogniz-
ing [the nature of a] thought overcomes and
purifies without exception negative actions,
gathered in samsara that has no beginning.

[How do you] recognize [the true nature of] a
thought? The thought is not born, it does not
cease, nor does it abide; it is not a thing [and]
there is nothing to recognize. The conviction
arises vividly that [mind's true nature] is like
space. This is called “the simultaneous arising of
experience and realization.” It is called “blend-
ing experience and realization into one.” It is
called “shamatha and vipashyana inseparable.”
It is called “making the dharmata manifest.” It
is called “[the apprehension of] characteristics self-
liberated.”

This [mahamudra] is not realized through exten-
sive study. It is not realized through great supe-
rior knowledge. It is not realized through coarser
examination and analysis. It is not realized
through being an authority on oral instructions. It
is not realized through will-power or effort. It is
not realized through verbal communication or
through being an expert in skillful means. It is
not realized through any kind of busy [dharma]
activity. From a tantra: “You will not find it
anywhere.”

Well then, you might ask, “If it is not realized
through all [these ways], how is it [realized]?”
Since through the blessing of a realized lama
[realization of the mind's nature] is recognized by
the self-awareness [that knows] its own [nature],
and since [this realization] appears from within, it
depends solely upon this blessing.

From a tantra:

This self-aware primordial wisdom
[Depends on] gradual blessing
Because it is beyond being an object experienced
through speech.
Omniscient primordial wisdom is like this as well.

We will read this one together, from the unpar-
alleled Dagpo Rinpoche:

Become accustomed to looking at [the nature of]
your own mind.
When you become accustomed to looking at your
own mind,
If you do not fall into the duality of object and
mind,
You will have the experience of nondual
primordial wisdom.
Special skillful means are taught
[And also] the [special] time of receiving [these
instructions] is taught.

As you experience meditation with dualistic
fixation,
You do not see [mind's] reality.
Although this view without realization [of mind's
reality]
Is said to be free of extremes, it is fabricated by the
intellect.

From an abbreviated sutra from among the
Prajnaparamita sutras:

“I see space” is what sentient beings often express
in words.
Examine the meaning of the statement, “I see space
like this.”
The Tathagata taught that seeing dharmata is also
like that [seeing of space].
One cannot find an example other than [this] for
seeing [the dharmata].

When someone says, “I see space,” then they are not really seeing anything, because space has neither color nor shape, and cannot really be seen. They are saying that they see something that really is not an entity, that really is not there. And similarly, when one says, “I see the true nature of mind,” then, since the true nature of mind is emptiness, one is saying that they see something that is not really there. When we look with our intelligence we cannot find anything to look at.

However much we look we cannot find space, because it is just the absence of any form or matter. There is nothing there. Nonetheless, when we rest relaxed without any fabrication, we experience the aspect of mind that is radiantly clear.

From [Khorlo Demchok] Dom[pa] Jung, a tantra:

**If mental events are taught to [have the true nature of] mind,
Then sentient beings also have the true nature of mind in the same way.
[Ultimate reality] is similar to space; [the true nature of mental events and sentient beings] completely rests in space.
[Ultimate] form without beginning or end
Is like the [radiant] clarity of a crystal or a gem.
Free of conceptual complication, it is not an object experienced by sense faculties.
Without change and without appearance,
All [phenomena] are empty; there are no afflicting states.**

From the protector Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamikakarika* or *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*:

**The view of permanence states [phenomena] exist.
[And] the view of extinction states [phenomena] do not exist.*
Therefore, an expert will not remain in [either extreme of] existence or non-existence.**

When we do not examine reality very carefully, then everything that we see looks as though it is really there and really exists. When

we examine carefully, we find that nothing really exists and that there is only mere appearance, meaning the appearance of something which does not really exist at all. Finally, the highest view is to know that the true nature of reality transcends both existence and nonexistence. There are three stages: existence; mere appearance, which is the absence of actual existence; and finally the transcendence of both extremes of existence and nonexistence. With this understanding we will not fall into either extreme of realism or nihilism, of permanence or extinction.

