

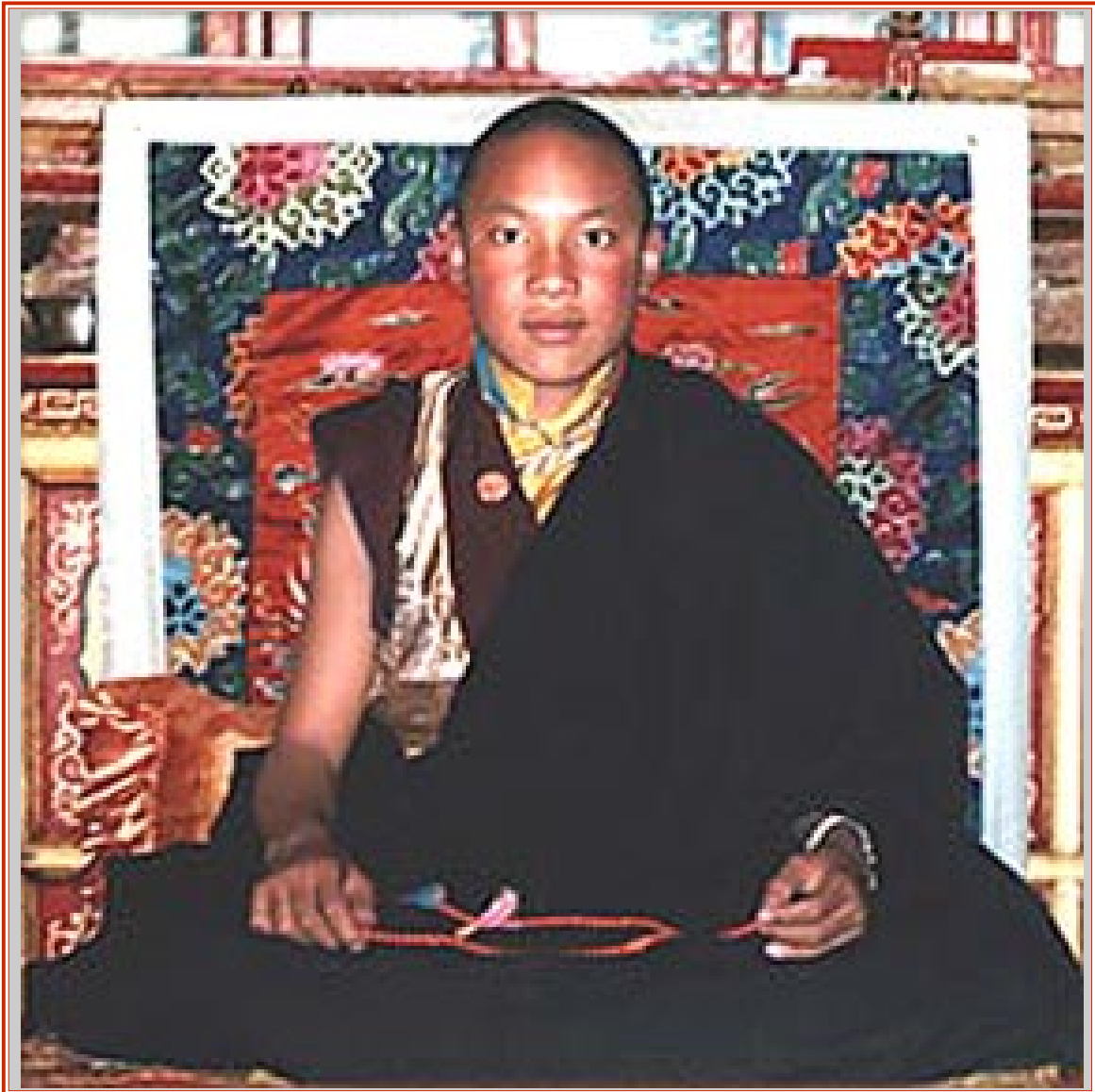


SHENPEN ÖSEL

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

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

JUNE 1998



HIS HOLINESS ORGYEN TRINLEY DORJE, THE SEVENTEENTH GYALWA KARMAPA, IN HIS FIRST MESSAGE ADDRESSED TO WESTERN DHARMA PRACTITIONERS IN GENERAL AND IN PARTICULAR TO THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE KAMTSANG TRADITION:

“You who have now obtained this body with its freedoms and favors, if you exert yourself one-pointedly in practicing the sublime dharma rather than letting it go to waste, it will be a noble effort, good for both this and all future lives. Therefore, may all of you keep this in mind.”

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

Introduction

When we have what seems to us much more direct ways of meditating, why should we study and meditate on an analytical system of meditation such as madhyamika?

In the practice of meditation, the actual technique that we employ is never very difficult. Even in the very much more complicated meditative techniques of the vajrayana, involving visualizations, mantras, mandalas, and mudras, the actual techniques are not difficult or particularly problematic; any intelligent seventh-grader could perform these practices as well, if not better, than an adult. The difficulties and problems are always simply how to relate properly to what arises in one's mind when one is employing any of these meditative techniques, how to relate to the incessant discursiveness and oftentimes intense emotional and cognitive confusion in the mind that one's meditation uncovers or stirs up.

In the practice of shamatha, we have the discipline of constantly returning to the breath or other objects of concentration, and of constantly labeling thought and emotional confusion in order to demystify it, in order to deprive it of the reality we impute to it.

In the practice of mahayana, we have the technique of exchanging self and others, the practice of tonglen or taking and sending, and in the vajrayana, mahamudra, and dzogchen traditions we have further techniques for relating to mind and its confusion.

But for any of these techniques to work, there has to be the willingness to let go of one's thoughts and emotions, the willingness not to get involved in and perpetuate and make a big deal of whatever particular psycho-drama or worry or anxiety or earth-transforming schemes our minds happen to be featuring at any particular moment. One has to be willing constantly to let go and return to the technique, and to do this it is necessary to see one's confusion and one's hopes and fears for the illusions that they are. They are mere thinking; they are not real. The power over us that they exercise derives completely from the reality that we unthinkingly give to them.

The study and practice of madhyamika reasonings is a powerful way of coming to see and to accept that the psycho-dramas of our lives are not real after all. If studied properly and meditated upon, madhyamika becomes a tremendous aid to letting go of all our confusion and of allowing the mind naturally to return to a state of peace and mental health, out of which all the positive qualities of mind are free to manifest.

With this kind of madhyamika understanding as a foundation, the practice of vajrayana becomes an even more powerful means of uprooting and purifying the deeper anxieties and traumas of the mind, and of finally dispelling the self-clinging, dualistic fixation, fundamental ignorance, and mental darkness that underlies all of them.

For that reason, it is often said in the vajrayana that madhyamika is the ground and mahamudra the path.


* * *

We would also like to draw the reader's attention to a question asked of the translator, Ari Goldfield, as to what was meant by the word substantial, as in "substantially existent" or "not substantially existent." Ari replied: ". . . the term substantial, as in substantially existent, is a translation of the Tibetan word *rang bzhin*, which means 'by its nature,' or 'by its essence.' When we say that something is substantially existent or naturally existent, essentially existent, what we mean is that it does not exist in dependence on anything else. It exists from its own side. It exists without depending on other causes and conditions."

We draw the reader's attention to this because the term substantial is, in other contexts, used to translate phrases such as *rdzas yod* and *dngos po/dngos yod*, both of which imply some sort of material substantiality that is not necessarily implied by the term *rang bzhin*.

The term *rang bzhin* is also sometimes translated as "nature" or "self-nature," as indicated by Chökyi Nyima (Richard Barron): "What I'm using now for *rang bzhin* is simply 'nature,' where it has a 'positive' meaning (as in 'the nature of mind'), or 'self-nature,' where the intention is one of negation (as in 'having no self-nature' or 'cannot be established to have any self-nature')."

* * *

Because we have been intent on keeping to our deadline, we have not been able to include the Tibetan texts for *The Refutation of Criticism*, by Nagarjuna and the three songs of Götsangpa. We will try to include them in a subsequent issue of Shenpen Ösel. 

—Lama Tashi Namgyal

One of the foremost teachers of the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, The Very Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, will give a series of teachings on *The Mahamudra Songs of Naropa* in Seattle June 9 through 15. Mahamudra is the main practice of the Kagyu path to enlightenment. Naropa's songs, which contain profound meditation pointing-out instructions, are very important for practitioners of mahamudra and are applicable to all other Buddhist paths as well.

While Rinpoche is in Seattle, he will also give three empowerments: Chenrezig, Vajrasattva from the tradition of Marpa the Translator, and Milarepa. Thrangu Rinpoche is in great demand throughout the world because of the clarity, profundity, and vastness of his teachings, and the gentle humor of his presentation. It is a privilege to host his teachings in Seattle.

Cost of the entire series of teachings and the three empowerments is \$150. For those who can attend only on the weekend, cost of the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday teachings and one empowerment (Vajrasattva) is \$80. For more information, call (206) 632-1439.



**The Very Venerable
Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche
on *The Mahamudra Songs of
the Mahasiddha Naropa***

Heart Teachings of a Tibetan Buddhist Master

Seattle

June 9, 10

7:30-9:30 p.m.

*Mahamudra Songs
of Naropa*

Kagyü Shenpen Ösel
Chöling (KSOC)

4322 Burke Avenue N
Seattle

June 11

7:30-10 p.m.

Chenrezig Empowerment

Sakya Monastery

108 NW 83rd Street
Seattle

June 12

7:30-10 p.m.

Mahamudra Songs

Catherine Blaine

Elementary School

All-purpose Room

2550 34th W

June 13

10 a.m.-noon

and 2:30-5 p.m.

Mahamudra Songs

Catherine Blaine

June 14

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

Mahamudra Songs

Catherine Blaine

June 14

3-5:30 p.m.

Vajrasattva Empowerment of

Marpa the Translator

Catherine Blaine

June 15

7:30-9:30 p.m.

Milarepa Empowerment

KSOC

Selected Verses From Nagarjuna's
Sixty Stanzas of Reasonings

I prostrate to the Mighty One
Who has taught about dependent arising,
The principle by which
Arising and disintegration are abandoned. (Homage)

Those whose intelligence has gone beyond existence and nonexistence
And who do not abide [in any extremes]
Have realized the meaning of dependent arising,
The profound and unobservable [truth of emptiness]. (1)

Those who see with their intelligence
That existence is like a mirage and an illusion
Are not corrupted by believing in
The extremes of earlier and later. (17)

By understanding arising, disintegration is understood.
By understanding disintegration, impermanence is understood.
By understanding impermanence
The truth of the genuine dharma is realized. (22)

Without a stable focus or location,
Not remaining and without root,
Arisen totally as a result of ignorance,
Without beginning, middle, or end . . . (26)

Without core, like a banana tree.
Like an unreal city in the sky,
The suffering world—the lands of confusion—
Manifests in this way—like an illusion. (27)

To those students in search of suchness
At first teachers should say, "Everything exists."
Then after they realize the meaning of this and abandon desire,
They will gain perfect transcendence. (30)

Those who realize that all entities are dependently arisen,
And just like a moon that appears in a pool of water,
Are neither true nor false,
Are not carried away by philosophical dogmas. (45)

Children are tricked by reflections
Because they take them to be real.
In the very same way, because of their ignorance,
Beings are imprisoned in the cages of their [conceptual] objects. (53)

The great ones, who with the eyes of primordial awareness
See that entities are just like reflections,
Do not get caught in the mire
Of so-called “objects.” (54)

The immature are attached to form.
The moderate are free from attachment to [the sense objects],
And those endowed with supreme intelligence
Know the true nature of form and [by so knowing] are liberated. (55)

The awful ocean of existence
Is filled with the tormenting snakes of the afflictions.
But those whose minds are not moved even by thoughts of voidness
Have safely crossed over [its dangers]. (59)

By the power of the virtue performed here
May all beings perfect the accumulations of merit and wisdom,
And from this merit and wisdom,
May they attain the twin dimensions of genuine [enlightenment]. (60)

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, adapted by Ari Goldfield from a translation in *Nagarjuna: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nagarjuna*, Christian Lindtner, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 100-120. May 17, 1997.

Gyalwa Götsangpa's

Eight Flashing Lances

Namo Ratna Guru!

Oh paragon of beings,
You are the dharmakaya, treasure isle,
The treasure too, sambhogakaya's myriad forms,
As nirmanakaya you fulfill the needs of wanderers,
Oh precious Lord, I bow respectfully to you.

A decisive understanding of true reality,
Without preference for either samsara or nirvana,
Conviction reached, the mind wavers no more,
These are three that render view unhindered,
Like a lance that flashes free in the open sky.

Cutting through the root, it holds its own ground,
The six consciousnesses are unspoiled by alteration,
Free of the effort of trying to remember what to do,
These are three that make meditation fully free,
Like a lance flashing free in the open sky.

Experiences are natural and unhindered,
Fear, depression, and anxiety are nowhere to be found,
Victory is gained over belief in duality,
These are three that render conduct fully free,
Like a lance that flashes free in the open sky.

Enlightenment's five dimensions have been there all along—
They directly manifest through experience.
Desire for buddhahood is exhausted,
These are three that make fruition fully free,
Like a lance flashing free in the open sky.

Transgressions and downfalls have been pure from the beginning,
Experience is clarity and emptiness without stain,
Self-importance has been dispensed with,
These are three that make sacred commitments fully free,
Like a lance that flashes free in the open sky.

Wanting for oneself is exhausted,
Love without strife flows in waves,
Undaunted, tireless, unselfish too,
These are three that make compassion fully free,
Like a lance flashing free in the open sky.

The muddiness of clinging is clarified,
Causes and conditions shine clearly like reflections,
The subtle art of what and what not to do is mastered,
These are three that make interdependence fully free,
Like a lance that flashes free in the open sky.

Prayers of aspiration set long ago now awaken,
Whatever is done is of benefit to others,
Performance is effortless and natural,
These three make activity unhindered,
Like a lance flashing free in the open sky.

In this well-known place called White Garuda
This small melody tells of eight lances flashing freely.
Borne on the waves of the excellent guru's blessings,
It appeared in the mind and now has been put to song.

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, translated in two separate
version by Tony Duff and Jim Scott. These were combined and edited by Ari Goldfield,
June 17, 1997.

Selected Verses From Nagarjuna's
Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness

Entities do not exist
In their causes, in their conditions,
In aggregations of many things, or in individual things.
Therefore, all entities are empty. (3)

Because it already exists, that which exists does not arise.
Because it does not exist, that which does not exist does not arise.
Because they contradict each other, existence and nonexistence do not
[arise] together
Since there is no arising, there is no remaining or cessation either. (4)

Without one there are not many, and
Without many there is not one.
Therefore, dependently arisen entities [like these]
Have no characteristics. (7)

[In the true nature] there is neither permanence nor impermanence,
Neither self nor nonself, neither clean nor unclean
And neither happiness nor suffering.
Therefore, the [four] mistaken views do not exist. (9)

Without a father there is no son, and without a son there is no father.
These two do not exist without depending on each other.
Neither do they exist simultaneously.
The twelve links are exactly the same. (13)

Composite and uncomposite [phenomena]
Are not many, are not one,
Are not existent, are not nonexistent, [and] are not both existent and nonexistent.
These words apply to all phenomena [without exception]. (32)

[Defiled] actions have afflictions as their cause,
And the afflictions themselves arise due to [defiled] actions.
The body [also] has [defiled] actions as its cause,
So all three are empty of essence. (37)

All formations are like unreal cities in the sky,
Illusions, mirages, falling hairs,
Foam, bubbles, phantoms,
Dreams and wheels of fire—
They have absolutely no core or substance to them. (66)

The unequaled Thus Gone One
Explicitly taught that
Since all entities are empty of any inherent nature,
All phenomena are dependently arisen. (68)

When one understands that “this arose from those conditions,”
The net of wrong views is lifted.
One abandons desire, ignorance and aversion,
And attains the undefiled state of nirvana. (73)

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, adapted by Ari Goldfield from a translation in *Nagarjuna: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nagarjuna*, Christian Lindtner, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 31-69. May 17, 1997.

Gyalwa Götsangpa's

Melody of the Eight Types of Nonduality

Namo Guru!

The precious Lord embodies enlightenment's five dimensions.
I prostrate to and praise this Precious One
Who dispels the darkness of wanderers' suffering
With nondual, great, everlasting bliss.

Wonderful visions of yidam deities and
Fearsome apparitions of obstructing demons are
Not separable within the pure expanse—
So! How joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!

Obtaining high rebirth or liberation and
Falling into the three unhappy destinations are
Not separable within the pure expanse—
So! How joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!

The mind busy with perceived and perceiver and
The peaceful state of nonconceptuality are
Not separable within the pure expanse—
So! How joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!

Complete happiness and comfort and
Overwhelming pain and suffering are
Not separable within the pure expanse—
So! How joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!

Being well-respected and worshipfully served and
Being derisively laughed at and beaten are
Not separable within the pure expanse—
So! How joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!

Wandering alone in mountain retreats and
Traveling the countries of the world are
Not separable within the pure expanse—
So! How joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!

Having the finest food and drink and
Living in hunger without nourishment are
Not separable within the pure expanse—
So! How joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!

Not crashing the ground with your skull and
Taking birth again and again are
Not separable within the pure expanse—
So! How joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!

This is the melody of the eight types of nonduality;
I have but a mere understanding of what true union is;
Not falling into confusion is very important.

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, translated by Tony Duff in January 1996, and edited by Ari Goldfield, June 18, 1997.

Selected Verses From Nagarjuna's
The Refutation of Criticism

Dependently arisen entities
Are called “emptiness,”
[For] that which is dependently arisen
Is that which has no inherent nature. (22)

One magical creation halts another,
One illusory being puts an end to
The wrong views of his illusory opponent.
When I refute the arguments of others, that is exactly what is happening. (23)

Another example: suppose a man falls in love with an illusory woman,
Then another illusion comes along
And shows the man what a fool he has been—
That's my work. (27)

If I took a position,
Then I would have a flaw.
Since I take no position,
I have no flaw at all. (29)

If the son is produced by the father,
But the father is also produced by that very son,
Then will you please tell me,
Which one is the true “cause” and which the true “result?” (49)

If emptiness is possible,
Then all objects are possible, all levels attainable.
If emptiness is impossible,
Then everything else is [impossible] as well. (70)

I prostrate to the Awakened One, the Buddha,
Who taught that dependent arising and emptiness have the same meaning,
And that this is the middle way path.
Your words are supreme, their meaning unsurpassed. (Concluding homage)

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, translated by Ari Goldfield,
May 21, 1997.

Gyalwa Götsangpa's
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 klesha's power to bestow
Is bliss without contagion, completely undefiled.
Kleshas coming up, sheer delight!

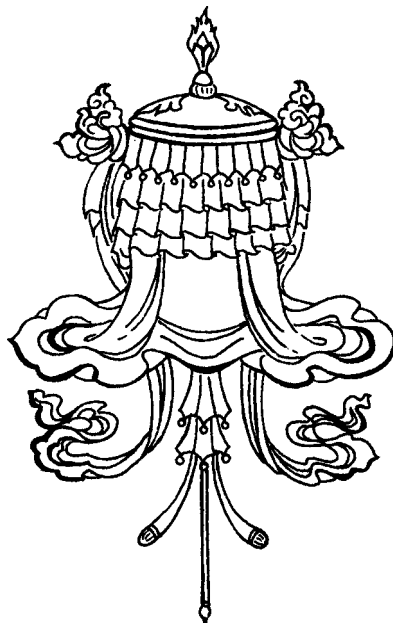
When I'm plagued by god-like forces or demonic interference,
I do not drive them out with rites and spells.
The thing to chase away is egoistic thinking,
Built up on the idea of a self.
This will turn the ranks of maras into your own special forces.
When obstacles arise, sheer delight!

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 the 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 in 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!





The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

Realizing the Profound Truth of Emptiness

In June of 1997 in Seattle, Washington, The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche gave a series of eleven teachings on realizing emptiness, based on the commentaries of Nagarjuna and the songs of Gyalwa Götsangpa and Jetsun Milarepa. The following is an edited transcript of that teaching from the first evening, June 17. Rinpoche's translator was Ari Goldfield.

By The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

Before we listen to these teachings, Rinpoche asks that we all give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, the awakening mind, which means that not only for our own benefit, but rather for the benefit of all sentient beings, who are limitless in number as space is vast in extent, we aspire to attain the precious state of buddhahood, which abides neither in the cycle of existence (samsara), nor in some one-sided cessation of suffering or some kind of individual peace (nirvana).

In order to attain the precious rank of buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, we must generate in our hearts great enthusiasm. We must generate the attitude that we will listen to, reflect upon, and meditate upon the teachings of the genuine dharma with all of the diligence and enthusiasm that we can muster.

At this time, when we have attained this precious human body, endowed with the wonderful qualities of faith, diligence, and intelligence, it is very important for us to use our time well. And the way to do that is to listen to, reflect upon, and then meditate on the genuine dharma.

When we are studying and reflecting on the meaning of the dharma, what are very important are the explanations of how the cycle of existence and nirvana—the tran-

scendence of that cycle of existence—appear, and how they really are—what is their true nature.

Along those lines, tonight Rinpoche will explain, from all of the vast array of topics of the genuine dharma, some verses from a text by the noble bodhisattva and protector Nagarjuna, called the *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning*. [See Page 6 for complete text.]

In the first verse, Nagarjuna prostrates to the Buddha, because the Buddha is the one who taught the truth of dependent arising. Because the Buddha taught that, Nagarjuna prostrates to him. This verse reads:

**I prostrate to the Mighty One
Who has taught about dependent arising,
The principle by which
Arising and disintegration are abandoned.
(Homage)**

If we can understand what dependent arising means, if we can understand the truth of dependent arising and how it is that all phenomena are dependently arisen, then we can abandon our attachment to arising and disintegration. And since that is true, then Nagarjuna prostrates to the Buddha, because the Buddha is the one who taught this most important truth. The Buddha is the one who taught us this method by which we can give up this type of attachment.

The next verse, which is the first verse after the homage reads:

**Those whose intelligence has gone beyond
existence and nonexistence
And who do not abide [in any extremes]
Have realized the meaning of dependent arising,
The profound and unobservable [truth of
emptiness]. (1)**

Those whose intelligence has gone beyond existence and nonexistence refers to those who desire liberation, who desire to be liberated with their intelligence. *Have gone beyond existence and nonexistence* means that they are no longer attached to the idea that phenomena truly exist, that there is some substantial existence to things; nor do they believe that nothing exists, that

reality is a complete nothingness or an absence of anything whatsoever. They have gone beyond both of these different extremes of view, because they have realized the meaning of dependent arising. If one realizes this meaning, then one will no longer be attached to either of these extremes.

Moreover, at the same time that one realizes the truth of dependent arising, one will realize the truth of emptiness, which is at the same time very profound and yet unobservable. Meaning that it can't be fixed or located by saying "this is it" or "this is emptiness" or "that is emptiness." It is beyond all our ideas about what it might be. The profound truth of emptiness is not something we can describe or pinpoint with some type of idea or description. Realizing that truth is what is meant by "realizing the truth of emptiness."

If we still believe in existence, if we have some type of belief in something substantial, if we think that there is something that truly exists, whatever it might be, then we are said to fall into the extreme called eternalism or permanence. And if we fall into that extreme, we will not realize the true nature of reality.

On the other hand, if we propound a view saying nothing exists, "there's absolutely nothing," that the truth is some kind of nothingness or vacuum, then that too is an extreme. That's called the extreme of nihilism. And if we fall into that extreme, we will also not realize the truth of emptiness. The reason for that is that the truth of emptiness, or what is actual reality, is something which is beyond any and all of our descriptions of it or conceptions about it. So whatever our conceptions are, they would necessarily fall into one of these two extremes. And so, by definition, one will not realize the true nature.

For example, let's take the appearance of a flower in a dream. This flower is not something that exists, that truly exists, because it's just a dream appearance—there's no real flower there whatsoever. On the other hand, you can't say there's absolutely nothing, because there is the mere appearance of a flower—but just a mere appearance, that's it. That is its nature in terms of how it exists in the world of appearances. There's nothing really there but there is this mere appear-

ance. In a dream there's nothing substantial but there is the mere appearance of something substantial. Thus, its true nature transcends both existence and nonexistence. Its true nature is not something we can describe with these kinds of terms, because it is beyond any type of thing we might be able to think up about it. And so, just like a flower that appears in a dream, all phenomena that appear, *wherever* they appear, are the same. They all appear in terms of being a mere appearance. There is nothing substantial to them, and their true nature transcends both existence and non-existence—and any other idea.

All phenomena that appear to us in this life are exactly the same. None of them truly exists, nor do they have any substance; but neither are they completely nonexistent, because there is the mere appearance of them. In terms of true reality, true reality is something which cannot be described by terms such as “exist” or “not exist” or by any other terms. True reality is beyond all of our concepts about it; it is inconceivable.

As examples of what this inseparability of appearance and emptiness, that characterizes all phenomena, is like, the next verse reads:

**Those who see with their intelligence
That existence is like a mirage and an illusion
Are not corrupted by believing in
The extremes of earlier and later. (17)**

Existence here refers to samsara, cyclic existence that ignorant beings go around and around in, again and again. Yet, even though beings are continually going around and around in samsara, everything in it is merely inseparable appearance and emptiness. It appears but it has no substantial nature. In that way, it is like a mirage or an illusion. When a magician creates an illusion of something, or when you see a mirage in the desert that looks like water, these are things that appear to exist, but in reality have no substantial existence at all. That is the characteristic of all appear-

ances in cyclic existence.

Those who see with their eye of intelligence that that is how all these appearances truly are, are not corrupted by believing in the extremes of earlier and later. Earlier and later refers to how you view past and future lives. Here, you could fall into the extreme of thinking that past and future lives were things that truly existed, that were somehow real and had some substance to them. That would be falling into the extreme of permanence. On the other hand, you could fall into the extreme of thinking that past and future lives absolutely didn't exist, that there was nothing whatsoever. That would be falling into the extreme of nihilism. However, by realizing that appearances appear and yet are empty of any true existence, you avoid falling into these extremes.

In the next verse we are introduced to a gradual way of beginning to understand emptiness. It says:

By understanding arising, disintegration is understood.

By understanding disintegration, impermanence is understood.

By understanding impermanence

The truth of the genuine dharma is realized. (22)

The first thing that we need to understand, that we can notice and think about, is arising, or birth—how it is that phenomena or things in cyclic existence come into being. For example, this flower. This flower was not just created by one cause or one thing or one condition, but rather it came into being because of the coming together of a great many different causes and conditions. And just like this flower, so are all phenomena in cyclic existence. They don't rely on one cause or condition; they are dependent for their existence on a coming together of a group of causes and conditions. If we can understand that, which is the truth of arising, then what follows is cessation. Everything that is born has to die. There's nothing

**True reality is
beyond all of
our concepts
about it; it is
inconceivable**

that ever is born or comes into being that does not cease to be. We know this just by our own observation and by our own experience.

Now we understand birth and death. And if we understand birth and death, then we also necessarily understand that phenomena are impermanent. Because “impermanent” means that things don’t stay the same forever. That which is born and that which dies go through changes. So all phenomena are impermanent.

There are two different types of impermanence. One type is called gross impermanence, and that is the impermanence that you can see with your eyes or experience with your other senses. When a house is destroyed by an earthquake, you can actually see this type of impermanence happen right before your eyes.

The second type is called subtle impermanence. Subtle impermanence describes the fact that all phenomena are changing moment by moment. From moment to moment, no phenomena stay the same. Causes and conditions are continually acting on all phenomena in cyclic existence, and so none of them ever stays the same from one moment to the next. For example

[Rinpoche snaps his fingers], even within one finger snap there are how many different parts? How many different instants are there? Hundreds and thousands and millions—you can keep dividing and find smaller and smaller instants, and no two instants are the same. So even such a tiny, minute phenomenon is constantly changing, and never stays the same. Realizing that is realizing emptiness, which is to realize that no phenomenon has any substantial, permanent nature.

The next verse reads:

**Without a stable focus or location,
Not remaining and without root,
Arisen totally as a result of ignorance,
Without beginning, middle, or end . . . (26)**

What is being described here is cyclic existence, and cyclic existence has no fixed location. It doesn’t have a location that is in any way truly existent. How can we know this to be true? We all live on this planet Earth, and we might think that we can find some location here. But this Earth is just suspended in space. And space is without any direction or location to it. So, if this Earth is just floating around in space without direction or location, how can we then say that we have any direction or fixed location? It doesn’t make any sense. That is something we can think about and understand pretty easily.

If we think about direction and location just on this Earth, another reason why we can say that there is no location or direction is that everybody on this Earth thinks that they are right side up. [Laughter] Everybody thinks that they are right side up; nobody thinks that they are upside down. But you can’t really have “right side up” without “upside down.” These two depend on each other. So really, there is no right side up or upside down on this earth. If we analyze carefully, we can see that this is true.

Without a stable focus: No matter how hard we try to make cyclic existence into something that truly exists, we can’t do it. There’s no way to make cyclic existence into something stable, into something that will not change, into something dependable. By nature, it’s none of those things. It is constantly changing and has no substance to it. And so all of our attempts to solidify it in any way are completely in vain. No matter what phenomena you try to use or try to analyze to make it into something stable and fixed, you just can’t do it.

The next line says that it is *without root*, which means that there is nothing grounding cyclic existence. To give an example that can be analyzed, take this Earth. We think that Earth is made up of atoms of substantial matter. That is the ground. That is what we are rooted to, that is

**There’s no way
to make cyclic
existence into
something
stable, into
something that
will not change,
into something
dependable**

our foundation. When we analyze these atoms, however, we really can't find anything, because, as you examine more finely, you find smaller and smaller particles. And every new particle, no matter how small, is just a collection or mass of smaller particles. And so, if you try to find the smallest truly existent particle, you can't find it. In this way it is demonstrated that there really is nothing substantial there. There really is no such thing as matter. There really is no such thing as some kind of solid foundation. It doesn't exist.

So what is the real root of cyclic existence? It is ignorance, and it is clinging to a belief in a self—in a truly existent self of the individual, and in some substantial existence to phenomena. But these two also have no true existence; if we analyze them, they are not substantial, truly existent things. And since we can see that the cycle of existence springs from the erroneous belief in a truly existent self and truly existent phenomena, then it follows that cyclic existence is also not a substantially existent thing. So cyclic existence has no root.

Then the next verse says *not remaining*; these phenomena don't remain. They are just like phenomena that appear in a dream. Whatever appears in a dream never really comes into being, even though it looks as if it does. And it never really goes out of existence, even though it looks as if it does. So how could there be anything to remain or have duration? Nothing ever really arises, nothing ever really goes away, and nothing ever really remains in cyclic existence. All appearances are exactly the same in that way.

These appearances in a dream, if they were really to abide or remain, would first have to come into existence. But since they never really come into existence, they can never remain, and they can never go away. That's how we should think about this.

Then the third line says that the real cause of cyclic existence is ignorance. Cyclic existence

arises totally as a result of ignorance. So what does that mean? How does that work? First we are ignorant of the true nature of phenomena; we think that they really exist. As a result, we develop the other afflictions or *kleshas*. We get attached to the phenomena that we like and want them; and there are other phenomena that we don't like, so we try to push them away. In this way we develop attachment and aversion, as a result of which we take all different kinds of actions. These kinds of actions are said to be defiled

actions because, when we act out of attachment and aversion, our actions are governed and motivated by our ignorance. These kinds of actions produce suffering as their result, and so we just go around and around in the cycle of existence.

Since the cause of cyclic existence is ignorance, we might think that it had some fixed point of beginning and some point where it might end. But really, it's not that way; it's just like a dream, in that things in a dream really have no beginning, middle, or end.

The next verse reads:

**Without core, like a banana tree.
Like an unreal city in the sky,
The suffering world—the lands of confusion—
Manifests in this way—like an illusion. (27)**

This verse starts out by saying that cyclic existence is without core, like a banana tree. When you peel a banana tree, you peel it and peel it and it has more and more peels to it. You look at this thing and it looks like something really solid and truly existent, but if you take off all the layers, there's no core. That's it, there's nothing left. In India the example of a banana tree was used to show that cyclic existence is without any core. It has no essence.

Then the cycle of existence is compared to an unreal city in the sky. This is a reference to the city of the *gandharvas*. The literal translation of their name is "smell eaters," which they are called

What is the real root of cyclic existence? It is ignorance, and it is clinging to a belief in a self

because [Rinpoche laughs] they are formless beings who subsist by eating odors. The Buddha talked about them, otherwise we wouldn't know too much about them, because most people can't see them [more laughter]. But some people can see them, and what they see is a big city where all these smell eaters live. They live just as we do and they do all different kinds of things. But even if you could ever see this place, if you could be there, you wouldn't be able to use anything there, because it's just like a phantom place. You could see many different things, but you couldn't make use of anything, or take part in anything, or talk to anybody, because gandharvas are just like phantoms. This is another example illustrating the true nature of cyclic existence.

The verse goes on to say that this is the suffering world. These are the lands of confusion, and the beings in this world suffer. Why? We suffer because we take things to be truly existent because we are confused about the nature of these appearances. We think these appearances are something real. But they are really not. Therefore, we suffer. And yet, all of this suffering in cyclic existence, what is it like? It's just an illusion. The suffering in cyclic existence appears, and all the beings in this world appear, simply because of the coming together of causes and conditions, which produce their appearance. And yet all the beings in this world and everything in cyclic existence is merely inseparable appearance and emptiness. It is appearance that has no substantial nature.

None of us seems to have had any experience with this city of the smell eaters, though it is said that, in past lives, we too were smell eaters. But we don't really remember that [Rinpoche laughs], so it doesn't do us too much good to think about it. But what we can relate to, in terms of our own experience, are examples like dreams and dream cities. In dreams we can experience appearances of very large and busy cities. There is not one thing that exists really in those cities; they are mere appearance. We can go to a movie and in the movie see a very big city with all

types of things happening in it. But again that's just a mere appearance. There's nothing real to it.

The next verse suggests a stage-by-stage approach to gaining an understanding of emptiness, or true nature:

**To those students in search of suchness
At first teachers should say, "Everything exists."
Then after they realize the meaning of this and
abandon desire,
They will gain perfect transcendence. (30)**

How should beginning students of the dharma—students in search of suchness, who want to realize the true nature—be introduced to things? First, teachers should say that things exist. They should explain things in terms of existence, which means that they should talk about past lives and future lives as being existent. And why? Because they are an integral aspect of the principle of cause and effect, of the law of karma which is that good actions lead to happiness, and bad or harmful actions, negative actions towards other sentient beings, lead to suffering. This is an important principle, and we should be taught that it is true and potent, so that we will have faith in it and live by it.

We should also be taught that the three jewels really exist, that there is the Buddha, the Buddha's teachings called the dharma, and the community of dharma practitioners called the sangha. The three jewels can provide us with a genuine refuge from cyclic

existence and can lead us out of it. We should also be taught to be wary of cyclic existence, to feel disgust for it, because it is of the nature of suffering—especially the lower realms like the hell realms, where beings go who commit the most negative actions. We should be taught about all these things at first as being things which are real. As a result, we will, if we understand the meaning of this, abandon desire. If we understand the meaning of all of this, we will no longer seek happiness from cyclic existence. We will no longer

**We suffer
because we
take things to be
truly existent**

seek happiness by trying to fulfill the needs of this “I,” by trying to make this “I” happy. And so we will no longer be caught in thinking that somewhere out there there can be something that can bring happiness. We won’t have any more desire for anything in the cycle of existence, and what that will lead to is an understanding of emptiness, which is here described as perfect transcendence.

The next verse reads:

**Those who realize that all
entities are dependently arisen,
And just like a moon that appears in a pool
of water,
Are neither true nor false,
Are not carried away by philosophical dogmas.
(45)**

Beings who with their intelligence understand dependent arising will understand that all phenomena are just like a moon that appears in a pool of water. That moon is something that is neither truly substantially existent, nor is it something completely nonexistent. There is an appearance of it, and that is also the nature of all phenomena. By realizing this, one will not be carried away by beliefs in extreme views or extreme types of philosophical dogmas.

This verse teaches that the true nature of everything in cyclic existence and of cyclic existence itself transcends both being true and being false. They are neither true nor false, just like the moon that appears in a pool of water. When you look at the moon that appears in a pool of water, there’s absolutely no way to tell that it’s not a real moon. If there’s a moon and it’s a clear night, and the water is not moving, and you look down and you see the moon there, what is to say that it is not the moon? There is a mere appearance of a moon, and yet there’s absolutely nothing substantial to it. Once you put your hand in the water, then you realize that the moon you have been

**Beings who . . .
understand
dependent
arising will
understand that
all phenomena
are just like a
moon that
appears in a pool
of water**

seeing is absolutely insubstantial. That’s the way it really is with all phenomena. If you analyze carefully, even the tiniest particle can be shown not to exist, because even the tiniest particle has parts that it’s made of.* There really is no such thing as a truly existent piece of matter. And by the extension of that analysis we learn that all phenomena that we see, all appearances, are of this nature. They have no true existence.