When you are dreaming, if you do not know you are dreaming, then everything looks real in that dream. As soon as you know you are dreaming, you know that your dreams are just mere appearances and that nothing in your dreams really exists at all. And finally, the true nature of the appearances in this dream transcends both existence and nonexistence; it transcends all conceptual fabrications about what it might be, one way or the other.

We can apply the same analysis to the daytime appearances that we see, the appearances of the sun and the moon and all the stars and this planet and all the beings on this planet. When we do not analyze them and we just take them at face value, then they seem to exist. As soon as we analyze, we find that everything and everyone is just a mere appearance and none of them really exist at all. And finally in their ultimate nature they transcend all of our concepts about what they might be, existence, nonexistence, or any other concept. The true nature of reality transcends all conceptuality. Therefore, Nagarjuna says in this verse that if you say “exist,” that is the extreme of realism; if you say “not exist,” that is the extreme of nihilism; and therefore the wise ones abide neither in realism nor nihilism. Rinpoche says that if you “exist or not exist,” you are not wise, you are stupid.

These words are spoken from the perspective of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, but they appear here in a mahamudra text because, at the time of gaining certainty about the mahamudra view, one needs to cut through all of one's conceptual elaboration about the true

***Editor's note:** these are our old friends, eternalism and nihilism.

nature of reality.

Next is the opening verse from the text called *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, the homage. In the Tibetan, actually, there is only the first line. And in this translation the last two lines are not included, which are the actual prostration; but it would go something like this:

**Whatever arises co-dependently [or dependently]
Has no cessation and no arising,
No extinction and no permanence,
No coming and no going,
And is neither different nor the same:
Mental elaboration, completely pacified,
It is taught to be peace.**

“Neither different nor the same,” means there are not different things nor is there only one thing.

And it would read something like “to the perfect buddhas who spoke these words I prostrate.”

This is the opening verse of the text *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*; the twenty-seven chapters of this text go on to prove that the statements made in this opening verse are true.

Another verse from the protector Nagarjuna:

**What are called “existence” and “nonexistence”
are extremes.**

**“Empty” and “not empty” are also extremes.
Once such extremes are completely thrown off,
An adept will not remain in the middle, either.**

**Just as [through] looking into the depth of space
Something to be seen will cease [to appear],
Likewise, when mind looks at mind [itself],
The whole collection of concepts will cease [to
appear] and enlightenment is attained.**

“Just as looking into the depth of space, something to be seen will cease to appear,” is talking about “seeing.” It is not that you look at some object and then the object disappears. It is that you look into space and there is no more seeing because there is nothing up there to be seen.

From Gyu Tagpa Nyipa:

**Nowhere in the realm of this world
Will the [ultimate] buddha be found.
The mind [itself] is the perfect buddha.**

Nowhere outside will you find the buddha. The only place to look for the buddha is the mind.

Here we also need to remember that in the text called *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, the true nature of mind is called the buddha potential but not buddhahood or the buddha essence. But here a different word is used; here, the true nature of mind is called the perfect buddha.

[Students recite Selected Verses from *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* and selected verses from *Mahamudra, the Ocean of Certainty*. See page 54 and the verses interspersed in the last two teachings beginning on page 76.]

If people have an interest in meditating on mahamudra, then it would be very good for them to recite each of these verses 108 times. Through this they will come to understand the meaning of the verses and will come to learn them by heart.

Now we will sing the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche*, the supplication that all appearances appear as the deity, all sounds arise as mantra, and all thoughts be liberated into pure being.

[Students sing the supplication, then the *Six Questions*, and *The Essence of Amrita*. See pages 52, 72, and 73.]

Rest with a child’s independence. Rest like an ocean free of waves. Rest with a butter lamp’s clarity. Rest like a corpse, without arrogance. Rest like a mountain, so still.

[Students meditate with Rinpoche.]