They have no substance, and yet they can not be said to be nonexistent either. You cannot say that everything is nothing or everything is fake. Because if you say that everything is fake or false, then that turns falsity into something truly existent. That reifies falsity into something substantial.

Furthermore, if there is really nothing true, then there can’t be anything really false. There can be no falsity, because the concept of falsity is dependent on the concept of truth. First you have to have truth in order to be able to have falsity, because false means not true. So if there is no “true,” then you cannot have “not true.” These are just ideas that are dependently existent on each other. Knowing this helps us to understand how it is that the true nature of cyclic existence transcends all these different kinds of ideas.

We live on this planet. On this planet there’s no up and down. This planet is suspended in space which has neither center nor edge, neither a middle point nor boundaries. And our existence transcends ideas of true and false. This Earth is neither true nor false, but like the moon that appears in a pool of water, and the many different

***Editor’s note:** To be “truly existent” something must be unitary, i.e. indivisible, unchanging, and independent of causes and conditions for its existence. Any particle of substantial matter, regardless of how small it is, can theoretically be made to touch another particle of matter. When these two particles touch each other, the right side of one touches the left side of the other. Therefore, each of them has both a left and a right side and, consequently, each can be divided in half. In fact, they are infinitely divisible. By this logic it is demonstrated that matter cannot, in fact, exist substantially as we know it.

sentient beings going about their business on it are also neither true nor false. We are all just mere appearances, just like the moon that appears in a pool of water.

So how is it that we take things to be real? The next verse reads:

Children are tricked by reflections

Because they take them to be real.

**In the very same way, because of their
ignorance,**

**Beings are imprisoned in the cages of their
[conceptual] objects. (53)**

Children can be tricked by a reflection in a mirror or by a magic trick, or by something in a movie, and they think that all of those things are real and actually have some real ability to do things. Everybody else knows that there is nothing real there. But we who are still ignorant are in the exact same situation. Because of ignorance, we are imprisoned in a cage made up of all of the objects which we conceptualize to be real. So we are imprisoned by that. And we are blocked from realizing our true potential because we take all of these things to be real, because we conceptualize these things to be real when really they are not, when really they are just like reflections or magic tricks that can fool children.

The next verse reads:

**The great ones, who with the eyes of primordial
awareness**

See that entities are just like reflections,

Do not get caught in the mire

Of so-called “objects.” (54)

The great and noble bodhisattvas, who have realized the truth of emptiness, who, with the eyes of primordial awareness, see that entities are just like reflections, do not get caught in the mire of so-called objects. *Great ones* refers to noble bodhisattvas. *With the eyes of primordial awareness* means awareness that has really been present from the beginning, which is inherent in the true nature of mind. You could also say, *with the eyes of their wisdom*. They see that all of the

entities within the cycle of existence are just like reflections in a pool of water, or just like reflections in a mirror, that they are mere appearances without any substantial existence. They see that entities don't truly exist, and, because of that, they don't get caught in the mud and mire as everybody else does, which is the mire of taking all of this to be true. Taking everything to be true is like a trap, of which they are free.

There is a story about the great bodhisattva-yogini of Tibet, Machig Lapdrön. Machig Lapdrön had the incredible ability to read the sutras at a very, very fast rate. Once, during an entire month, she read all twelve volumes of the one hundred thousand line version of the *Sutra of Transcendent Perfection of Wisdom* every day. Every day she read all twelve volumes. In those sutras it talks about how form has no color—it's neither yellow nor red nor white nor blue. Nor does it have any shape—it's not round or rectangular. Nor is it hard or soft. None of these characteristics, or any other characteristics, truly exists.

By reading that sutra every day, at the end of a month Machig Lapdrön had directly realized emptiness. As a result of that she was able to see that all phenomena are just mere appearances, are just like reflections, and so she did not get caught in the mire of clinging to objects as being true.

Machig Lapdrön was quite special. Most siddhas, most great spiritual masters of Tibet and India, attained realization through the practice of vajrayana, through the practice of tantra. Machig Lapdrön, on the other hand, attained realization through studying, contemplating, and meditating on the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, the *Prajnaparamita* sutras, the sutras of *The Transcendent Perfection of Wisdom*. When she passed into nirvana, they built a funeral pyre for her. When it was burning, her son, who was also a great master, named Gyalwa Döndrup, sang praises to her at each door of her cremation shrine. In one of these praises he sang, “Mother, you are the great *Prajnaparamita* siddha. You are the great master of *The Transcendent Perfection of Wisdom*.”

It is important for us to realize how profound and how important this view being taught here in texts like Nagarjuna's *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning* is, because, if you know this view well, if you understand emptiness through this view, then you also can attain the great powers of realization.

The next verse reads:

**The immature are attached to form.
The moderate are free from attachment to
[the sense objects],
And those endowed with supreme intelligence
Know the true nature of form and [by so
knowing] are liberated. (55)**

The *immature* here refers to those who are not bodhisattvas, who are still in cyclic existence. And the reason that they are still in cyclic existence is that they are still attached to form as being something real. As a consequence, they still have desire for certain kinds of forms and aversion for other kinds of forms, and this keeps them going around in the cycle of existence.

The moderate are free from attachment to sense objects; this refers to beings in the formless gods' realms of the cycle of existence, who have dispensed with the kind of attachment and clinging to objects of form that we have but are still attached to a sort of blank meditation state. Even though they are free of attachment to sense objects, they are not completely free from the cycle of existence. Who is free from the cycle of existence? Those endowed with the supreme intelligence that knows the true nature of form, who know form to be empty, who know form to be nothing more than inseparable appearance and emptiness. By knowing that, they are liberated.

The next verse reads:

**The awful ocean of existence
Is filled with the tormenting snakes of the
afflictions.
But those whose minds are not moved even by
thoughts of voidness
Have safely crossed over [its dangers]. (59)**

What is the method by which we can attain

the transcendence of suffering, by which we can attain nirvana? It is by our minds' not being moved even by thoughts of voidness. What this means is that, even though thinking that everything is empty is quite a subtle thought, still, if we are attached to that thought, then we are reifying emptiness into something real. We are attached to emptiness as being something truly existent, and that's still not quite realizing the true nature of reality, which is beyond all conceptions about what it might be. But those whose minds are not moved even by thoughts of emptiness have safely crossed over the dangers of the awful ocean of existence, which is filled with the tormenting snakes of all of the afflictive mental states. These afflictive mental states constantly plague all those who are still going around in cyclic existence. Those whose minds are not moved even by thoughts of emptiness have crossed over this ocean of suffering and have attained nirvana, the transcendence of suffering.

The last verse is the dedication of merit:

**By the power of the virtue performed here
May all beings perfect the accumulations of
merit and wisdom,
And from this merit and wisdom,
May they attain the twin dimensions of genuine
[enlightenment]. (60)**

This is the dedication that Nagarjuna wrote. When he talks about the power of the virtue performed here, he is talking about the power of his virtue accumulated by writing this text. But for us, it's the power of the virtue of listening to and thinking about the explanations of the text. By that virtue, we should think, may all beings perfect the accumulations of merit and wisdom. Merit and wisdom are the two causes of enlightenment. The perfection of the accumulation of merit is essentially the perfection of doing good for others in terms of apparent reality. The accumulation of wisdom is the perfection of realizing the true nature, which is beyond all conception. From this merit and wisdom, may sentient beings attain the twin dimensions of genuine enlightenment, which refers to the two kayas, the dharmakaya

and the rupakaya, sometimes translated as the truth body and the form body. The truth body refers to the actual mind of the buddha, the pure awareness of the buddha, and that body is the result of the perfection of the accumulation of wisdom of the true nature of reality.

The form body of the buddha is what everybody can see, and what benefits beings.* It is the result of the perfection of the accumulation of merit. So by the power of the virtue performed here, may all beings perfect the accumulations of merit and wisdom. And from this merit and wisdom, may they attain the twin dimensions of genuine enlightenment.

This has been a brief explanation of some very important verses from Nagarjuna's *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning*. In this day and age, we all have a lot of work to do and we have a lot of other things to study, so we don't have time to study the entire text in all of its detail. Since that is the case, then it's very good to look at the important verses and understand their meaning. That is something that we can do in a brief period of time, so that's why we have explained it in this fashion.

This is a good selection of verses because at the beginning there is the homage, and at the end there is the dedication of merit, which rounds everything out. In between are the important verses, so it's a good collection of verses to have.

When we are meditating on emptiness, if we pick one verse and recite it, think about it, and meditate on its meaning, and then move to another verse, recite it, think about it, and meditate on its meaning, and continue on in that vein, then that's a very good way to meditate.

If you are curious why we recite these verses with even timing and in a level tone of voice, the idea is to let the mind rest in a peaceful way. But of course, when you are by yourself, you may say it any way with which you feel comfortable.

***Editor's note:** Traditionally the rupakaya is used to stand for both the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. The nirmanakaya is, indeed, what can be seen by the eyes of sentient beings in the human realm. The sambhogakaya is another form body, imperceptible to ordinary beings, but perceptible to enlightened bodhisattvas, which also exists for the benefit of beings.

Question: [unintelligible, but probably:] Why does the accumulation of merit lead to a form body, and the accumulation of wisdom lead to the truth body?

Rinpoche: The form body is all of the great qualities of the buddha, like the protrusion on the head, the radiant body, and things like that, including the thirty-two major and eighty minor signs of physical perfection. Why does the accumulation of merit lead to the attainment of such a body? This actual body of the buddha is what we as deluded sentient beings can see and what helps beings. From that standpoint, it is something existent. The accumulation of merit is actually helping beings and doing good things for beings in terms of the existent. And so this is something, from that standpoint of being existent, that has a result which is also something existent.

If we take this house as an example, the walls and the paint and the colors are things that we can see, so they are all existent things, and they have existent causes. The space inside of the house is something nonexistent that has causes which are also nonexistent. So it's like that.

So just as the space inside of this house is something nonexistent and, therefore, can't have an existent cause, similarly the truth body or dharmakaya, which is the complete freedom from all elaborations, also requires as its cause the meditation on emptiness, which is also free from all elaboration.

Question: [questioner seems to ask about nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya]

Rinpoche: The sambhogakaya or the enjoyment body is also a form body. It is of the nature of light—that's how it's described. It includes, for example, Vajrasattva, or the five buddhas of the five buddha families. These are forms which ordinary beings can not perceive. Only bodhisattvas can perceive them. In short, the sambhogakaya is the enjoyment body which is enjoyed by all bodhisattvas.

The emanation body, the nirmanakaya, on the other hand, is made of flesh and blood, is born from a womb, and can be seen by all ordinary

beings. It's not really of the nature of flesh and blood, but that's how it appears to us.

Question: Why are the form and truth body referred to as "twin" bodies?

Translator: It's twin meaning two, not twin like twins, but twin like two. I just thought it sounded nice. [laughter]

Question: Could Rinpoche explain the extremes of earlier and later again?

Rinpoche: Earlier and later refer to past and future lives. In Buddhism it is taught that there are past and future lives. As for past lives, there was never a first one, for there is no beginning to the succession of them. As for future lives, so long as we are ignorant, then there will be no end to them. If we think that these lives are things that are truly existent, that they have some substantial existence, then we fall into the extreme of permanence, of eternalism. And if we believe, on the other hand, that there is absolutely no such thing whatsoever, that there are not even the mere appearances of past and future lives, then we fall into the extreme of nihilism. But if we realize that this existence is like a mirage and an illusion, in the sense that it is something that appears but has no true existence, then we won't fall into either of these extremes.

So it's good if we understand what is a mirage and an illusion. All of our suffering is just a mirage and an illusion. All of our afflictive mental states are just mirages and illusions. And all the difficult and adverse circumstances that we run into are just mirages and illusions. They are just mere appearances without any substantial nature.

We should think about the suffering in a dream. If we dream of bad things happening which entail suffering, and if we don't know that we are dreaming, then there is absolutely no difference between the suffering we experience in the dream and the suffering we have during the day. Absolutely no difference. Now from the perspective of the waking state, there is nothing really happening in a dream. It is a mere appearance.

There is no reason to suffer. The only reason that we suffer is that we take these dream appearances to be true. It is only because we are obscured by our ignorance that we think these dreams are real, and we suffer as a result of it.

What is the true nature of a dream? It is just openness and spaciousness. What we need to do to be liberated from suffering is to realize that all appearances are of the same nature. We need to realize that our suffering does not come from these appearances, but from our taking these appearances to be real. If we realize this, then we will experience the true nature of everything that is, which is openness and spaciousness also.

When we first learn about emptiness, it appears that emptiness has to do with outer phenomena, that outer phenomena are empty of true existence. But really and truly, true emptiness, the true nature of reality, is the true nature of our mind, the true nature of this very present and ever present mind. And the true nature of this very present mind is openness, spaciousness, complete freedom from all thoughts, complete freedom from all ideas about the way things are or are not. Openness, spaciousness, and relaxedness.

Question: You were talking about the extremes of earlier and later, past and future lives, permanence versus nihilism. I guess I'm getting confused about how you equate these. I've heard existence versus nihilism, but how can you say that existence is permanent? Maybe in that moment that I'm totally caught in something I think it's permanent, but if I step back I realize it's not permanent. But I still think it exists. So even though I don't think it's permanent, I still think it exists.

Translator: Permanence is a literal translation of the word in Tibetan, *takba*, but I can ask Rinpoche to explain it a little bit more.

Rinpoche: There are lots of different extremes of view that we can fall into. The point is not to think about just being free from the view of permanence, but also from the extremes of thinking either that things exist or thinking that things do not exist; of thinking that things are permanent or thinking that they are impermanent, of thinking

that they appear or thinking that they do not appear, of thinking that they are empty or thinking that they are not empty—all of these sets of extremes are thoughts, are different concepts that we impute to reality. But the true nature of reality is beyond all extremes of thought, beyond all the different kinds of thoughts that we have about it. That's the point of teaching about these extremes. It's just to show us that these are different ideas and thoughts that we can have about how things are.

The Consequence Middle Way school, the Prasāngika Madhyamika, doesn't make any assertions about anything. They have no views, because any view is regarded as an extreme. Any view is a superimposition onto the true nature of reality. And so they don't have anything to say about the nature of reality except to refute other people's views.

In order to understand this, the best thing to do in the beginning is to think about dreams. You can't say that dream appearances, the things in a dream, are existent, but you can't say that they're completely nonexistent. You can't say that they fall into the extreme of permanence, but you can't say that they fall into the extreme of nihilism either. You can't say that they are entities, but you can't say that they're not entities. You can't say really anything about them. Nothing really can accurately describe what they are. Thinking in this way we can understand the true nature of reality.

In the *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, Nagarjuna wrote a verse which says, "Permanence, impermanence, and so forth, these four, where are they in the expanse of peace?" Permanence, impermanence, both permanence and impermanence, neither permanence nor impermanence—any kind of idea you want to make up—where is it in the expanse of the true nature of reality? Where is it in the expanse of peace? You can't find it, because the true nature is beyond all of these concepts.

We will now discuss a song by a great Kagyu yogi, Gyalwa Götsangpa called *Eight Flashing Lances*, which is very good for us to read. [See Page 7 for complete text.]

Gyalwa Götsangpa was born in southern Tibet. He traveled to central Tibet, where he met his lama

and received instructions. Then he went to northern Tibet and meditated for many years in a cave near a very big lake. Then he went to western Tibet, to Mount Kailash and meditated near Mount Kailash for a while. Then he went to India where he went to a sacred place called Jaulindata. Then he went to Nepal and from there back to Tibet. In all of his great and miraculous life, he never stayed in meditation in the same place twice. He never visited the same place twice. He was constantly going from one cave to another, and when he passed into nirvana, he was still living in a cave. His is a really miraculous story. Something quite wonderful about Götsangpa's story is that he was very sick a lot of the time that he was meditating. He was quite ill, and the illness caused him a lot of pain. But he took his illness to the path, and his illness became the means by which he realized the true nature. Later he sang many songs about how he did that.

The metaphor of flourishing a lance in space is used because, when one flourishes a lance or a sword in space, there is no obstruction, there is no hindrance to it. It moves very freely. It does not move once and then run into something. It is never hindered by anything. This is an example of what the true nature is like, and what realization of the true nature is like; it is completely unhindered. It is open, spacious, and relaxed.

This song is very much in accord with the meaning of the verses we have studied from the *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning*, because the *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning* talks about the true nature, which is the complete freedom from any ideas about it, which nature is also completely open, spacious, and relaxed.

The view is without any focus or object. The meditation is without any grasping. The conduct is without any type of attachment or bias. These three describe the true nature. Both teachings are talking about the same state of openness and spaciousness.

So now we will meditate, and the way we will meditate is that we will read one verse at a time, and then meditate on the meaning of that verse. We will read the verse, then think about the meaning a little bit, and then finally rest without any type of grasping or thinking about anything at all. (51)



'Nagarjuna had five main types of reasonings with which he demonstrated that phenomena do not truly exist.'

The Logic That Refutes the Idea That Anything Is Truly Existent

The following transcript continues Rinpoche's series of teachings. This is from June 18, 1997.

Rinpoche wishes everybody *tashi delek* this evening, and makes the aspiration that all of us will develop *ultimate* awakening mind, which is the bodhicitta that understands the ultimate truth. It is by virtue of not understanding the ultimate truth that we are trapped in cyclic existence, which is marked by confusion and ignorance.

Rinpoche also makes the aspiration that our *relative* awakening mind will also increase and increase. Relative awakening mind, relative bodhicitta, is loving kindness and compassion for all sentient beings. By developing relative bodhicitta, we prevent ourselves from falling into the extreme of becoming attached to isolation, one-sided peace, or cessation.

By developing these two types of awakening mind, we will attain the precious state of buddhahood, which falls neither into the extreme of existence, nor into the extreme of one-sided peace, and we will be able to perform the benefit of countless living beings. Please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, the awakening mind, which is the essential aspiration of the great vehicle, the mahayana.

Tonight, Rinpoche will explain some verses from the protector Nagarjuna's text, *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*. [See Page 9 for complete text.]

The first verse reads:

Entities do not exist

In their causes, in their conditions,

In aggregations of many things, or in individual things.

Therefore, all entities are empty. (3)

Entities are, by nature, empty of any type of substantial existence; therefore, they cannot be found to exist in their causes and conditions or in the coming together of their causes and conditions. They cannot be found to exist in the coming together of many things, nor can they be found to exist in individual things. They cannot be found to exist in any one cause or any one condition. And if we examine very subtly, we see that even these causes and conditions do not have any true exist-

ence. It is impossible to find an entity that truly exists in any of these possibilities; therefore, entities are empty of inherent existence.