Milarepa gave four examples of meditative experience. The first example is that meditation is baseless, like in a dream. Experiences in a dream have neither base nor root, and, similarly, experiences that we have during meditation actually have no base; they are baseless. Secondly, Milarepa said that meditative experience is without grasping, like a water moon, like the moon’s reflection on a pool of water. A water moon does not think about things one way or the other; it is mere clarity, it is merely bright in its own appearance. Similarly, the mind’s true nature does not grasp onto things; it is mere radiant clarity. The mind is like a water moon,

from the water moon's perspective. A water moon is just mere clarity, and that is what the mind is. Third, Milarepa said that experiences are substance-less. They are not made of any substance or matter, like rainbows. In a rainbow you can see the colors of something, but there is nothing there, and that is what meditative experience is like. And finally they are directionless, like space.

[Students sing *The Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition, The Song of the Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range, Auspiciousness that Lights Up the Universe*. See pages 25, 26, and 27.]

[Rinpoche asks translator to sing *No Birth, No Base, and Union*.]

**The true nature of appearances is that they've never been born.
If birth seems to happen, it's just clinging, nothing more.
The spinning wheel of existence has neither a base nor a root.
If things seem to be stable, that's only a thought.
The true nature of the mind is union, inseparability.**

'When we do not examine reality very carefully, then everything that we see looks as though it is really there and really exists. When we examine carefully, we find that nothing really exists and that there is only mere appearance, meaning the appearance of something which does not really exist at all. Finally the highest view is to know that the true nature of reality transcends both existence and nonexistence.'

If you separate its aspects, you are hooked on some view.

The sign of the true lamas is that they hold a lineage.

**The ones who make stuff up are just being dumb.
The mind's basic reality is like the clear and open sky.**

**But the dark clouds of thoughts just cover it all up.
So let the lama's pith advice be the wind that blows those clouds away.**

Even confused thoughts themselves are clear light that shines so brilliantly.

**Experience is so bright, like sun and moon light.
Without any direction, clarity shines timelessly.
You cannot hold it; you can't say what it is.**

So many kinds of certainty shine like the stars in the sky.

Whatever arises is the greatest bliss.

**Its nature is simplicity, the dharmakaya expanse.
The six dependent appearances are empty naturally.**

This natural flow is effortless—there's not a klesha in sight.

**Within this basic state completely relaxed,
Wisdom without fixation abides continuously.**

The three kayas inseparable—the greatest miracle! ॐ





With Great Compassion and an Understanding Of Emptiness, We Will Never Be Discouraged

After teaching the Vajra Songs of the Indian and Tibetan Siddhas, the Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche answered questions. The following edited transcript is from September 24. Rinpoche gave the teaching in Tibetan; it was orally translated by Ari Goldfield.

Sarwa Mangalam. Let's sing *The Song of Meaningful Connections*. [Students sing. See page 19. Rinpoche then began the session with an injunction to engender bodhicitta, and then gave the reading transmission for the remaining verses of *Praise of the Dharmadhatu*.]

The most important and most profound part of this text are the six verses teaching about the self-liberation of the six sense consciousness. They are from number 38 through 43. And Rinpoche taught up through those verses, and has now given us the reading transmission for the remaining verses in the text. In the future, perhaps, the commentary will be translated, and then it will be easier to understand the meaning of these latter verses.

These six verses provide for six different meditation sessions. Rinpoche says he feels it would be very good, if you have the interest, to gather and do a series of weekend retreats, meditating on one of these verses each weekend, and then sing the Milarepa songs and the Guru Rinpoche supplication as well. That could last for six weekends.

Now let's sing *What it Means to be Lucky, the Noble Path laid with Precious Gems*.

[Students sing. See page 62.]

Do you have any questions?

Question: I had a question on the vajra song entitled, *From a tantra*. It says, “This self-aware primordial wisdom depends on gradual blessing because it is beyond being an object experienced through speech.” And then it says “omniscient primordial wisdom is like this [as well].” It sounds as if there are two different kinds of wisdom, self-aware primordial wisdom and omniscient primordial wisdom. Is that right, and if so, what is the difference?