As an example, we can apply this logic to the suffering we experience as a result of thinking about the future. As a result of thinking about the future, we experience a lot of worry and anxiety, which is suffering. However, if we examine its nature, we will find that it doesn't really exist. It doesn't exist either in the coming together of all or any number of its causes and conditions, or in any one particular cause or condition that we might isolate.

What is the main cause of suffering in thinking about the future? It is the future! Let us think about that. The future is something which does not exist. You can't find it anywhere. The future is something that is not here at all. Since the cause doesn't exist, the suffering doesn't exist either.

The next verse reads:

Because it already exists, that which exists does not arise.

Because it does not exist, that which does not exist does not arise.

Because they contradict each other, existence and nonexistence do not [arise] together

Since there is no arising, there is no remaining or cessation either. (4)

We can develop a reasoning using this logic. We can say that suffering is not something that ever arises. Why? Because, it doesn't arise from being existent when its cause is present. And it doesn't arise from being nonexistent when its cause is present. And it doesn't arise from being both existent and nonexistent when its cause is present. And it doesn't arise from some other possibility. Let's look at these four.

If you say that something arises, then it either has to exist at the time of its cause or not exist at the time of its cause. Those are the only two

possibilities. If something exists at the time of its cause, then it doesn't need to arise. It doesn't make any sense that it would arise when it already exists. How could it exist at the time of its cause? If it existed at the time of its cause, then one would not be producing the other; the result would not rely on the cause to exist. It would already be there, so arising would be something nonsensical.

The next possibility is that the thing does not exist at the time of its cause. If that were true, then what you would be saying is that the cause does not have power to do anything, because, by the time the result

comes around, the cause is gone. There would be no connection between the two. So we would see all kinds of things arising without cause, like flowers arising in space, because causes would have no power to do anything.

A thing does not arise from being both existent and nonexistent at the time the cause is present. That doesn't make any sense. That has all the faults of the previous two reasonings. And, there is no other possible way for a thing to arise. Therefore, suffering is not something that arises. And if it does not arise, then suffering is not something that truly exists.

Nagarjuna had five main types of reasonings with which he demonstrated that phenomena do not truly exist. One of them was this, to examine whether or not, at the time of the cause, the result either existed or did not exist.

For example, suffering in a dream is not something that arises from being existent at the time of its cause, from being nonexistent at the time of its cause, from being both existent and nonexistent at the time of its cause, or from being neither existent nor nonexistent at the time of its cause. Suffering in a dream is something that never really happens. It is just a mere appearance. If we think about this type of example, it will help us to understand. To understand that phenomena never really arise, or never come into

What is the main cause of suffering in thinking about the future? It is the future! . . . The future is something which does not exist

being, is difficult. But if we think about a dream it will become easier, because in dreams we have all types of appearances that never really happen, that never really come into being.

Another one of Nagarjuna's reasonings is to examine a phenomenon to determine whether it exists as something that is one or many. This next verse shows how these ideas of one and many are really just dependently arisen and, therefore, not truly existent:

Without one there are not many, and

Without many there is not one.

**Therefore, dependently arisen entities
[like these]**

Have no characteristics. (7)

A dependently arisen entity, anything that has arisen in dependence on other things, has no characteristics, which means that it has no substantial essence. It is not something that truly exists because it is neither one unitary thing nor is it the coming together of many things.

We can take this flower as an example of something that is neither one nor many, like all phenomena. This flower is clearly not one, unitary, indivisible thing, because it has many parts. On the other hand it is not many indivisible things because each of these parts in turn has many parts. Since it is not one, unitary, substantial, indivisible thing and since it is also not many unitary, substantial, indivisible things, it does not truly exist.

All dependently occurring appearances have no substantial essences because they are beyond being either one indivisible thing or many indivisible things. For examples we have the dependently occurring appearances that we see in dreams. All of the things that we see in dreams are appearances. At the time we are dreaming, they look real, but in fact they have no substantial essence. They have no inherent na-

ture, because they are neither one thing, nor are they many.

We might think that the afflictions, the afflicted mental states, are things that are real, that the kleshas are things that have substance to them. We might think that, because there are mistaken views, wrong ways of seeing things, which then give rise to emotional afflictions in our minds. But these wrong views do not really exist either. There is really no such *thing* as a wrong view. Mistaken views, which appear in our minds, are just mere appearances. That is demonstrated in the next verse:

**[In the true nature] there is neither permanence
nor impermanence,**

**Neither self nor nonself, neither clean nor
unclean**

And neither happiness nor suffering.

**Therefore, the [four] mistaken views do not
exist. (9)**

All of these mistaken views, these thoughts of permanence and impermanence, self and nonself, clean and unclean, etc., are dependently existent thoughts. They depend on the existence of correct views. To have an idea of a mistaken view, you have to have an idea of what a correct view is. So there is nothing that is *inherently* mistaken. Things can only be mistaken in dependence on something that is correct. Therefore, a mistaken view is only *dependently* arisen, and never *truly* arises. It is not something that ever truly happens. Moreover, if we examine these thoughts of mistaken views to determine whether or not they are some kind of entity, then we must conclude that these

thoughts individually are neither one thing nor the coming together of many things. Therefore, they have no essence. Wrong views or thoughts of wrong views are things that never truly arise and which have no substantial essence.

**Another one of
Nagarjuna's
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that is one
or many**

Four basic types of mistaken views are described. One of them is to take what is impermanent to be permanent. But if we look at impermanence and permanence we can see that both of them are only dependent ideas. There is no way that anything can be permanent without one's having some idea of what impermanence is. Similarly, if you were to say that something is impermanent, impermanence is not something that is truly existent because that depends on permanence. So neither of these inherently exists.

The next type of wrong view is to take that which is clean to be unclean. But again, what is clean? Clean means that which is not unclean. And unclean is that which is not clean. So you can never find out what either of these things is. It just goes back and forth. They don't truly exist.

The third mistaken view is to take that which is not a self to be a self. Again, what is nonself? It is that which is not a self. Well, what is a self? It is that which is not a nonself. You cannot figure it out. You cannot find out what these things inherently are.

The fourth mistaken view is to take that which is unhappiness to be happiness. Well then, what is happiness? It is that which is not unhappiness. What is unhappiness? It is that which is not happiness.

And so again these things are just dependently existent. They are not truly existent. They are not inherently existent. They exist only from the perspective of our thoughts, which bring along with them the concepts of their opposites. When we see something that is clean or dirty, it is just as when we see something clean or dirty in a dream. You see something and you say, "Oh, this is clean." But you can only say that because you have some idea of what dirty is. You see something that is dirty and you say, "Oh, this is dirty." But you can only say that because you have some idea of what clean is. Nothing is inherently clean or dirty. Just as when you see something clean or dirty in a dream.

Since these four mistaken views do not really exist, that which arises from them—the three main afflictions: ignorance, desire-attachment, and aversion—also do not really exist. They have no substantial essence. They are unborn. They never really arise.

We might think that the twelve links of cyclic existence really exist, that dependent arising is something real, that there really are things that are produced by other things. And we might think that there are things that are produced by that which produces them:

Without a father there is no son, and without a son there is no father.

These two do not exist without depending on each other.

Neither do they exist simultaneously.

The twelve links are exactly the same. (13)

Normally, the way that the twelve links of dependent arising is traditionally explained is that from the earlier ones come the later ones.

First there is ignorance. Then there is action taken in ignorance. Then, as a result of that action, there is a consciousness which is born in a womb somewhere in cyclic existence. And on and on, like that. So the later ones depend on the earlier ones. But actually, the earlier ones are just as dependent on the later ones as the later ones are on the earlier ones. Really you can't say which one produces the other one. So ignorance is just as dependent on action taken in ignorance as this action is dependent on the ignorance. If

we go all the way to the end then we would say that birth is just as dependent on aging and death as aging and death are dependent on birth.

How can we demonstrate this to be true? In worldly life, take the example of a father and son. Normally we say that the father produces the son

Since these four mistaken views do not really exist, that which arises from them—the three main afflictions: ignorance, attachment, and aversion—also do not really exist

and that the son is produced by the father. But if you think about it, then there is no way that you could ever have a father without there being a son. No one is ever called father before there is a son, before there is a child. The father is just as dependent on the son as the son is dependent on the father. So which one is the producer and which one is the produced? You can't really say. You can make the same analysis with a mother and daughter. It is the same exact thing.

We can also think about how the eye perceives form in a dream. No form in a dream exists before you see it. And similarly, the eye that sees does not exist before the form that is seen is there. These two are equally dependent on each other. They are only existent in the sense that they are mutually dependent, and neither of them exists in any independent way.

Because the Buddha taught that composite phenomena, which come into being as a result of different things' coming together, do not truly exist, we might then be inclined to think that uncomposite phenomena truly exist, but they don't. This is taught in the next verse which says:

Composite and uncomposite [phenomena]

Are not many, are not one,

Are not existent, are not nonexistent, [and] are not both existent and nonexistent.

These words apply to all phenomena [without exception]. (32)

If we made a reasoning out of this, we would say that no composite phenomenon has any substantial existence because composite phenomena are neither one thing nor the coming together of many things. They neither exist, nor do they not exist.

The last line says that these words apply to all phenomena without exception, which means that the reasonings in this verse may be applied to anything. For example, we can say that all of the mental states which afflict us, all of the kleshas,

We could say that all of the difficult times that we meet in this life have no substantial existence

have no substantial essence because they are neither one thing nor the coming together of many things. Therefore, they are beyond either existence or nonexistence. We could say that all of the difficult times that we meet in this life have no substantial existence. They don't really exist, because they are neither one thing nor the coming together of many things. And therefore they transcend both existence and nonexistence.

For example, the suffering, the hard times, the difficult experiences that we have in a dream don't really exist. But we think that they do. So we are tricked. We are confused into thinking that they truly exist, so we suffer. When we consider the suffering we experience from difficult circumstances during the day, there is no difference. We know that once we wake up from a dream, we will realize that these difficult experiences were really nonexistent. The suffering that we experience during the day is of the same nature. It is only because we think that these appearances of suffering are real that we suffer; we don't suffer as a result of the appearances themselves.

We might think that the cycle of existence is real, that existence is real because the body seems something real. We might think that the actions that the body takes are real and that the afflictive mental states which propel those actions are real. The next verse refutes these notions:

[Defiled] actions have afflictions as their cause, And the afflictions themselves arise due to [defiled] actions.

The body [also] has [defiled] actions as its cause, So all three are empty of essence. (37)

The karma* that we accumulate, the actions which are defiled by our afflicted mental states of either desire or anger or indifference/apathy, don't

***Editor's note:** Karma is, by definition, action and the results of actions motivated by fundamental ignorance of the true nature of things, the consequent clinging to self and phenomena as dualistically and truly existent, and the afflictive mental states that arise from dualistic clinging.

truly or inherently exist because they depend on afflictive mental states to occur. They are completely dependent on something else for their existence. They are not inherently existent or independently existent in any way. Similarly, afflictive mental states rely on actions as their cause. When you take an action out of desire or anger or indifference, what does it produce? It produces more desire or more anger or more indifference.

Similarly, another way to think about this is that the result of these actions is some sentient being, some consciousness somewhere. And if there were no sentient being, how could there be any afflictions? How could there be any afflicted mental states? In that way too, the afflictions arise as a result of actions. So the afflictions are not something inherently existent. They are completely dependent on something else.

And the body, is that something real? Is that something independently existent? No, it exists as a result of actions. The body is the fruit, the ripened result, of taking certain actions in the past. Based on whatever actions you take in the past, you wind up with some kind of body. So this body is not something inherently or independently existent either.

Therefore, since these three—afflictions, actions, and the body—are dependently existent, what does that say? It says that really they don't truly exist. They don't exist in the ultimate sense. They don't have any substantial essence. In terms of what is true reality, they don't exist.

It is like the body you have within a dream. You dream and you have different types of things running around in your mind. You dream that, because of whatever is going on in your mind, you do all types of different things. All of these doings are just mere appearances. They have no substance. They are not real.

To illustrate how it is that phenomena are mere appearances due to the coming together of

causes and conditions while having no material substance, many different examples are given in the next verse. It says:

**All formations are like unreal
cities in the sky,**

Illusions, mirages, falling hairs,

Foam, bubbles, phantoms,

Dreams and wheels of fire—

**They have absolutely no core or substance to
them. (66)**

All formations are lacking inherent substance, because they are just mere appearances that arise due to the coming together of causes and conditions. They are like unreal cities in the sky, like illusions, like mirages, like falling hairs that one sees when one has an eye disease, like foam and bubbles, like phantoms and appearances in dreams; and like wheels of fire, which one sees when a torch is spun around in space at night and produces the appearance of a wheel that really isn't there.

The next verse reads:

The unequaled Thus Gone One

Explicitly taught that

**Since all entities are empty of any inherent
nature,**

All phenomena are dependently arisen. (68)

**If phenomena
were truly
existent, what
would that
mean? It would
mean that
they existed
independently of
any causes and
conditions**

Why is it that the Buddha taught that phenomena are dependently arisen? It is because they are empty of any inherent nature. Since they are empty of any inherent nature, the Buddha taught that they are dependently arisen.

If phenomena were truly existent, what would that mean? It would mean that they existed independently of any causes and conditions. It would mean that they existed in a permanent fashion that didn't depend on anything else. If phenomena were

really like that, there would be no reason to teach about dependent arising, because nothing would need to arise in dependence on anything else. It is because phenomena do not have any inherent essence of their own, that they are not independent and, therefore, have no other way to exist but dependently, that the Buddha taught dependent arising. The Buddha taught that they rely on different causes and conditions for their appearance.

The last verse talks about the advantages of understanding this truth of dependent arising. It says:

When one understands that “this arose from those conditions,”

The net of wrong views is lifted.

**One abandons desire, ignorance and aversion,
And attains the undefiled state of nirvana. (73)**

When you understand dependent arising, you are no longer ensnared in the net of wrong views, which entail either thinking that things are really substantially existent or that there is just nothing at all.

Samsaric beings cling to one or the other of these thoughts. Dependent arising shows that none of the things that you might think of are substantially existent. So, you are led to an understanding of the true reality, which is freedom from all of these different types of ideas. When that happens, you naturally abandon desire, ignorance, and aversion. You abandon all of the mental afflictions and attain the state of nirvana, which is not stained by any of them.

This has been a brief explanation of some important verses from Nagarjuna’s *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*. What we need to do is compare the reasonings used in these verses with the reasonings used in the verses from the *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning*. If we

do that, then understanding both of them will become easier. This is also connected with what is expressed by Götsangpa, the great yogi, in his song *The Eight Flashing Lances*.

[Next Rinpoche gives the transmission for Götsangpa’s song: *Melody of the Eight Types of Non-Duality*. See Page 10 for complete text.]

This song takes eight pairs of opposites and shows that in the true nature of things, these opposites do not truly exist. The nonexistence of these opposites is described by the terms duality and equality, equality in the sense that all things are in their true sense equal. This is taught in both the great vehicle, mahayana, and in the tantric vehicle, vajrayana. It is taught in both vehicles that, in terms of true reality, nirvana and samsara are indistinguishable, unidentifiable, and inseparable. This is easy to understand if we think about a dream. We may think things’ appearing in a dream to be very contradictory to each other, but in reality these things do not exist. Therefore, there is no difference among them.

For example, if we dream of being bound up in iron chains, and then of being set free, these two events appear to be opposite to each other, but in reality there were no such occurrences. None of it ever really happened. In terms of true reality, neither state—being bound or being unbound—had any substance, so there was no essential difference between them. You might also dream of seeing something that seems very clean and pure, and in the same dream of seeing an appearance that looks completely disgusting and very

dirty. But these are just appearances; there is no substance to them. It is only from the perspective of our thoughts that there is clean and dirty— from the perspective of true reality there is no such distinction. That is why true reality is said to be devoid of two: because none of these distinctions actually exists. It is also said to be the equality of all the mental distinctions which are made in thought but which are not real.

When you understand dependent arising, you are no longer ensnared in the net of wrong views

It is taught that samsara and nirvana are indistinguishable, that they are not separable in any way. If we think about the nature of a dream, we will understand what the root of our confusion is. All of the appearances in a dream are appearance and emptiness inseparable. They appear but they are empty of any substance at the same time. Yet we take them to be true and real, because we are not aware of their true nature. We have a dream and we think that everything in that dream is real. We interact with it as though it were real and so we suffer as a result. If, on the other hand, we have a dream, and at the same time we know that it is just a dream, then whatever happens is not a problem. Whatever happens we know to be merely a dream appearance. Whatever it is an appearance of, we know that it is merely appearance and emptiness inseparable. None of the distinctions that we see and hear in the dream really exist. Then, what is the true nature? The true reality is beyond there being any distinction or not being any distinction. The true reality is beyond any of these thoughts that we might have about it.

Question: Can you say something more about the term that is translated as “characteristics?” And also the term that is translated as “substantiality?”

Rinpoche: Characteristics are basically what defines things. For example, if you have a dream of something clean, what tells you that it is clean? These are its characteristics. These are things which are imputed by thought. Nothing in the appearance itself is clean from its own perspective, but it is because of A, B, and C that it is thought to be something clean. The A, B, and C are its characteristics, the characteristics of cleanliness. Similarly, we can dream of something and say, “Oh, this is dirty.” From its own perspective it is neither clean nor dirty, but, because of A, B, and C, we say that it is dirty. A, B, and C are the characteristics that we say dirtiness has. That is

Dharmakaya is the expanse of true reality. . . . It is the equality of self and other

what characteristics means.

Then the term substantial, as in substantially existent, is a translation of the Tibetan word *rang bzhin*, which means “by its nature,” or “by its essence.” When we say that something is substantially existent or naturally existent, essentially existent, what we mean is that it does not exist in dependence on anything else. It exists from its own side. It exists without depending on other causes and conditions.

For example, if a dream fire were really existent or substantially existent, then it would have to burn something. It would have to perform the function of burning something. But it doesn’t. It is just a mere appearance. It is not something real or substantially existent. Also, if we think about self and other, if self and other were substantially or inherently existent, then they would exist without depending on each other. But we can see that self and other are just dependently arisen concepts. They don’t exist independently or inherently. We can see quite easily that nothing is inherently self and nothing is inherently other. These are merely dependent concepts that arise because we think about things in relation to ourselves. When we think about this [Rinpoche points to himself] it is “I.” Somebody else looks at this [still pointing to himself] and it is “you,” it is “other.” I look at this and I say “I.” You look at this and you say “you.” So what is this? Sometimes it is “I.” From my perspective it is “I.” From your perspective it is “other.” From my perspective that [Rinpoche points at another person] is “other.” From his perspective it is “I.” So what is it? It is neither. These concepts are only dependently existent. Self and other are not inherently or independently existent.