Rinpoche: Self-aware primordial wisdom is inconceivable. It cannot be described, so it is indescribable. The only way to experience it is to realize it directly, to have a direct experience of it, and this depends on blessing. In the vajrayana it is said that realizing the true nature of mind depends on blessing. And it usually depends on gradual blessing because, as our faith increases in the lama, the blessing of the lama also increases. Omniscient primordial wisdom is slightly different from self-aware primordial wisdom because it is talking about the stage of fruition. First primordial awareness or self-aware primordial wisdom is realized, and then, as the realization increases and becomes perfected, it becomes a buddha’s omniscient wisdom.

There are different stages of blessing and different stages of faith. Some people, because they have practiced and had a lot of faith in past lives, are able to generate great faith naturally without trying; it just rises up from within them, as it did in Milarepa when he heard the name of Marpa Lotsawa for the first time. And for other people their faith increases gradually during their lifetime; based on studying and practice, their faith in their lama grows and grows. So it can happen either way.

It is possible to generate faith even after first being really angry at your lama. This happened, for example, in the case of the hunter, whose name was Gampo Dorje, and Milarepa. He was actually so angry at Milarepa that he wanted to kill him; he wanted to shoot him with an arrow. But then after that his anger became faith. This is called generating faith after first being angry at your lama.

Some people gain faith in dependence upon not having any faith. This was the case of Loden Gendun and others, who, when they first came to see Milarepa, did not have any faith in him at all. But they debated him. Loden Gendun debated with Milarepa a lot, but by the end, because Milarepa had won every debate, Lotun Gendun had developed a lot of faith in him. And so this shows that you can gain faith based on your wrong views and your mistaken conceptions.

Some of Milarepa’s students actually beat him first. They tied him up with a rope, beat him, and threw rocks at him. Milarepa was not very well liked in the *shedras*, the monastic colleges, because they thought that Milarepa was a nihilist. If you went up to Milarepa’s cave, you did not see any statues, there were no offering tormas, nobody was doing any pujas. And so they said, “Milarepa does not believe in religious ritual; he’s a nihilist. He says religious ritual is not important. He has fallen into the extreme of nihilism.” So then one time Milarepa came down out of the mountains and went to a *shedra*. In those days in the monastic colleges they had the tradition of beating you to punish you if you had done something wrong, and so they beat Milarepa. They said, “Oh, here comes the nihilist,” and they tied him up, threw rocks at him, and beat him. But then afterwards they gained faith in Milarepa, because Milarepa did not get angry. He just said, “Oh, if you beat me, it is okay; if you like me, it is okay; it is up to you.” So when they saw Milarepa’s patience and equanimity while experiencing such abuse, they really gained a lot of faith in him.

So there are many different ways to give rise to faith, and if we can give rise to faith, then we will be able to realize the true nature of mind.

Question: Since we have been given, during this course, so much to read and so much to sing, how do we integrate that with our sitting meditation, which is just as important?

Rinpoche: The way to meditate and actually rest in equipoise is first to study a lot. Read the passages from these texts, and after you have read a lot and you are tired, then just take a rest; take a

rest and look at the true nature of mind. Just look at it nakedly and rest, relaxed.

There are many verses in these songs and verses that we have given you. The verses are about the view, meditation, conduct, and fruition. But the main reason why we should read these is to gain certainty about the view; that is what comes first. And to gain certainty means that we develop confidence in the correctness of the view. We become sure about it. And the way to gain that kind of certainty is to read and compare different things. The various texts that we have studied supplement and aid each other, and thereby help us to gain understanding of the view. So read one and compare it to the next one and so forth. Then, as you gain certainty in the view, rest in meditation. There are a lot of verses on the view, but there are also verses on meditation, which are also very important.

Last year we studied the *Sixty Stanzas on Reasoning*, the *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, and *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* by Nagarjuna. Those texts explain things from the perspective of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, the Rangtong or Empty-of-Self School. This year we have studied verses from *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* by Nagarjuna and from many vajra songs, which explain things from the perspective of the Shentong or Empty-of-Other School, which is in accord with the third turning of the wheel of dharma.

Please read 108 times the verses that we have explained from the *Vajra Songs of the Masters*. By doing so you will memorize them, and they will then come to mind very easily. There may also be some verses that are less clear than others, but studied and recited together, each verse will supplement one's understanding of the others.

Milarepa's songs are very important because some are in harmony with the Shentong view, the Empty-of-Other view, and some are in harmony with the Rangtong view, the Empty-of-Self view. From the Rangtong some are in harmony with the Svatantrika madhyamaka, the Autonomy School; and some are in harmony with the Prasangika madhyamaka, the Consequence School. And then

some are in harmony with the Shentong view, and some are in harmony with the extraordinary view of mahamudra. So they are all very important.

Now we will sing the *Six Questions*. [Students sing. See page 72.] This is a song from the view of mahamudra, and it teaches us that we do not need to stop thinking, we do not need to stop being afflicted; we need instead to meditate on the essence of thoughts and on the essence of the kleshas or the mental afflictions.

The meditation that is taught in this song is to look nakedly at whatever thought arises, and rest, relaxed. Whatever mental affliction or klesha arises, look at it nakedly and rest, relaxed. To look at whatever arises, nakedly, is the view; to rest, relaxed, is the meditation.

If we looked at it from the perspective of shamatha and vipashyana or calm abiding and superior insight meditation, then looking nakedly would be superior insight, vipashyana, and resting, relaxed, would be shamatha, calm abiding.

We had a question about a verse that talked about the importance of faith. The way to meditate in connection with faith is to sing the verses from the supplication to the lama, calling the guru from afar, and then to look nakedly at the essence of this mind filled with faith. And in that way one meditates on faith while calling the lama from afar.

When we look nakedly at the mind filled with faith, then that is superior insight, vipashyana; when we rest, relaxed, that is calm abiding, shamatha.

Now we will call the guru from afar by singing the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche*, and in connection with that, by singing the verse called *The Six Kinds of Consciousnesses Self-Liberated*:

The meeting of appearances of the six kinds of consciousness,

This is the guide that turns adverse conditions into a path.

Is there anyone here who is able to keep to this path and follow it through?

The one for whom desire and craving have been consumed is happy.

The rope that ties perceiver and perceived, when cut, is E Ma Ho!

[Students sing the *Supplication to Guru Rinpoche*. See page 52.]

Are there other questions?

Question: In verse 29 of *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, it says that buddhas do not perceive the characteristics of their aspiration prayers, and in the commentary you said that their nirmanakaya forms—their body forms—and their buddha fields, which others perceive, do not appear to them. If they are omniscient, why is that the case?

Rinpoche: The reason that they do not appear to the buddhas is that their mode of experience is non-dualistic. If buddhas perceived their nirmanakaya forms and buddha fields they would be involved in dualistic perception. And so they do not appear from the perspective of the buddhas. But by virtue of the aspiration prayers made by buddhas in the past when they were bodhisattvas, they do appear to those who are still involved with dualistic perception.

This is explained in the philosophical schools of the mahayana, the great vehicle. It is explained in the Cittamatra, the Mind Only School, that the buddha mind does not have duality. There is no duality of perceiver and perceived. According to the Middle Way School, the buddha is free of conceptual elaboration. The buddha mind is free of any conceptual activity that says, “Oh, something is this or something is like that.” A buddha’s primordial awareness is free from all conceptual activity.

So how is it that buddhas can see everything but have no conceptual mental activity, no dualistic mental activity? Well, it is inconceivable how this works, because for us ordinary beings to perceive and be aware of things, we need thoughts, we need duality. There is no other way for us to know things at this time. How buddhas can know things and not have any dualistic perception is alternatively said to be difficult to understand or inconceivable. These two things mean the same thing.