From understanding this, we will understand the true equality of self and other, that in the true nature there is no such distinction. A great siddha named Domba Heruka sang a verse in which he said, “From the dharmakaya, where self and other are of the nature of equality, I have compassion

for all beings who still cling to ideas of good and bad.” Dharmakaya is true reality. It is the expanse of true reality. What is that? It is the equality of, or the lack of any distinction between, self and other. Having realized that, Dombé Heruka feels compassion for all beings who are still confused and still think that self and other really exist and, therefore, cling to ideas of some things being good and some things being bad.

The characteristics which tell us that this is “I,” and the characteristics which tell somebody else that this is “other,” do not truly exist. They exist only in dependence on something else. It is like that.

Question: Would Rinpoche kindly comment on how we may understand compassion in light of these teachings on emptiness? Is compassion something that is truly existent, or is it also only dependently existent?

Rinpoche: Yes, compassion does not inherently exist; it is dependently arisen. Compassion, first of all, depends on there being other sentient beings for whom we may feel compassion. When we generate compassion, we think about how all sentient beings, in our past lives, have been our parents and so have been very kind to us. As a result of feeling gratitude for that kindness, we feel compassion towards them, we feel that we want to help them. This compassion depends on them and it depends on our own thinking and our own process of cultivating compassion and remembering it and being mindful of wanting to be compassionate towards others.

Question: Rinpoche mentioned five types of reasonings that Nagarjuna used to demonstrate the truth of emptiness. He explained two of them. Could he describe what the other three are?

Rinpoche: Last night and tonight, we have actually gone over a few of these different reasonings. The first one is dependent arising. Phenomena do not truly exist because they are depen-

dently arisen. The second one is that phenomena do not truly exist because they are neither one nor many. The third is to analyze the cause to see whether or not the result exists at the time of the cause or does not exist at the time of the cause.

The fourth way to demonstrate emptiness is to look at arising itself. This one is called the Vajra Thunderbolt Reasoning. It says that phenomena do not truly arise because they are never really born. We can say that they are never born because

we can demonstrate that they are not born from any of the four possibilities. They do not arise from themselves. They do not arise from something different from themselves. They do not arise both from themselves and from something different from themselves. And they don't arise from something that is neither themselves

nor different from themselves—in other words, they don't arise without any cause.* That's the fourth possibility.

The fifth reasoning is called the examination of cause and effect together, and it is also called the reasoning that looks at the four possibilities. But, these are four different possibilities [from those discussed above]. By examination it demonstrates that one result does not arise from one cause or many causes and that many results do not arise from one cause or many causes. That's what the five reasonings are.

If we consider these five reasonings in terms of stages, they would be in this order. First, you would use the reasoning that examines the essence, or the substance, of phenomena—which is the one that sees that they are neither one nor many. Then you would look at the cause and see that phenomena neither exist at the time of their cause nor do they not exist at the time of their cause. Then you would look at the cause and result together, which is the examination of those

***Editor's note:** Therefore phenomena do not ultimately arise, are not ultimately born, and if they do not arise or are not born, they do not, therefore, truly exist. And if they do not truly exist, then they are said to be empty of inherent existence, and therefore are said to be empty. Therefore all phenomena are appearance and emptiness inseparable.

Compassion does not inherently exist; it is dependently arisen

last four possibilities. Then you would look at arising, the Vajra Thunderbolt Reasoning, and see that phenomena do not ever really arise, because they do not arise from any of the first set of four possibilities that we mentioned. And finally, you would understand that phenomena are just mere appearances because they are dependently arisen.

These five reasonings are the root of all the reasonings in the six collections of reasonings of Nagarjuna. [Nagarjuna wrote six different texts in which he expounded the view of the middle way.] There are many different branches of these reasonings, and many different ways you could use them, but they all stem from these five.

Question: What is the reason why the father and the son cannot exist simultaneously? If you see them side by side, they seem to exist simultaneously.

Rinpoche: The reason that they cannot exist simultaneously is that they no longer have the relationship of produced and producer. It is in that context that they don't exist simultaneously. If you are trying to say that one is the producer of the other, and then you find that you can't say that, then you might say that maybe they exist simultaneously. But you can't say that because then how could they be cause and result? Two things that exist at the same time don't have the relationship of cause and result. The cause has to come before the result. If they both exist at the same time, then they cannot be cause and result.

When we say that, the world's response would be, "Of course, the father exists before the son! It would be dumb to say that he didn't." But then the world is making the mistake of thinking that one's mental continuum viewed over time is one thing. What you are saying is that what existed before the son was born, and then the father that exists after the son is born, are the same thing. You are saying that the person as he was before the son was born and the person as he is after the son is born are exactly the same thing. But, of course, that is not the case. The way that phenomena are is just like in a movie. Movies are a very good example. We watch a movie and we see a person

and we say, an hour later, that that person has shown up on the screen again and looks like the same person. And so we say, "There is that person again." But really, a movie is just a series of frames. There is just one frame after another, and there is no connection between any of the frames. Really there is absolutely nothing that is the same between one frame and another frame that appears an hour later, but we think that there is. We confuse these different things to be the same thing.

Another example would be going to a river and losing our hat. Our hat flows away down this river. Then, we come back a year later and we say, "I lost my hat in this river." But, all the water from then is completely gone. That is the mistake of taking many things and confusing them to be one. Or we can look at this butter lamp. We can light the lamp and then come back in a few hours and say, "Oh, the lamp is still lit." But really, the flame that was there when we first lit the lamp disappeared immediately and was replaced by another flame. Here is a completely different flame. Again, that is what is called mistaking things in a continuum to be the same thing. Really there is no such thing as a continuum, because a continuum presupposes that something carries over from one moment to the next. But nothing, absolutely nothing, carries over from one moment to the next. It is just like a number of finger snaps in a row. Here is a continuum of finger snaps, but each snap is completely different from the last. Similarly, each moment relies on its own causes and conditions to come about and is replaced by something else which relies on completely different causes and conditions. For this reason, we can understand that things can exist neither as one thing nor as many things. That their true nature is beyond both one and many. So they are empty of any true existence.

In a dream, we have appearances of many different things. We have appearances of things which look like they are one thing and we have appearances of things that look like they are many things. For example, we can see mountains or people or all different kinds of things. Some things look like they are one, some things look like

they are many. But really, none of these things are either one or many.

Question: If nothing carries over from one moment to the next, then how can there be a concept or memory of a continuum?

Translator: What I asked Rinpoche I broke down into two parts. I said, “If there is no such thing as a continuum and there is really nothing that carries over, then, first, how do we remember past things? And, second, why do we have the thought that there is a continuum?”

Rinpoche: In Buddhism there are different explanations of memory, depending on which philosophical school a person belongs to. One philosophical tradition is called the Mind Only school (Cittimatra). What they say is that there are two aspects to any experience. One is an outward facing aspect which experiences all the different things that are perceived, and one is an inward facing aspect which is called self-awareness, which means that the mind is aware of its own experience. The mind is aware of its experiences, and so it can remember the past.

But according to the middle way, there is no assertion that there is self-awareness of the mind. What the middle way says is that memory, just like everything else, is merely the coming together of causes and conditions. It is the mere coming together of causes and conditions, just as, if you had a mirror and you had the proper causes and conditions, then a reflection would arise in the mirror. Everything is just like that. It is the mere coming together of causes and conditions. Things do not need a basis of any kind or some kind of foundation. Causes and conditions just come together in one moment, and then different ones come together in another moment, and that’s how all phenomena are.

The second part of the question was, “Why is it that we think that there is a continuum, if there really isn’t one?” We think that there is such a continuum because the moments of the past and the future look alike; they are similar. For example, this butter lamp looked the same five

minutes ago as it does now. Because things look the same, we think that they are, in fact, the same thing. Even though absolutely nothing carries over from one moment to the next, because one moment looks similar to the next, then we confuse it to be exactly the same as the former one. It’s like that.

Question: I want to ask a question about energy. We have been thinking about appearances, such as a flame, and how we perceive them. But what about the concept of the transfer of energy, or the conservation of matter and energy, and the fact that energy is neither gained nor lost. We know about that. Wouldn’t that be a continuum?

Translator: The way I have phrased the question was: These days scientists talk about energy or power, and believe that power is something that doesn’t diminish. For example, the power that propels a rocket, which is thought not be expended but converted into something else. I don’t know how else to describe it. But what I have emphasized is that power or energy is thought to be something that is neither lost nor diminished.

Rinpoche: Maybe we could relate that to the power that exists within the expanse of equality for all different kinds of appearances to arise. All different kinds of appearances can arise. Appearances of being clean and appearances of being dirty. Appearances of all different kinds of things. They can all arise because of this power which is inherent in the true nature.

Questioner: I was thinking, would this be the same? I was thinking that mind equals energy, since energy equals power, as far as the translation. Is that correct?

Translator: Energy is power. Correct.

Questioner: And energy is also mind?

Rinpoche: The greatest power, according to the mahayana, which is the great vehicle, is the [power that is inherent in the] true nature of

mind, which is of the nature of clear light. Of the true nature of mind there are many different explanations. The true nature of mind is said to be that which pervades all things and, yet, is beyond all things. It pervades all things and, yet, is beyond there being anything there to pervade or there being anything that pervades. In the mahamudra and dzogchen teachings, there are also many different explanations. In the vajrayana there is also the explanation of the true nature as being bliss and emptiness inseparable. If we analyze the question according to the middle turning of the wheel of dharma, according to the middle way, then power or energy is, again, just another concept. It is just a thought. Its true nature is beyond any ideas of whether it exists or doesn't exist or is both existent and nonexistent, or neither existent nor nonexistent. Its true nature is beyond all of these different kinds of things. Thoughts about power are simply dependently existent. To say that there is energy that always exists, how could that be true? Thoughts about the existence of anything, energy and power included, depend on there being some idea of nonexistence. Such a thought can not describe true reality. Similarly, if you say that energy is something that is nonexistent, that depends on an idea of something being existent. No thought, one way or the other, can describe the true nature.

For example, we could have a dream of there being energy that was either existent or nonexistent. We could have a dream of energy being great or small. But in the true nature, what is really there? None of these things. So it is like that.

In the vajrayana, there are explanations of the great power of the inseparable bliss emptiness of the true nature. That is an explanation from the perspective of talking about and establishing things as existent. But this explanation is according to the middle way. In the highest school of the middle way, the Consequence Middle Way school (the Prasangika), everything is refuted. The

In the highest school of the middle way, the Consequence Middle Way school (Prasangika), everything is refuted

reason that they are able to refute everything, from their way of thinking, is that everything is just a thought. Everything is just an idea. Even to say that there is nothing is still just an idea. To say that there is great energy is one idea. To say that there is no such thing is another idea. The point of all of this, from the standpoint of the middle way, is to get past all conceptualizing about the way things are.

For example, in the song, *Melody of the Eight Types of Nonduality*, the second verse is about visions of yidam deities on the one hand and very fearsome appearances of bad demons on the other hand. Apparently these are both powerful things in different directions. But neither of them truly exists. So let's sing this song again!

[*Melody of the Eight Types of Nonduality*]

Now we will meditate according to the way we did yesterday, which is to recite the verses one by one, and then meditate a bit on their meaning, one at a time, and then rest in a state that is free from any thoughts at all.

[*Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness/Meditation*]

This is a mode of meditation that is called analytical meditation. First we recite a verse. Then we think about the meaning of that verse until we have gained a degree of certainty about it. Then we rest the mind evenly in that certainty.

Now, in order to dedicate the merit of the virtue we have accumulated by teaching, listening to, and reciting the teachings, let us recite the last verse from the *Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning* three times.

[*Sixty Stanzas of Reasonings*, last verse] ㊦



'The one to whom we prostrate is the one who speaks words which cannot be refuted. We test these words and find them to be completely valid and irrefutable by any type of argument.'

Everything Is Just Appearance and Emptiness Inseparable

The following transcript continues Rinpoche's series of teachings. This is from June 19, 1997.

Rinpoche wishes everyone *tashi delek* this evening, and makes the aspiration that we realize the ultimate truth, which is pure being free from all concepts about what that might be, that we realize also that the mode of appearances is that everything appears, but does not truly exist—like illusions, and dreams—and that, as a result of realizing these two, we help limitless sentient beings.

We will begin by reciting *The Sixty Stanzas of Reasonings*, and then *Melody of the Eight Types of Nonduality*.

[Recitation]

As before, please give rise in your hearts to the precious attitude of the great vehicle, mahayana, which is bodhicitta, the awakening mind. Tonight, from all of the topics that comprise the genuine dharma, we will explain some selected verses from Nagarjuna's *The Refutation of Criticism*. [See Page 11 for complete text.] It is one of the six collections of reasonings by Nagarjuna.

The first verse reads:

Dependently arisen entities

Are called "emptiness,"

[For] that which is dependently arisen

Is that which has no inherent nature. (22)

All entities that are arisen from causes and conditions are called emptiness; they are of the nature of emptiness. That which is dependently arisen, that which arises due to causes and conditions, has no inherent nature of its own. It has no independent nature. This verse demonstrates that whatever dependently arises is necessarily empty of true existence. Everything that is dependently arisen is pervaded by emptiness. There is nothing that is dependently arisen which is somehow outside of the scope of emptiness. Also, within the expanse of emptiness all different types of things arise due to the coming together of various causes and conditions.

For example, when we have a dream all of the different appearances that we see in a dream arise due to various causes and conditions. All of these appearances are empty. There is not one of these appearances which has any substance or any reality to it. Yet, within this emptiness, all of these appearances arise due to these various causes and conditions. Similarly, all of the appearances of this life, whatever they may be, arise due to the coming together of various causes and conditions. Therefore, all of the appearances of this life are pervaded by emptiness of any inherent or substantial existence. Yet, within the expanse that is emptiness all of these various appearances arise due to the coming together of different causes and conditions.

Similarly, after we pass away from this life and before we take birth in the next life, we experience the intermediate state, the bardo, and in that state all different kinds of appearances arise. All of these appearances arise due to the coming together of causes and conditions. None of them have any inherent or independent existence. Therefore, they are all pervaded by emptiness. Within emptiness all these appearances appear and arise due to the coming together of causes and conditions. That is why it is said in the great vehicle, the mahayana, that the ten directions and everything in the ten directions are just one immense buddha field of infinite extent. Why? Because everything in the ten directions is pervaded by emptiness, and within this expanse of emptiness, all of the various appearances arise due to the coming together of various different causes and conditions. These appearances are all just empty forms—they are inseparable form and emptiness.

In the same way, all appearances—what happened in past lives and what may happen in future lives, all appearances of actions and the effects of actions—appear due to the coming together of various different causes and conditions. They are pervaded by emptiness, and within emptiness they all arise.

Those who believed that things really exist said to people who espoused the middle way, like Nagarjuna, "You say that all phenomena are

empty. And if that is true, then your words are also empty. And all your reasonings are empty. How can your reasonings do anything? If your words and your reasonings are empty of any substance, then how do they have the power to refute the ideas of others? How do they have the power to describe what is the correct view?" The answer that Nagarjuna gave to them is in this next verse, which says:

**One magical creation halts another,
One illusory being puts an end to
The wrong views of his illusory opponent.
When I refute the arguments of others, that is
exactly what is happening.**
(23)

It is as if you had one being who is a sort of magical creation, something which is just an appearance. This being is going around and looking at all these other magical creations and thinking that they are real. Then, another magical creation comes along and says, "Oh, really! This stuff is not real; it is all just a bunch of magical tricks. It doesn't have any substance to it at all." Then the first magical creation says, "Oh, you're right, that's right." So, that is what this is like. None of these creations and none of these events have to be real in any way for this scenario to occur.

In the other example that is given, you have one illusory being, and it is looking at all this illusion, and it thinks that it is real. So, it has all kinds of problems because of that. Then another illusory being comes along and says, "This is really not real. This is all illusion. And here's why, for this, this, and this reason." Then, the first illusory being says, "Oh, that's right." And it realizes that everything is an illusion. And then its problems go away. That's all it is.

We can think of the example of the dream. We dream and in this dream we are confronted with all kinds of perils, like the threat of being burned by fire, or being drowned in water, or being chased

by big fearsome tigers and lions. So we get very frightened because we don't know that we are dreaming. Then, along comes someone in the dream who says, "You're dreaming, don't be afraid, you're just dreaming. It's not a problem." So then we think that everything is okay. "I don't have to worry about this. I am just dreaming. Thanks to this nice person who told me all of this."

There is no real problem because the problem was that one was taking these appearances to be real. First of all, there is really not anything happening in this dream. Second, the person who comes along and tells us that all of this stuff is not real but just a dream is also just part of the

dream. Their words are just part of the dream. All of the reasons for the fear are just part of the dream. And then when we change our mind, when our mind is relieved, that is also part of the dream. None of it has to be *really* happening for it to happen. It is just an illusory series of appearances.

In the same way, all of the appearances in the cycle of existence, all of the appearances in the three realms of existence, are just like an illusion and like a dream. They are mere appearances that are empty of any substantial existence or any inherent nature. Because we take these appearances to be true, we suffer. That is the problem. But there is an antidote for that problem, and that antidote is the practice of the dharma. The dharma reverses our attachment to these appearances as being real. The crux of our problem is that we take these appearances to be real. That does not mean that the dharma itself, in order to serve as an effective antidote, has to be something real, either. The reasonings of the dharma do not have to be something real, because they are all equally illusory, equally mere appearance.

Let's recite this verse three times: [Recitation of preceding verse]

In case we don't understand it yet, we get another example:

Another example: suppose a man falls in love

with an illusory woman,
Then another illusion comes along
And shows the man what a fool he has been—
That's my work. (27)

Here is another example of looking at an illusion and thinking that it is something real. Here the example is an illusory woman. Someone sees an illusion of a beautiful woman created by a magician and thinks that it is real, causing all types of things to arise in their mind as a result of that. Then, the example shows another illusion created by a magician that comes along and points to this illusory woman and says that this is just an illusion. This is not something real and you are making a mistake to think that it is. But just because the illusory being who comes along and is able to show this person that the woman is not a real woman—that she is just an illusion—does not mean that the illusion doing the explaining is something real, or that the words that this second illusion speaks are something real. They are just as illusory as the woman. But they still have the ability to reverse this person's thought that this illusory woman is something real.

According to the prajnaparamita sutras, which are the sutras of the transcendent perfection of wisdom, samsara, the cycle of existence, is empty of any inherent or substantial existence. Nirvana, the transcendence of suffering, is also empty of any inherent existence. Samsara, the cycle of existence, is just appearance and emptiness inseparable. Nirvana is just appearance and emptiness inseparable. None of the sentient beings, none of us have any substance. We are just appearance and emptiness inseparable. The buddhas are just appearance and emptiness inseparable. Everything is just appearance and emptiness inseparable. And yet, when a suitable person hears the words of the dharma, then they can reverse their clinging to all of these things,

**Nagarjuna refutes
all propositions.
He refutes all
ideas, and he cuts
through all objects
of focus**

ourselves included, as being real. They can understand that it is all just like illusions—that it is all just appearance and emptiness inseparable.

Then the opponents of Nagarjuna said to him, “Nagarjuna, you go around refuting everyone else's view. What about your view? You have a view. You talk about emptiness as being the ultimate truth. That view also has a flaw, because, as it is a view, it can also be refuted.”

Nagarjuna responded with a verse which states that if he had a position, then he would have a flaw:

If I took a position,
Then I would have a flaw.
Since I take no position,
I have no flaw at all. (29)

Nagarjuna said that when he taught about the ultimate truth being empty of all elaborations and of all the different thoughts about what it might be, he was refuting everyone else's ideas, but that he had no ideas to posit himself. If he had some description of what the ultimate truth was, he said, “Then I would have a flaw. I would have a concept about what ultimate truth is. But I don't have any concepts of what ultimate truth is because it is beyond concepts. I don't have any view.”

Nagarjuna refutes all propositions. He refutes all ideas, and he cuts through all objects of focus. These three things. If Nagarjuna had some view or some proposition, then he would have a flaw. But he doesn't. If he had some idea, then he would have a flaw, but he doesn't. If he had any object of focus—in terms of the ultimate truth being this or that—then he would have a flaw. But he doesn't. Therefore, he has no flaw.

In the tradition of Nagarjuna, all views, all propositions are refuted, but nothing is proposed in their place. All ideas are refuted, but nothing is thought of in their place. All objects that could be focused on are cut through, but nothing is focused on in their place. Nagarjuna refutes the idea that things truly exist, but he does not say anything else. That is the end of the discussion. The reason

Nagarjuna does things in this way is that the ultimate truth is something in which there are no names at all. So there is nothing that can be said about it. The ultimate truth transcends all convention, all concepts, all terms. And so no term can be applied to it. That is why Nagarjuna, once he refutes the views of others, does not propose anything himself.

There were those who believed that things truly exist because they thought there were really causes and there were really results; there were things that did the producing, and that there were things that were produced. The next verse is a response to that type of view. It says:

**If the son is produced by the father,
But the father is also produced by that very son,
Then will you please tell me,
Which one is the true “cause” and which the true
“result?” (49)**

Normally, we would think that the father produces the son. We would say that the father is the producer, and the son is the produced. But if we think about it, then there is no father before there is the son. *Because* there is a son, then we call somebody father. And so the son is the cause of this conventional term of father being applied. Therefore, if you try to say that there really is a producer and there really is a produced—well, which one is it? Which one is the producer, which one is the produced? You really can't say. Either way, if you look at it in another way, then you are wrong. This is Nagarjuna's response to this type of belief.

If we look at this question in terms of a gross view, in terms of a continuum, then we say that the father produces the son. But if we analyze that continuum in terms of the individual moments, which are completely distinct, and then try to find the exact point at which the producer produces and what is produced is produced, then we will see

that there is no way that one can come before the other. They exist only in dependence upon each other. Therefore, one cannot exist before the other one does. Therefore, it is nonsensical to speak of one of them being the producer. If the producer does not exist before the produced, then how can it be the producer of the produced?

Another criticism that was brought against the followers of the middle way, and against Nagarjuna in particular, by other Buddhist and by non-Buddhists alike, was that, if phenomena were really empty, if there were nothing that was truly existent, then that would mean that there would be no such thing as cause and effect, there would be no such things as past and future lives, there would be no such thing as the three jewels, there would be no such thing as attaining buddhahood.

In response to that, Nagarjuna composed this verse:

**If emptiness is possible,
Then all objects are possible, all levels
attainable.
If emptiness is impossible,
Then everything else is [impossible] as well. (70)**

**If phenomena
were truly
existent, solid,
and unchanging,
. . . you could not
possibly attain
buddhahood or
any other level of
realization, as
nothing would
ever change**

Here Nagarjuna argues that the actual situation is just the reverse of what these people claimed. Only because phenomena are empty of true existence can all of these different kinds of appearances manifest. If phenomena were truly existent, solid, and unchanging, then there could not be a cause and a result with respect to these phenomena, because nothing would ever change. You could not possibly attain buddhahood or any other level of realization, as nothing would ever change. Everything would be independently existent—not affected by causes and conditions. And therefore no change would be possible.

If we think about this in terms of past and future lives, we can understand that it is only because they are empty of true existence that there can be past and future lives. It is dependent upon there being this life that we can have any idea of a past life and a future life. This life is now and the past life is before now, and the future life is after now. If there were no now, then how could the past before now and the future after now exist? It is only because these things are dependently existent that we can have any concept of them as having any existence at all.

And similarly, this present life depends just as much on the past and the future. For if there were no idea of past and future, you would have no idea of what now was—as now is something which is not the past and not the future. It is now. Now, this life, is just as dependent on past lives and future lives, as past and future lives are dependent on this one.

Similarly, virtue is dependent upon nonvirtue; nonvirtue is dependent on virtue. Happiness is dependent upon unhappiness; and unhappiness is dependent on happiness. Therefore, we can have ideas, we can have concepts of cause and effect, we can have the result of performing virtuous actions being happiness; and the result of negative actions being suffering. And also, because phenomena do not truly exist, we can practice the dharma, and the dharma can be a remedy for suffering and the afflictions. The afflictive mental states are only the result of certain causes and conditions. Suffering is the result of certain causes and conditions. Therefore, the dharma, which is also just the result of certain causes and conditions, and therefore also a mere illusion, is able to alter the causes and conditions that are the cause of the afflictive mental states and suffering. It can change them, eliminate them, be a successful antidote for them. It is only because these things are the results of causes and conditions that all of this is possible—that it is possible for the dharma

The teaching of the middle way, the teaching on emptiness, and the teaching on dependent arising, all have the same import and the same meaning

to be an effective antidote.

The last verse reads:

I prostrate to the Awakened One, the Buddha,

Who taught that dependent arising and emptiness have the same meaning,

And that this is the middle way path.

Your words are supreme, their meaning unsurpassed. (Concluding homage)

This is a prostration to the Buddha, because the Buddha taught dependent arising. That is the reason why Nagarjuna prostrates to the Buddha. Also, Nagarjuna points out to us that dependent arising, emptiness, and the middle way path, which is free from all extremes, have the exact

same meaning. They are the same teaching. The teaching of the middle way, the teaching on emptiness, and the teaching on dependent arising, all have the same import and the same meaning. Because the Buddha taught this, the Buddha's words are supreme, and the meaning of the Buddha's words is unsurpassed. For this reason, Nagarjuna prostrates to the Buddha.

The Buddha taught that dependent arising and emptiness have the same meaning and are inseparable. This is not

something that can be harmed or refuted by reasoning. Because the Buddha's teachings about dependent arising and emptiness cannot be defeated by reasoning, Nagarjuna prostrates to the Buddha. This is the manner in which homage is paid in a tradition grounded in reasoning. The one to whom we prostrate is the one who speaks words which cannot be refuted. We test these words and find them to be completely valid and irrefutable by any type of argument. For that reason we prostrate to that person—not for any other reason.

The Buddha Shakyamuni himself said that nobody should accept anything as true before they

had analyzed it themselves. He said, “You should only accept what I say, based on your own analysis of it, not out of respect for me.” He compared the situation to a merchant buying gold. A merchant buying gold would never accept the gold just on faith, but would test it by their own means to see if it were real. And if it were real, they would buy it, and if it were not real, they would not buy it.

If, on the other hand, it is a tradition in which you believe what the teacher says—because you have faith in that teacher, and faith in that teacher as being great, then you believe what the teacher says on faith—then that is a tradition that is based on faith.

[Recitation of *Seven Delights*. See Page 12 for complete text.]

This song is very much in accord with the view of Nagarjuna as expressed in the texts we have studied the last two nights and in the text, *The Refutation of Criticism*, that we have studied tonight. The first verse talks about whether or not there are thoughts arising. The truth is that whether or not there are thoughts arising, in the ultimate truth, in actual reality, there is no difference. In the ultimate truth there is no distinction between thoughts arising and not arising. Thoughts arising is just emptiness and appearance inseparable, and thoughts not-arising is also appearance and emptiness inseparable. They are both just dependently existent ideas. Whether or not they happen does not make any difference once you have realized the ultimate truth.

The reason why we can be happy if kleshas arise, if afflictive mental states arise, is that kleshas themselves are empty of any substance. They are just mere appearance. And any antidote we might try to apply to remove afflictive mental states would also be just a mere appearance and not real. The true nature is of the nature of equality of both the afflictions and of any antidote we

Why is it we can be happy, in fact, have sheer delight, when obstacles arise?

might apply. This true nature is the true nature of mind; it is clear light—and the realization of that is sheer delight. Why is it that we can be happy, in fact, have sheer delight, when obstacles arise? It is because, whether obstacles arise or they don't arise, neither is a real or inherently existent state. They are just dependently existent. When obstacles arise that depends upon some idea of there not being any obstacles; and there not being any obstacles depends on some idea of when there are obstacles. So they are just dependently existent ideas. And that is to say that they are not existent. To say that they are not existent is to say that they are of the nature of equality; and to say that they are of the nature of equality, is to say that they are of the nature of clear light. Whether or not they arise—if one says that one is facing obstacles, or that one has no obstacles—these are

just dependently arisen ideas, not real. When you realize that, then that is an experience of sheer delight.

Why is it an experience of sheer delight when we are suffering in the pits of samsara? The reason is that the pits of samsara and the pinnacle of nirvana are just dependently existent. To say that they are dependently existent is to say that one exists only in dependence on the other and vice versa. And that is to say that they really do not exist. They are of the nature of equality. It is the same with happiness and unhappiness. Happiness and suffering exist only in dependence on each other. To say, “this is suffering,” depends on some idea of what happiness is. To say, “this is happiness,” does not truly exist because that depends on having some idea of what suffering is. To say that they are dependently existent is to say that they are really not existent. They are like happiness and suffering in a dream.

We can have different kinds of happiness and different kinds of suffering in a dream. But these experiences are not truly existent. Therefore the last line says: *When karmic consequences bloom, delight*. Well, *karmic consequences blooming* means the results of actions we have taken in the

past, particularly the bad ones that result in suffering. Whether they happen or they do not happen, they do not truly happen, because whether they do or they do not is again just dependently existent—and not truly existent. In terms of relative truth we can be happy when we have suffering because that experience is the cleansing or the purifying of the seed of some bad action which we have sown in the past. Once we experience its result we will never have to experience it again. We can have that attitude towards suffering in terms of its mode of appearance. In terms of the ultimate truth we know it to be not truly existent. Then when it happens it is an experience of delight.

Suffering from illness is, again, the result of some negative actions taken in the past. So the result we experience now is illness, sickness. And again, we can experience delight when illness comes because we know that that is the purification of those negative actions. We won't have to experience the ripening of that particular karma again. The suffering of illness also gives us the opportunity to practice *tonglen*, the practice of taking and sending, which is a very important practice in the mahayana. When you experience the suffering of illness, in the practice of *tonglen* you pray that all the suffering of illness of all sentient beings ripens in you at that moment. You take in all the suffering of others and you send out your own happiness, your own joy, and you imagine that others experience that happiness and joy. When we suffer sickness we have the experience of empathy with others, so it is a very good time to practice *tonglen*. In terms of understanding its ultimate nature we understand that whether sickness arises or does not arise, it is just a dependent concept. It depends on our thoughts. When we have an idea that we are sick, it depends on a thought of not being sick; and when we have an idea of not being sick, it depends

We can experience delight when illness comes because we know that that is the purification of those negative actions. We won't have to experience the ripening of that particular karma again

on some idea of what sickness is like. Realizing the true nature of suffering from sickness to be equality is also an occasion for delight.

When Götsangpa sings about illness, he is singing from his own experience. Götsangpa became quite painfully sick for long periods of time when he was practicing in retreat. But he never left his retreat to go see a doctor or to go to a hospital. Since there were no doctors where he was meditating high up in the rocks, he did not rely on doctors or medicine to try to get well.

Instead he took his illness to the path. Since he brought his illness to the path, the illness, in fact, became a catalyst for his realization. Eventually, when he became realized, his illness completely went away of its own accord. So this verse is something from Götsangpa's own experience.

There are a couple of reasons why Tibetan yogis and yoginis do not go to see doctors. One reason is that, when they get sick, then that experience provides a good opportunity to realize the true nature. And that is an experience of delight. Moreover, should they happen to die while they are in retreat, since that is the best way to die, why would they ever want to go to a doctor? [laughter]

Milarepa sang a song called, *How all my wishes can come true*. One

verse of that song says, "If I die in this retreat, all alone, then this yogi's wish will come true." Milarepa sang his song before he passed away in a cave. This shows the extent of his commitment. Even when he was dying, he still stayed in a cave. Tibetan caves are quite nice and dry, so you can stay there both in the summertime and the wintertime.

Why can we have sheer delight at the point of death? Because it is an extraordinary opportunity to realize the true nature of mind, which is clear light. What happens when you die is that all thoughts dissolve into clear light. If you meditate

on the clear light nature of mind at that time, then it is like uniting with your mind's own clear light nature because your thoughts naturally do that at the point of death. And then all thoughts of birth and death—for example: “I’m going to die, I’m going to die,” those kinds of thoughts—are self-liberated in the expanse of dharmakaya. So, dead, and not dead, are just two notions that are dependent upon each other. If you have the idea, “I am not dead,” it depends on some idea that “I am dead,” and vice versa. For that reason they are just dependently existent; and to say that they are dependently existent is to say that they are non-existent.

Another way to think about this is to think about how people die. They have a thought, “Oh I’m dying, I’m dying,” and then they are dead. So where is death? There is no actual point of death. Between that thought, “I’m dying, I’m dying,” and being dead there is nothing. Therefore, there is no death. Death has no essence. If we realize that—that there is no death, that death has no essence—at the point of death, then thoughts of death are said to be liberated into the dharmakaya.

Why is it that we can experience sheer delight when bad circumstances happen? In terms of the relative truth, the truth of appearances, when bad things happen, we practice the dharma more. [laughter] That is a good reason to be happy when we are in bad circumstances, because we practice more. We remember to practice the dharma. In terms of the ultimate nature of bad circumstances, then again, bad circumstances are just dependent for their existence on some idea of what good circumstances are, and vice versa. And so, to say that they are dependently existent is to say that they are not existent. To say that they are not existent is to say that their nature is clear light. To say that their nature is clear light, to realize their true nature of being, is to experience sheer delight.

If we are experiencing a time in our lives when everything is going great, and we have a great job, a lot of money, different kinds of things, and we are surrounded by all our friends all the time and never encounter anyone whom we don’t like, then what happens is that our pride increases. We become arrogant about our condition and about how everything is going so great for us. Having more pride leads to more jealousy, because somebody might look better than we, and we might become jealous of them. Also, when everything is going great for us, we get distracted. Why should we want to practice the dharma? We think, “I don’t have to practice right now.” So we get distracted.

These are all bad things, and they all come from having good circumstances. On the other hand, when we have bad circumstances, when things are tough, we have no reason to feel proud. Our pride diminishes, and correspondingly jealousy diminishes, and then we practice the dharma. For this reason dharma practitioners think that bad circumstances are much better than good ones. It is like that.

When we recite from Götsangpa, we should know that this is a song sung from his own experience. We should have the exact same delight as he did, the same type of delight that he had toward all of these things. This is quite difficult, but it is important for us to know what realization is like, what the experience of realization is like when you realize that all appearances are just like illusions, just appearance and emptiness inseparable. The ultimate truth is the true nature of mind, which is clear light. We should know what that realization is like and how Götsangpa experienced it.

[Recitation of *Seven Delights*]

Now what questions are there? If there are questions about the *Refutation of Criticism*, or about the *Seven Delights*, please ask.

**If we realize that—
that there is no
death, that death
has no essence—
at the point of
death, then
thoughts of death
are said to be
liberated into the
dharmakaya**

Question: Rinpoche, dependent arising is often used to show that an entity's true nature is emptiness. Yet cause and effect is proven not to occur as in the argument about arising. Are not dependent arising and cause and effect basically the same thing? And if so, how can both arguments be used? In Western philosophy this sort of sounds like circular reasoning, which is rejected as false reasoning. So if it is true, how, coming from the standpoint of Western philosophy, can I better understand?

Rinpoche: Nagarjuna refutes the true existence of cause and effect, that cause and effect is something real. He refutes dependent existence as being something real, but he does not attempt to deny that there is the mere appearance of things arising due to merely apparent causes and merely apparent conditions, just like what happens in a dream.

Dependent existence is like the moon that appears in a pool of water. First you have the moon in the sky, then you have a cloudless night, and you have a clear pool of water on the ground. Dependent on that, you have an appearance of the moon in the water, which is just a mere appearance, just a reflection.

Dependent existence is like the eye that sees and the form that is seen in a dream. Dependent existence is like bondage and liberation in a dream. Dependent existence is like clean and unclean in a dream.

What these examples are trying to point us to is the understanding that all phenomena are just appearance and emptiness inseparable. There are many different examples given of empty forms, forms which appear but have no substantial or true existence. The ultimate truth is equality, the complete freedom from all of these elaborations of causes and conditions and all of those different kinds of things. These refutations that Nagarjuna addresses to his opponents are also appearance and emptiness inseparable, just like illusions and just like magical creations, which are taught in this text.

Question: Could you please say some more words

about how to take illness to the path?

Rinpoche: First we start out by understanding that thoughts like, "I am really sick," or "I am just a little sick," or "I am sick," or "I am not sick," are all just dependently arisen; they exist only in dependence on each other. Which is to say that they don't really exist. So it is like having experiences in a dream. You can have a dream and think, "Wow, I am really sick," or "I am just a little sick," or "I am not sick," or "I am just sick," or "I am a sicko," or whatever, but all of these thoughts in the dream are just dependently existent, which is to say that they are not truly existent. Sickness is not something that truly exists, it exists only in dependence upon our thoughts.