According to the tradition of the shravakas, the buddhas do perceive things dualistically

until they die, when they leave their five skandhas behind and just dissolve, basically. The shravakas have no tradition of the three kayas. After a buddha leaves his or her body behind, there is no sambhogakaya and there is no nirmanakaya.

According to the vajrayana, all phenomena are the display or the creative play of bliss-emptiness. And the buddhas’ primordial awareness is this bliss-emptiness carried or taken to its ultimate perfection. However, within this primordial awareness, there is no dualistic appearance.

In order to understand this point fully, we need to analyze the different explanations of all the different vehicles and see what each one has to say; otherwise, it will be difficult for us to understand this point.

There are debates between the schools of the Empty-of-Self, the Rangtong, and the Empty-of-Other, the Shentong, as to whether a buddha experiences dualistic appearances. It takes a lot of study to understand the positions of both sides very well. This explanation is a brief explanation that is in harmony with meditation.

Second question?

Question: In *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*, verse 99, it says, “Those who have reached nirvana with remainder believe they have reached nirvana that is without remainder. The nirvana that is reached in this tradition is a freeing of the mind of any flaw.” Will Rinpoche please explain the difference between these two types of nirvana? [Inaudible].

Rinpoche: In the tradition of the shravakas, it is thought that when one reaches nirvana that that is the end. They think that they have gone as far as you can go. But that is not the case according to the mahayana, because in the mahayana you do not reach nirvana until you have purified all habitual tendencies and all cognitive obscurations, obscurations to omniscience. And once you have done that, then you really reach nirvana.

The arhats and arhatis in the shravaka tradition who reach what is called in that tradition the “nirvana without remainder,” meaning that they

have given up their skandhas, are, in fact, just resting [temporarily] in samadhi. Subsequently they are awakened by [the light rays of] the buddhas, who call them, saying, "Now it is time to go on to the mahayana." So then they have to get up from their samadhi and have to enter the mahayana.

Arhats and arhatis think that they have reached the highest nirvana, the actual nirvana, but they have not, and they find that out when the buddhas call them.

Was there another question back there?

Question: How does one deal with the fact that until one becomes a first-level bodhisattva, there is still a chance that one could fall back into samsara? It seems discouraging to think that one could work really hard in this life and then have a chance to lose everything at the end.

Rinpoche: In the mahayana we practice developing compassion and emptiness. When we practice compassion, we take the attitude that we actually want to be born in samsara, that samsara is like a garden party and that we really want to come and live in samsara for the benefit of others. We do not want to leave. And because we understand that all phenomena are actually of the nature of emptiness, that they are only the false appearances of things, which are like dream appearances or illusory appearances, [and that the suffering attendant upon them is also illusory and unreal,] then we should never feel discouraged about the prospects of getting born somewhere in samsara. We should be happy about it, because then we can be of benefit to others.

The bodhisattvas' aspiration is that we will be able to suffer and go through whatever difficult circumstances we need to go through, for the benefit of others, and that we will have the ability to do that.

If we give rise to great compassion, and if we have an understanding of emptiness, then we will never be discouraged.

The Tibetan word for bodhisattva, *jangchup sempa* (male) or *jangchub semma* (female), means heroic being. So bodhisattvas, male and

female, have great courage. They do not get discouraged by anything, not even by the prospects of staying in samsara for a very long time, because they want to stay there to benefit others.

Now let's sing *Seven Delights*, which is about liking sickness, liking getting old, liking dying, and liking whatever bad happens to us. There is no reason to get upset or get down; just be happy.

[Students sing *Seven Delights*. See page 80.]

If we ever feel weary or frustrated with sickness, aging, death, or other difficult circumstances in samsara, we should sing this song many times and think about its meaning.

Sickness, aging, death, and all other difficult circumstances are just like dreams. If we do not know that we are dreaming, then they can make us suffer; but if we know we are dreaming then they are a cause for happiness.

So now let's sing *The Ultimate View, Meditation, Conduct, and Fruition*.