So we need to realize that, and this is part of the process of gaining certainty about the view. Because the view is that appearances are just illusions. They are just appearance and emptiness inseparable, just like the appearances that arise in dreams. Different things can appear in dreams; none of them have any reality. They are just appearance and emptiness inseparable. Gaining certainty in the view means gaining certainty about this understanding of the mode of appearance. In terms of the mode of ultimate reality, the mode of ultimate reality is the equality of all these different kinds of things, which is emptiness. So we gain certainty about that, and then we rest in meditation. We rest the mind in meditative equipoise within this emptiness, within the emptiness of all these different kinds of ideas. That is how to take illness to the path.

So the yogis in Tibet have a saying, "My body is not sick, my thoughts are sick." The body is not really sick, our thoughts are sick. So when you think about it, think about a dream. Think about when you have a dream of being sick. Your body has no sickness; your thoughts are the ones that are sick. And so that helps us realize that sickness is only something that exists in our thoughts. It's really not something truly existent.

According to the middle way of approaching this, we use our intelligence. We use our intelligence to analyze what is the ultimate truth. We ask the question: What is actually happening

here? What is the mode of appearance, and what is the mode of true reality? And so what we find is that true reality is free from all of these different thoughts. None of these thoughts can express the true reality because all of these thoughts are just dependent on something else. So they can't be really true. What is true reality? It just depends on how you look at it—the reality that your thoughts create depends on how you are looking at it. You can't describe true reality. And so in the middle way, what we do is we use our intelligence to understand that and to gain certainty about it, and then, once we have gained certainty about it, we remember it again and again. And then, when we meditate, we rest the mind evenly without any thoughts at all.

One way to do this is to meditate right upon the very feeling of sickness. When we have a feeling of sickness, we use our intelligence, which tries to determine what is really the truth, to see that this sickness has no essence. And then we rest in that, in true reality which is free from thoughts about the sickness. If we have an especially strong, intense feeling of sickness, then, when the thought stops, there is an experience of great power. The stronger the feeling is, when the thought that takes it to be real stops, the stronger and more powerful the realization is.

***Editor's note:** The five aggregates, or the five *skandhas* in Sanskrit, are five aggregates of phenomena, which make up individuals and their experience. They are form (Sanskrit: *rupa*; Tibetan: *gzugs*), feeling (San: *vedana*; Tib: *thsorwa*), perception (S: *samjñā*; T: *'du-shes*), formation (S: *samskara*; T: *'du-byed*), and consciousness (S: *viññāna*; T: *rnam-par-shes-pa*.) All aspects of an individual's experience of her/his world or his/her mind can be subsumed under these five categories. In the confused state, we cling to one or another aspect, or to a collection of aspects, of these five categories of experience as being a concrete self. When the aggregates are actually seen accurately, no self is found in them, either singly or taken together. Moreover, one does not find an individual apart from them. Ultimately, the aggregates, or *skandhas*, which are merely analytical constructs for categorizing an individual's experience, are empty of inherent existence, as are all individuals, and as are all aspects of their experience.

First, you remember the view. Once you have gained certainty in the view, you rest the mind in meditation

One way we can analyze is to base our reasoning on the fact that there is no “I,” that there is no truly existent self of the individual. When we are sick, and we have the thought of “Oh, I’m sick,” we can say, “Well, who is sick?” Find this “I.” The individual or the “I” is the name that we throw onto the five aggregates,* but try to find this truly existent “I” amongst these five aggregates—the one aggregate of the body and the four of the mind. Where is this “I”? Where is it? If you do that, you will realize you cannot find it. You cannot find the “I” anywhere. And so, if there is no “I,” if there is nobody to get sick, then sickness can't exist. There is nobody to get sick.

This is a method that again is based on reasoning, on using your intelligence. You use your intelligence to figure out what is the truth, and once you've done that, then you just rest in that. In this instance, you look for the “I” until you realize you cannot find it, and then you rest in not being able to find it.

So, we have to think about how it is in a dream, and why, in a dream, we suffer as a result of illness. We suffer when we have a dream of being sick because we think in this dream that we are real. That is the mistake of clinging to an “I” where there is no “I.” We think the sickness is something real. That is making the mistake of thinking that a phenomenon which doesn't have any substance, has substance, that it exists. Because of these two mistakes—even though, because it is just a dream, there is no “I” and no sickness—we suffer. If we think about that, we can apply that in the daytime when we feel sickness. And that will help our view. It will be an aid to gaining the correct view.

It is just like the suffering we experience as a result of thinking about the future. We think about the future a lot, and as a result of that we suffer a lot. We have thoughts about the future like, “Oh, I’m going to get old, and when I’m old, who’s going to take care of me?” We suffer as a result of thoughts like that. But really, there is no

“I.” We think that there is an “I” in the future, and as a result of that first mistake we suffer. And then we take the future to be something real. But where is the future? The future is nowhere. You can’t find it anywhere. It is not really existent. The future is nowhere to be found. That is called the mistake of taking phenomena which are not truly existent to be truly existent. Based on these two mistakes we suffer, whereas, if we realize that we are making these mistakes, then we won’t suffer anymore as a result.

So in short, this has been an explanation of how to take sickness to the path, and to sum it all up, first you remember the view. You think about the view. Once you have gained certainty in the view, you rest the mind in meditation. Just rest it evenly. And the more you get accustomed to this and the more you meditate on this, the easier and easier it will be to take sickness to the path.

In the *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*, the bodhisattva Shantideva says that once you start to meditate, whatever happens, it is easy. It is like that.

So tonight we have explained in brief Nagarjuna’s text called *The Refutation of Criticism* and the song of Götsangpa called *Seven Delights*. If we think about these again and again, if we meditate on these again and again in connection with each other, then that would be very good. So now we have studied *Sixty Stanzas of Reasonings*, *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, and *The*

Refutation of Criticism, all by Nagarjuna, and Gyalwa Götsangpa’s songs, *Eight Flashing Lances*, *Melody of the Eight Types of Nonduality*, and *Seven Delights*. These are the words of the great scholar and of a great siddha, a great meditation master, and, if we think about these in connection with each other, then that is very good. Sometimes if you all, on a weekend, can get together and recite some verses and sing some songs together and meditate on them, then that would be very good. If you recite the words and meditate on the words, then the words have great power. So now let’s recite the verses from *The Refutation of Criticism*, one by one, and meditate in between.

[Recitation of *The Refutation of Criticism*]

In the madhyamika tradition there are two types of meditation. Once you have determined that all phenomena are empty, one tradition is to rest in that emptiness which is like space. And the second type is just to rest the mind completely free of any type of idea or concept at all. The meditation on emptiness which is like space, the complete absence of any phenomena, is the meditation that is taught by the Autonomy Middle Way school, the Svatantrika Madhyamika. And the meditation in which thoughts even of emptiness cease, and there is absolutely no thought of anything whatsoever, that is the meditation taught by the Consequence Middle Way school, the Prasangika Madhyamika. ㊦



The Very Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

The Tantric Path and Mahamudra

By The Very Venerable
Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

In May of 1996, The Very Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche gave a series of teachings on the practice of meditation. Previous issues have featured transcripts from that series. The following is the last in the series, a transcript of Rinpoche's teachings the morning of May 26. The teachings were orally translated by Lama Yeshe Gyamtso.

To begin the session, please generate the pure motivation of bodhicitta, which is the thought that you will listen to the teachings in order to be able to properly practice genuine dharma in order to be of benefit to all beings who fill space.

I used to feel that, since students were mainly interested in, and experienced with, the practices of tranquility and insight—shinay and lhaktong (*shamatha and vipashyana*, in Sanskrit)—that dealing with these topics alone would be the most beneficial thing to do. And since the practices of the generation stage, the yidam* practices, are slightly unwieldy or complicated at first, and because the appearances of the deities, the male and female deities, the peaceful and wrathful deities, in all their various costumes and with their scepters and their various appearances and so forth, are all a bit bewildering, and, therefore, since new students were usually not that interested in this subject, I felt that I didn't really need to address it. But since then I've come to feel that, while it is true that people have more interest initially in tranquility and insight than they have in the generation stage, I think it is my responsibility to inform students about the generation stage in order to inspire some interest in it and so that people will have some understanding of it. Therefore, I'm going to talk a bit about this today.

Many people feel or think the following: "I am not a yidam. I am an ordinary person. Visualizing myself as a deity, especially one with an abnormal number of faces, or a particularly large number of arms, or a deity who is brilliant red or pure white in color, seems quite useless to me. What is the use of doing such a thing?" Well, in fact, such practices are extremely useful.

Of course, we are ordinary people, but at the same time the basic nature of any ordinary person is the essence of the wisdom of all buddhas, which in the sutras is called buddha nature and in the vajrayana is called the wisdom of the great perfection, or the wisdom of mahamudra, and so on. As this is our basic nature, and always has been our

***Editor's note:** a personal diety, the practice of which brings realization of the natural state—the true nature of mind and the true nature of reality

basic nature, visualizing oneself as a deity is not pretending to be what one is not, and it is not attempting to change what one fundamentally is. It is rather attempting to move towards a recognition of what has always been there, and through recognizing it, to reveal its qualities.

In our present condition, buddha nature is obscured by various secondary or adventitious stains which are present in our minds—mental afflictions and cognitive obscurations—and these have to be removed in order to reveal our buddha nature. Now these can be removed gradually through the practice of meditation; and yet, it is much more effective to work with the actual mode of experience that we now undergo.

Specifically, we experience at present a variety of impure appearances, what we could call internal impure appearances—the experience of kleshas and so forth within our minds—and external impure appearances. By viewing all of these as the pure world of the deity, gradually these impure appearances or projections can be removed. It is for that reason that we visualize the mandala and forms of these deities.

In general, our practice of dharma and our practice of meditation are concerned with the realization of emptiness or sunyata. Because of that, we may imagine that the ultimate result or the ultimate fruition of our practice is some kind of absolute nothingness. We may imagine that buddhahood is a state of absolutely nothing. But this is not the case. The state of buddhahood, which is the result of these spiritual paths, in as far as the actual experience of that buddha is concerned—what is called the self-experience or self-appearance of that buddha—is the dharmadhatu, which is utterly insubstantial, and in that sense is not an existing thing, but is, at the same time, the radiance of that buddha's wisdom as it is experienced by that buddha. So it is the experience of the dharmakaya or, otherwise put, the dharmadhatu.

Now the radiance of that buddha's wisdom is

also experienced by others, and the experiencing of that buddha by others takes two principal forms. To those who have a pure mode of experience, such as bodhisattvas, the buddha manifests as what are called pure bodies and wisdoms—as a pure or undiluted expression of that buddha's wisdom. So buddhahood is not nothing, because it is a radiant wisdom that manifests in the experience of others as well.

To impure or ordinary beings, the buddha manifests as nirmanakaya, as the body of emanation. So, fundamentally, the modes of manifestation in the experience of others of a buddha are the pure realms of the sambhogakaya, which are

experienced by bodhisattvas, and the impure realms of the nirmanakaya, which are experienced by others who are ordinary beings. What we are cultivating in the practice of the generation stage is the experience of the sambhogakaya realms.

When we use the word “deity,” we think of something that is very, very good indeed that can help us—something that can give us something that we don't have that that deity has and that we can get from that deity. This is not the vajrayana view or use of the concept of deity.

Any of the many deities used in vajrayana meditation are used primarily to promote or bring out, through identification with them, qualities that are innate in us already. We merely use the technique of working with a deity to bring out or promote these qualities. For that reason, while we do sometimes visualize deities as separate from ourselves—for example, while we do sometimes visualize deities in front of us for the accumulation of merit and so on—our principal mode of visualizing deities is to visualize ourselves as these deities.

This visualizing is done in a precise manner. It always begins with the recognition that our conventional mode of experience or appearances is

Any of the many deities used in vajrayana meditation are used primarily to promote or bring out, through identification with them, qualities that are innate in us already

the projection of our obscurations, our confusion, and, therefore, at the beginning we let go of all of this. We think that everything that we see and so forth subsides or dissolves into emptiness. And then, from within the expanse of emptiness, there will usually be the visualization of the mind of the deity arising in the form of either the seed syllable of that particular deity and/or possibly the scepter, which represents that specific deity, and then gradually from that the practitioner will arise in the form of the deity's body. And when you arise in the form of this visualized deity, you think, "I am this deity." If it is a guru sadhana, you think, "I am this particular guru"; if it is a yidam practice, you think, "I am this particular yidam"; if it is a dharmapala practice, you think, "I am this particular dharmapala."

Aside from the ultimate benefits of this kind of practice, which are the qualities of buddhahood, there are short-term benefits as well, and these ensue even with a relatively slight amount of practice. For example, a great deal of generation stage practice is concerned with actually visualizing various aspects of the deity's appearance. You visualize the deity's body in general and in particular parts, the ornaments or jewelry, the clothes, and so on. As you do this, your mind is placed at rest on each of these specific points in turn; and the placement of your mind at rest on these specific points of the visualization generates an excellent state of shinay or tranquility. In particular, because you are engaged in a detailed visualization—for example, you move from one detail to another of the deity's physical appearance, the details of the jewelry and clothing, the scepters held in the hands, and so on—the inherent clarity of your mind is very much brought out and experienced. And so, the tranquility that is generated, while it is a state of rest or tranquility, has no torpor or sunkennes to it.

Another aspect of some generation stage practices is what is called the radiation and with-

drawal of light or rays of light. This usually takes the form of brilliant rays of light shooting out from the seed syllable at the heart of the deity and then gradually being withdrawn back into it. Often this radiation and withdrawal of light is connected with actually benefitting beings. For example, when performing this phase of the meditation, you may begin by considering all of the pain and suffering there is. Then you think that these rays of light fill the entire world and remove all of the

physical pain, poverty, sickness, ignorance, emotional misery, and so on, that afflict all beings. The color of the rays of light will sometimes correspond to the color of the deity, such as yellow, red, white, whatever. Sometimes it will be of five colors, like a rainbow, and so on. In any case, you think that through these rays of light you actually remove all the physical and mental suffering of beings, and through doing that, that you establish all beings in a state of long-lasting happiness. In that way, through this aspect of the generation stage, you can also

train your mind in the development of bodhicitta, and you can do so in such a way that you can actually start to instill in yourself a confidence that you can benefit beings.

Also, when you are performing this meditation of the radiation and withdrawal of light rays, you can think that the rays of light go to, or are projected to, all pure realms, and that on the end of each ray of light are innumerable excellent offerings which are presented to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas who reside in these realms. And by means of this meditation you accumulate merit.* And then you can think that the rays of light which have drawn into themselves the blessings of all these buddhas and bodhisattvas are withdrawn back into your heart, by means of which you actually receive their blessings. And when you perform this meditation and generate the confi-

***Editor's note:** Merit is the positive karmic result of virtuous action.

Because you are engaged in a detailed visualization . . . the inherent clarity of your mind is very much brought out and experienced

dence that you have actually received the blessings of these various buddhas and bodhisattvas, this produces a good experience of your mind, and will very much enhance both the clarity and stability of either tranquility or insight practice.

Furthermore, the practice of the generation stage includes three fundamental elements, which are called clear appearance or clarity of appearance, stable pride, and recollection of purity. The first of these, clarity of appearance, is the clear visualization of the form of the deity, and even this alone will somewhat weaken your fixation on a self. We constantly support or strengthen or reinforce our fixation on a self with thoughts of “my body,” “my mind,” and all those things with which we usually identify. Here, you are somewhat counteracting that by visualizing yourself as a deity, who is not who you normally regard yourself to be. Furthermore, the deity’s form is not conceived of as solid and substantial, but as vivid and yet utterly insubstantial, the unity of lucidity and emptiness, like a rainbow. This visualization alone will naturally slightly weaken the fixation on a self.

When practicing visualizations, you also sometimes reflect upon the second point, which is stable pride. Stable pride is the recognition that you are not inventing something, you are not visualizing something that is not already there inherently, and, based on that, stable pride is the generation of the confidence, “I actually am this deity.” It is the confidence of being the deity and getting into the actual feeling of being the deity, rather than merely visualizing the deity as a static or dead image.

In order to enhance the pride of being the deity, there exists the technique of invitation. From the three places—from the forehead, the throat, and the heart of the deity’s body—rays of white, red, and blue light radiate, and invite the actual deity from all the places where that deity might be found.*And then this deity is brought in

and dissolves into you. The reason for this technique is that you may have the attitude that you are visualizing yourself as the deity, but that it is just a static image, and that the deity is really somewhere else. If you have that attitude, then by doing this visualization you will become confident that this deity is actually within you, and that the visualization is not merely a static image. This is a significant step in learning to transform the impure mode of perception into a pure one.

The third technique when you are practicing the stage of generation is the recollection of purity, which is fundamentally the recollection that the deity’s form is not impure and substantial, that it

is not made of flesh and blood. It is an utterly insubstantial and yet vivid embodiment of wisdom, and it arises like a rainbow in the sky, as a spontaneous and insubstantial unity of vivid appearance and natural or inherent emptiness. Furthermore, in connection with this third technique, there is the recognition that your mind, the mind of the practitioner, is the mind of the deity. Not only your body, but your mind is to be identified with the deity, which means that you let go of the thought that your mind consists of impure kleshas and nasty

thoughts and so on. You simply generate the confidence that your mind is fundamentally the mind of the deity. Now if it is, for example, a guru practice, then you think, “my mind is the mind of this guru.” If it is a yidam, you think, “my mind is the mind of this yidam.” If it is a dharmapala, you think, “my mind is the mind of this dharmapala.” And this confidence is legitimate, because that is the nature of your mind. Recognizing that, you

The practice of the generation stage includes three fundamental elements: clear appearance, stable pride, and recollection of purity

***Editor’s note.** The deity will be found in her or his own pure land, in the mindstreams of all buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times and ten directions, in the mindstreams of all the other sources of refuge, in the physical support into which the deity is dissolved at the end of any given practice, and, of course, ultimately in the mindstream of the practitioner.

rest in that confidence. Resting in the confidence that your mind is the mind of the deity is a powerful way of enhancing your realization of insight or lhaktong.

Now all of this is true about any deity practice, and which particular deity it is makes comparatively little difference in all of this. You could be meditating upon Chakrasamvara, you could be meditating upon Vajrayogini, you could be meditating upon Avalokiteshvara, you could be meditating upon Tara. In any case, what you are actually doing, the fundamental technique of identification with the visualization of the deity, is the same. And all of these different elements are, and should be, present in the practice. Whether the liturgy is elaborate or short, and whether the visualization is complicated or simple, does not change the basic process of the generation stage.

In that way, then, the practice of the generation stage is really useful. It is followed by the practice of the completion stage. The completion stage consists, most fundamentally, of tranquility and insight. Now, tranquility is important, but eventually it has to be followed by the practice of insight, lhaktong.

Insight depends, first of all, upon your devotion and your supplication.* Through repeated devoted supplication, there can occur a recognition of the nature of things, which is what we call insight.