[Students sing. See page 25.]

Other questions?

Question: What does it mean to say that the three realms appearing to us are our mind and that the three realms appearing to others are their mind? Is there still duality present there?

Rinpoche: There are also appearances that appear in common to many sentient beings who have accumulated similar types of karma. When you dream, what appears to you does not appear to somebody else, and so that is the view that is being explained here. But to really understand the view of the mind only school requires more explanation than that. That is a basic understanding.

For example, what appears to us is our body, but when my body appears to you, it is not your body, it is somebody else's body. Things appear differently to different people's minds. One person appears to their enemy as being quite unpleasant, disgusting, and revolting, but to their friends as being someone quite attractive. And so this just shows that things appear differently to the different minds of different beings. As it is said, when a person dies, their friends are sad; when the

same person dies, their enemies dance. This shows that the entity itself is not the source of happiness or suffering.

Question: It is interesting that the image of a cloud is used both for something negative, which would be an obscuration, and for something positive, which would be the name of the tenth bhumi.

Rinpoche: Yes, in this case, the example is slightly different. The cloud is not related to obscuring the unpolluted sky or anything like that. A cloud can also be something positive. Usually, in the metaphor for compassion, compassion rains down from a cloud. And so in this case the cloud is something good. Here the teachings of the dharma and the blessings of the dharma rain down from the tenth-level bodhisattva on all beings equally, on all disciples to be tamed, and to such a vast extent that the tenth-level bodhisattva is said to be like a cloud.

At this point bodhisattvas are purifying only the most subtle of dualistic perceptions, and when they finish they become buddhas. Tenth-level bodhisattvas are incredibly skilled at giving dharma explanations according to the differing needs of beings; their dharma explanations are therefore said to be like falling rain.

These verses are explanations of how the names come for the different bodhisattva bhumis or levels, but there are also other explanations of all the different qualities that go along with each level. The bodhisattva bhumis require a very profound explanation. So if we stop here, then we make a very auspicious connection.

Now we will sing the *Song of the Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*.

[Students sing. See page 26.]

Rest with a child's independence. Rest like an ocean free of waves. Rest with a butter lamp's clarity. Rest like a corpse, without arrogance. Rest like a mountain, so still.

[Students meditate with Rinpoche.]

As a departing aspiration, may all of you perfect the wisdom that arises from listening to, reflecting on, and meditating on the teachings of the genuine dharma, and through doing so may

you perform great benefit for all of the limitless sentient beings.

May the activities of this dharma center grow and grow and flourish and flourish, and through that may great benefit of others be performed.

You live and work in a big city. When you are working, may you see everything to be like an illusion and like a dream. May you see everything to be like an illusion and like a dream, and through this may your samadhi of illusion, your meditation on illusion, get better and better. And on the weekends, may you rest in the meditative samadhi that is like space, that is like the sky. And through both of these types of samadhis getting better and better, may great benefit of beings be accomplished.

Working in a big city is the way to realize the true nature of mind, mahamudra. Working to benefit others is the way to realize mahamudra, the true nature of mind. This was the way of the mahasiddha Tilopa.

So it would be very good for all of you to gather here on the weekends and meditate. You are very fortunate to have Lama Tashi Namgyal here, who stayed twice in the three-year, three-month retreat. You do not need a translator to listen to him teach; you can get the teachings directly. So if you were to come and meditate on the verses about the twelve ayatanas from *Praise of the Dharmadhatu* which we mentioned earlier, these six verses, then that would be a very good thing to do.

As the lord of yogis, Milarepa, sang, "I see this life to be like an illusion and a dream, and I have compassion for those who do not realize that." So we have to practice seeing this life as being like an illusion and a dream, and then we have to practice compassion for those who do not realize that.

In the mahayana, the practice is to perform the benefit of others, but it does not matter if we cannot do much right now to benefit others. If that is the case, then we just need to make aspiration prayers so that in future lives we will be able to perform great benefit for others.

So now we will all rise and sing *Auspiciousness that Lights up the Universe*.