As far as actually practicing insight meditation, it is slightly distinct from the practice of tranquility. First of all, the gaze is a little different. In tranquility practice, you generally somewhat lower your gaze. In insight practice, you raise your gaze above the horizontal, so that you are looking slightly upward. The reason for this is that, by doing so, you promote the lucidity of your mind, which is necessary for insight practice. The actual meditation begins with tranquility practice. You allow your mind to come to rest in the state of

tranquility or stillness that you have cultivated through practicing tranquility meditation. Then you look at it directly. You are not trying to analyze it or to examine it conceptually. You are trying to actually see it, see what it is like. You are trying to see what is at rest. How is it at rest; what does “at rest” mean? What is this stillness? Where is it at rest? Is it inside your body, outside your body? Is it somewhere in particular? And the way you look at this state of stillness, the way you look at your mind within stillness, is almost like looking at something physically with your eyes, in the sense that it is a direct experience, rather than an attempt to evaluate conceptually.

When you look at your mind, or you look for your mind, you will not find anything there whatsoever. No matter how you look, and no matter where you look, you won’t find anything. And initially, not finding anything, you are likely to think either, “Well, I’ve mistaken the manner of looking; I don’t know how to look; I’m looking in the wrong way; it’s there but I’m not seeing it.” Or you might think, “Well, I’m just not capable of looking at it; I don’t have what it takes to find the mind.” In fact, if you think these things, your

thinking is incorrect. The reason you don’t see the mind and the reason you don’t find the mind is not that you don’t know how to look or that it is too subtle for you to find. The reason that you don’t find the mind is that there is nothing there. The mind exists nowhere. The mind abides nowhere. The mind has no substantial characteristics whatsoever. And it is for this reason that

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emptiness
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looking at it**

we call the nature of the mind emptiness or dharmadhatu. Now, when we say dharmadhatu—which means the expanse or space of all things—what is being implied is that dharmadhatu is at the same time the nature of all things, not just the nature of the mind. However, practically speaking, the method is to look at this nature within the mind, because you can directly experience, right now, your mind’s emptiness simply by looking at it. It is much more difficult to experience the emptiness of all things. Therefore, we use the

***Editor’s note:** i.e. devotion to and supplication of the guru.

mind as the technique for establishing this important understanding.

When we say that the mind is empty, we do not mean that it is an absolute nothingness. If we simply say empty, then we might think that mind is like empty space, which is nothing whatsoever. Empty space is nothing whatsoever in the sense that empty space has no cognitive lucidity. Empty space has no intelligence, no awareness. Your mind *is* nothing whatsoever in the sense that it has no substantial characteristics, it has no substantial existence of any kind. And yet that nothingness, if you want to call it a nothingness, is at the same time lucid. In fact, it is a cognitive lucidity, which is referred to as the unity or sameness of lucidity and emptiness. And this is something that you can and will directly experience through looking at your mind.

Yesterday, I described the eight consciousnesses, and I said that it is the sixth consciousness, the mental consciousness, that meditates. I also said that the sixth consciousness is conceptual, which means that the sixth consciousness has the capacity to conceptualize. It also has the capacity to be nonconceptual. When you meditate, the sixth consciousness is turned in on itself. It looks at itself. Normally, the sixth consciousness is outwardly directed, and thinks about or conceptualizes all sorts of things. But when the sixth consciousness is applied in this technique of meditation by turning in on itself and looking at itself, it looks at itself in a nonconceptual way, and it experiences its own emptiness, its own lucidity, directly, rather than through a veneer of conceptual estimation or evaluation. Now, this mode of direct experience is called, in the language of valid cognition, or the traditional study of logic and cognition, *yogic direct valid cognition*. It is a direct experience, so therefore, it is called a direct valid cognition. And it is a type that occurs in practice, and, therefore, is called yogic direct valid cognition. So, even though this is performed by the sixth consciousness, it is still a

nonconceptual and direct experience.

Now, some people study quite a bit. If you are one of those who has been studying quite a bit, or if you are one who may study quite a bit in the future, you may have, or will come into contact with references in the Buddhist tradition to the impossibility of the mind seeing itself. Specifically, in Chandrakirti's *Madhyamika Avatara*, and in Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*—and in the latter text specifically in the ninth chapter, the chapter on the perfection of wisdom—we find statements that the mind cannot see itself, and images and reasons for this statement are given. Here, what is being given in these texts is a refutation of substantialist schools who assert that a

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substantial mind can see its substantial self in the same way, for example, that our physical eye actually sees something, a visual form, that appears to be out there.

Now, while seeing this statement in madhyamika texts—that the mind cannot see itself—you may wonder if it contradicts the mahamudra tradition's injunction to allow your mind to look at itself. In fact, it does not. Because what is being discussed in Chandrakirti's and Shantideva's writings is the substantialist notion that a substantial or truly existing mind can see itself as a substantially existent thing. And when the texts say that that is impossible, they are being completely accurate, of course. But, in this

context of meditation practice, when we say that the mind looks at itself or views its own nature, we're not talking about a mind that has substantial existence viewing itself and seeing or discovering its substantial existence and substantial characteristics. We are talking about a mind of which the fundamental nature is emptiness, and of which the primary characteristic is cognitive lucidity, looking at itself and seeing its own emptiness, and, through

being aware of that emptiness, recognizing its own cognitive lucidity, which is entirely different from a substantial thing seeing itself.

Question: Rinpoche, you said that the completion stage consists of tranquility and insight. When I've been doing my ngöndro practice, I might start the practice session with shamatha-vipashyana practice. And in the vipashyana practice, I practice this kind of looking that you're describing. Then there's the generation of the visualization, the recitation of the mantra, the dissolving of the visualization; and after that, what I remember being instructed in was keeping the gaze up and out, but resting your mind in the aftertaste of whatever the practice was. So, for example, if it is the Vajrasattva mantra, resting in that purity; if it's mandala, resting in the accumulation of merit and wisdom, and so forth. So I'm curious about what to do in that space after doing the visualization. And also, is the term completion stage synonymous with insight and tranquility? Is that just a vajrayana term that we use to describe them?

Rinpoche: Well, the practice of shamatha at the beginning of a session of generation stages is good because it relaxes your mind and enables you to perform the generation stage properly. The actual intention of a completion stage is the bringing of the mind to rest in a state of stable lucidity. And this could be resting in the aftertaste of the previous generation stage experience, because that will have the elements of clarity and stability in it. Or it could be resting in the direct experience of the mind's nature—whichever is appropriate for the specific practitioner.

Mainly, when we say completion stage, we are referring to insight, to lhaktong or vipashyana. But when beginners cannot recognize what is to be experienced or meditated upon in insight meditation, or they cannot rest in that long enough to actually practice it, then it is okay for them to do shamatha or tranquility practice at that point, and gradually develop that into the completion stage.

Question: Rinpoche, when we rest in a state of

tranquility and reflect on the mind, then what doesn't seem to subside is a sense of locatedness to that lucidity, to the clarity of just sitting with eyes open. The experience of visual world, sound, and so on, all arise somewhere, or there's a sense of it arising somewhere, which doesn't fall away. What would be a further step?

Rinpoche: In the beginning, when we practice this, we experience a lot of fixation. First of all, it is important to recognize that the presence of the five sense consciousnesses, or the functioning of the five sense consciousnesses, does not, in itself, in any way impair or compromise your mind's basic lucidity or clarity, because the five sense consciousnesses in themselves and your mode of experience based on them does not entail conceptual fixation in and of itself. However, through habit it is normal for us to experience our clarity as somehow centered on this perspective, this point of view, this specific location. This need not be viewed as a threat to meditation practice; it is simply how you experience. But as you continue to work with the practice, the aspect of that experience that is, in fact, a conceptually imposed fixation will loosen and will fall away.

Question: Rinpoche, could you elaborate on the concept that insight depends on supplication and devotion? And I'm also interested in anything Rinpoche has to say on the mechanism of transmission from guru to disciple.

Rinpoche: Devotion is mainly confidence, and it refers here to the confidence that there will be a result from practicing this meditation. It is a confidence that these instructions, derived from this teacher, will lead to this result. And it is the certainty that, therefore, the process is valid. If you lack this confidence, if you think, "I don't know if this is really going to do me any good or lead to anything," then you'll think, "What is the point in sitting still and staring off into space?" If you have no confidence in the instructions and the teacher who gives the instructions, then when they say to you, "Look at your mind, look at your mind," you'll think, "Aah! What good will that do?"

And, as long as you take that attitude, that it's probably not going to do any good, it probably is not going to do any good. And no realization will come about. So for that reason, devotion, confidence, is very important. If you think, "well, this person realized this by doing this, and he's taught me how to do this, so, therefore, I can realize this by doing this," if you think that, then you will. The confidence will actually enable you to recognize your mind. So it is the confidence in the instructions and, therefore, in your practice and, therefore, in the teacher who gives it.

Transmission or pointing out is simply when a teacher knows exactly what to do, exactly what instructions to give, and the environment of the instructions, and so on—exactly what to do to cause a particular student to recognize their mind's nature. So the essence of transmission is appropriateness.

Question: Rinpoche, you say that a substantial mind can not look at itself and see any substantial mind. But you said that that is not contradictory with an insubstantial, lucid mind looking at itself and seeing lucid emptiness. I want to get this clear in my mind. Would you say that whatever it is that looks, that feels like a watcher, that has some kind of awareness, looking at your mind, one's mind, and seeing that it's empty, and recognizing that because it is empty, that's what gives rise to the lucidity—would you say that it is the lucidity that looks at that emptiness, and sees lucidity arising from that emptiness, therefore it sees, that whatever is looking at it recognizes that whatever is looking is, because it's lucid, empty? Does that make sense?

Translator: If I understood your question, it's quite simple. Let me tell you what I asked him. When the mind that is the unity of lucidity and emptiness recognizes itself—that mind of lucidity and emptiness—is it the lucidity aspect that recognizes?

Rinpoche: Yes. It is the aspect of clarity, of lucidity, that recognizes. But the lucidity mainly and initially recognizes the emptiness, by not experiencing anything. The cognitive lucidity, or we

could simply say, the cognition, sees the emptiness, and through recognizing the emptiness, through there being recognition, recognizes that that emptiness is cognition.

Question: Therefore, if I had experienced this, I could think, "Because there is emptiness, and lucidity arises out of that emptiness, then this lucidity, which is looking at that emptiness, which I take to be a 'me,' is actually empty. Because I see lucidity arising from emptiness, then this lucidity that sees it is empty."

Rinpoche: Well, following upon that recognition you would not take the lucidity to be a self, because the very recognition would have been the recognition of that lucidity's emptiness or insubstantiality, which is also its nonselfness, its nonselfhood. Because our fixation on a self is based on the misapprehension of something existing, the recognition of nothing having substantial existence would contradict or contravene that.

Question: Okay. And so would you say that it would take this doing, recognizing that over and over again, to take away this misapprehension of selfhood, because we come right back to thinking, acting as if we are a self?

Rinpoche: Well, it's a process of gradually increasing the intensity and stability of the recognition that correspondingly weakens and finally eliminates fixation on a self.

Question: Okay. But you gain faith that it's possible by just having that one experience?

Rinpoche: Yes.

Question: Okay. Thank you very much.

Question: Could you please explain what you meant by "torpid tranquility?" My instinct says some kind of laziness or dullness.

Translator: Dullness. The word torpor is like the word sleepy, or dull. Why don't we ask Rinpoche to

define the Tibetan word?

Rinpoche: The fundamental meaning of the term *jingwa*, which literally means “sunkenness,” and comes from a verb which means “to sink,” like to sink into quicksand—the fundamental meaning of it is a mental state in which any clarity in your mind is sunk, and so there’s no manifest clarity at all, and the mind is very dull. Or torpid.

Question: And could you say the Tibetan word?

Rinpoche: *jingwa*.

Translator: Rinpoche’s saying that the actual pronunciation will vary between areas. Some would say *jingwa*, some would say *singwa*, some would say *shingwa*, all for the same word. (SY)

Thrangu Rinpoche’s Schedule Through August 31, 1998

June 8-16

Seattle

See Page 5 for details.

Contact: Sharon Keegan,
902-224-2752 or
gampo@shambala.org

June 16-July 1

British Columbia

Weekend Seminar, June 20 & 21
Victoria Shambala Center
Contact: Kerry Crofton,
250-383-9108 or
kerry@pacificcoast.net

Mahamudra Seminar, June 24-28
Karma Tekchen Chöling
Contact: Ping Yau, 604-264-1383
or *ktc_vancouver@bc.sympatico.ca*

Teaching, June 30
Vancouver Shambala Center
Contact: Juanita Evans,
604-683-6722 or
75104.3305@compuserve.com

For additional scheduling,
contact Ping Yau

July 1-12

Toronto

Pema Vajra Empowerment and
Teaching, Karma Kagyu Centre
of Toronto, Lama Namse
Contact: Shelley Shakespeare,
416-588-4528 or
andrezej@netcom.ca or Paul
Fanning, paul@allergan.com

July 14-28

Nova Scotia

Shambala Center, July 14-16
Halifax
Contact: Moh Hardin,
902-420-1118 or kala3@istar.ca

Teaching monastics and
retreatants, July 18-26,
Gampo Abbey

July 30-Aug. 10

New England

Program in Portland, Maine
Contact: Nancy Phillips,
207-773-4154 or Bill Lawless,
lawless@downeast.net

Aug. 13-31

Germany

Aug. 14-18, Freiburg

Inauguration and teaching,
Aug. 20-24, Halscheid
Mahamudra Retreat Center

Aug. 26-27, Heidelberg (not
confirmed)

Weekend course, Aug. 28-30,
Tashi Chöling, Frankfurt

Contact (for all of the above):
Hort Rauprich, Karma Kagyu
Verein, 49-(0)2256-7005 or
karma.kagyu.verein@t-online.de

December 1998

Idyllwild, California

Mahamudra Retreat (not
scheduled yet)

Contact: Lee Miracle,
909-659-3401 or kml@pe.net

Schedule coordinator, Gloria Jones, secretary to
Thrangu Rinpoche
c/o Thrangu Tashi Chöling
P.O. Box 1287
Kathmandu, Nepal
Phone: 977-1-472024
Fax: 977-1-471902 or 472927
email: gloria@vajvidya.mos.com.np

Errata

On page 63 of the last issue of Shenpen Ösel in the section, **In the next issue of Shenpen Ösel**, we inadvertently omitted the title of respect, “Rinpoche,” behind Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche’s name.

On page 59, in the ninth line down in the main body of the text, *rig*, which refers to the unconditioned true nature of mind, the intrinsic, primordial pure awareness that completely transcends the functioning of mind, should read *rigs*, which means reasonings or the power of reasoning.

On page 59, second line from the bottom of the Tibetan text, *chos*, meaning dharma, should read *chod*, meaning to cut.

On page 17, in the editor’s note, “living in a dark age,” which in other contexts can refer to a time of the five degenerations, here specifically refers to an age in which a buddha has not appeared, attained enlightenment, and taught the dharma. In this context, so long as the teachings of the dharma still exist and are properly taught, we are not living in a dark age. The five degenerations are 1) the degeneration of the times, meaning that

the outer events of the world are becoming worse in terms of social unrest, warfare, crime, etc.; 2) the degeneration of beings, meaning that the mindstreams of beings are becoming coarser; 3) the degeneration of length of life, meaning that, taking a very long view, the length of life of beings is growing shorter; in this context, according to Buddhist cosmology, at the beginning of this kalpa human beings could live 80,000 years, whereas at the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni’s birth, a human being was said to be able to live only 100 years; 4) the increase in the emotional afflictions in the minds of beings, which means a degeneration of mental stability; and 5) the degeneration of view, which means that people’s understanding of reality and their basic outlook is growing farther and farther from the truth. In the context of these five degenerations we are now living in a dark age.

On page 13, in the first line of the second complete paragraph in left-hand column, *ngegyu* and *nge* should read *nyegyü* and *nye*.

Would You Like to Transcribe?

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

New KSOC Meditation and Class Schedule

SATURDAYS

8-10 a.m.

Guru Rinpoche practice

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

Formless sitting meditation and teaching (guided meditations on emptiness based on the chanting of the verses of Nagarjuna and Götsangpa taught by The Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche at KSOC in June of 1997, led by Lama Tashi Namgyal; question and answer session at end of meditation.

1:30-3:00 p.m.

Chenrezig practice

SUNDAYS

9-11 a.m.

Chenrezig practice

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

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

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In the past we have sent Shenpen Ösel on a complimentary basis to a rather large audience of Buddhists with the hope that it would find an audience of readers who would like to receive edited transcripts of recognized and qualified Buddhist teachers, and would in turn be willing to help support our efforts financially either by subscribing or through direct donation. We have sent the magazine to our own mailing list of people who have attended programs sponsored by Kagyu Shenpen Ösel Chöling, the Seattle Shambala Center, and the Karma Kagyu Study Group of Seattle; to the entire *Northwest Dharma News* mailing list; to the list of participants in the Awakening Mind retreat sponsored by Kagyu Changchub Chuling in Portland; to the entire mailing list of Karma Mahasiddha Ling in Idyllwild, CA; to the entire mailing list of Kagyu Thubten Chöling in Wappingers Falls, NY; and, in varying quantities, to every Kagyu dharma center we could find on the worldwide web.

As a consequence we have received many wonderful and enthusiastic responses, and many people have subscribed and donated to Shenpen Ösel, for which we are very grateful.

Beginning with this issue, we are no longer sending free issues of Shenpen Ösel to everyone on the *Northwest Dharma News* mailing list, and beginning with the next issue, we will no longer be sending free issues to everyone on the Kagyu Thubten Chöling mailing list. In ceasing to do so we are motivated by financial considerations and by our wish not to send the magazine to those who might simply toss it.

So, if you would like to continue to see Shenpen Ösel in your mail box, and would like to help keep us in business, please do not hesitate another instant to subscribe and/or donate. Arise now and look for your checkbook, and send us a subscription or donation check. There is no time like the present for getting things done. Please help us to be able to continue to provide this service for the dharma community.

As you know, all of the time and energy that goes into recording, transcribing, editing, laying out, addressing, and mailing Shenpen Ösel is entirely voluntary, and so your subscriptions and contributions are used solely to cover printing and mailing costs.

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

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

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF SHENPEN ÖSEL

**Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche on Mahamudra: the
Essence of All the Buddha's Teachings**

**Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche on the Bardo
and Daily Life**

**Biographical Sketch of Khenpo Tsultrim
Gyamtsö Rinpoche**

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**‘Nagarjuna prostrates to the
Buddha because the Buddha
is the one who taught the
truth of dependent arising.’**

**—The Very Venerable
Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche**

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