[Students sing. See page 27.] 

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu

An Outline for Help in Following Rinpoche's References to the Commentary

Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche presented the teachings of *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu* according to a commentary written by Shakya Chogden, entitled *Ascertaining the Dharmadhatu: An Explanation of Praise of the Dharmadhatu*. This commentary in turn presents the teachings according to an outline to which Rinpoche and the translator frequently refer during the course of the teachings. Based on these references, we have endeavored to make our own outline of Khenpo Rinpoche's presentation for the benefit of those who might be confused by these references. This outline should not be taken as an accurate rendering of the original outline in the commentary. It is certainly incomplete, since Rinpoche taught only the first 43 verses of the 101 verses of the root text, and it may also add items to and omit items from the commentator's original outline. And it is certain that many of the headings will be found to be differently worded.

A. Homage and Short Description of the Dharmadhatu. (verses 1-2)

B. Dharmadhatu Described as Radiant Clarity. (verses 3-11)

1. The analogy of butter and milk. (3,4)
2. The analogy of the butter lamp. (5-7)
3. The analogy of the sapphire in the stone. (9,10)
4. The analogy of pure gold. (11)

C. Answers to Arguments Raised in Debate. (verses 12-25)

1. If the dharmadhatu were present, beings would be buddhas.
Refuted by means of the rice example. (12,13)
2. If the dharmadhatu were present, beings would have the essence of buddhahood.
Refuted by means of the banana tree example. (14-17)
3. Any antidote that clears obstructions to realizing the dharmadhatu would also clear away the dharmadhatu.
Refuted in three parts:
 - a. How the dharmadhatu and obstructions can co-exist.
The example of the clouds which obstruct the sun and moon. (18,19)

The example of water deep in the earth. (23)

b. Why the dharmadhatu would not be cleared away by clearing obstructions.

The example of fire cleaning soiled cloth. (20-21)

The example of teaching emptiness. (22)

c. Why the dharmadhatu is not the same as self.

The example of the dharmadhatu not being male or female. (24,25)

D. The Remedy That Removes Obstructions. (verses 26-35)

1. The remedy for the afflictions: the wisdom that realizes the selflessness of the individual. (26)

2. The remedy for the cognitive obscurations: the wisdom that realizes the emptiness of phenomena. (26)

3. The remedy for both the afflictions and the cognitive obscurations: realization of the emptiness of phenomena. (26)

a. The reason that it is necessary to understand that phenomena are empty.

Why kleshas must be cleared away. (27)

Why thoughts must be cleared away. (27)

b. The reason that it is possible to understand that phenomena are empty.

An explanation of how it is possible to understand

... that thoughts of samsara are empty. (28)

... that thoughts of nirvana are empty. (29)

The remedy that removes obscurations.

Abstract thoughts are all imaginary. (30)

Uniquely characterized phenomena do not exist. (31)

Why sentient beings are confused. (32)

The Buddha teaches the nature of phenomena to be freedom from extremes. (33)

It is impossible to describe this freedom. (34-35)

E. Dharmadhatu Called by Different Names. (verses 36-43)

1. According to Stages: sentient beings and buddhas. (36-37)

2. According to Different Modes of Completely False Appearance: the five sense perceptions and the mental perception. (38-43)

'When we practice compassion, we take the attitude that we actually want to be born in samsara, that samsara is like a garden party and that we really want to come and live in samsara for the benefit of others. We do not want to leave.'



'We do not need to stop thinking, we do not need to stop being afflicted; we need instead to meditate on the essence of thoughts and on the essence of the kleshas or the mental afflictions.'



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'What is the dharmadhatu? It is the very essence of our present mind, the very essence of this present moment of mind, which essence is radiant clarity. It is completely free of any flaw; it is naturally perfect just as it is. Therefore, the true nature of mind is the ultimate thing to realize; it is the ultimate object of meditation. When purified of stains, it is nirvana.'

**—The Very Venerable Khenpo
Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche**

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