



Shenpen Ösel

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

Volume 5, Numbers 2 and 3

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"...no ignorance, no end of ignorance up to no old age and death, no end of old age and death; no suffering, no origin of suffering, no cessation of suffering, no path, no wisdom, no attainment, and no nonattainment. Therefore, Sariputra, since the bodhisattvas have no attainment, they abide by means of prajnaparamita. Since there is no obscuration of mind, there is no fear."

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This issue of Shenpen Ösel is devoted to a series of teachings given by The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche in Seattle, Washington, October 26-31, 1999. The teachings were translated by Ari Goldfield. In addition to the translated, transcribed, edited text of the teachings, we have included the songs that Rinpoche led. © 1999 Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche.

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

Photo credits this issue: *Ryszard K. Frackiewicz, pages 11, 28, 37, 51, 57, 66, 79, 91, 93, 105, 107, 130, back cover.*

On the cover: Prajnaparamita with an excerpt from *The Sutra of the Heart of Transcendent Knowledge*

A Prayer To Avert Nuclear War

By Chatral Rinpoche

Namo Guru Ratnatraya! To the Teacher and the Three Jewels, I bow.

True leader of the golden age—Crown of the Sakyas!
Second Buddha, Prince of Oddiyana, Lake-Born Vajra,
Bodhisattvas—eight closest spiritual heirs
High Nobles, Avilokitesvara and Manjushri,
Vajrapani and the rest!
Twenty-one Taras, Host of Noble Elders,
Root and lineage lamas, deities,
Peaceful and wrathful gods!
Dakinis in your three homes!
(the earth, the heavens and the emanated worlds!)
You who through wisdom or karma have become Defenders of the Doctrine!
Guardians of the Directions!
Seventy-five Glorious Protectors!
You who are clairvoyant, powerful, magical and mighty!
Behold and ponder the beings of this age of turmoil!

We are beings born at the sorry end of time;
An ocean of ill-effects overflows from our universally bad actions.
The forces of light flicker,
The forces of darkness, a demon army, inflames great and powerful men.
And they rise in conflict, armed with nuclear weapons
That will disintegrate the earth.
The weapon of perverse and errant intentions
Has unleashed the hurricane.
Soon, in an instant, it will reduce the world
And all those in it to atoms of dust.
Through this ill-omened devils' tool
It is easy to see, to hear and think about
Ignorant people, caught in a net of confusion and doubt, [who]
Are obstinate and still refuse to understand.
It terrifies us just to hear about or to remember
This unprecedented thing.

The world is filled with uncertainty,
But there is no means of stopping it, nor place of hope,
Other than you, undeceiving Three Jewels and Three Roots,
(Buddhas, Teaching and Spiritual Community, Lama, Deity and Dakini)

If we cry to you like children calling their mother and father,
If we implore you with this prayer,
Do not falter in your ancient vows!
Stretch out the lightning hand of compassion!
Protect and shelter us defenseless beings, and free us from fear!
When the mighty barbarians sit in council of war—
Barbarians who rob the earth of pleasure and happiness,
Barbarians who have wrong, rough, poisonous thoughts—
Bend their chiefs and lieutenants
To the side of peace and happiness!
Pacify on the spot, the armed struggle that blocks us!
Turn away and defeat the atomic weapons
Of the demons' messengers,
And by that power, make long the life of the righteous,
And spread the theory and practice of the doctrine
To the four corners of this great world!
Eliminate root, branch and leaf—even the names
Of those dark forces, human and non-human,
Who hate others and the teaching!
Spread vast happiness and goodness
Over this fragile planet!
Elevate it truly with the four kinds of glory!
And as in the golden age, with all strife gone,
Let us be busy only with the dance of pleasure, the dance of joy!
We pray with pure thoughts—
By the compassion of that ocean the three supreme refuges
And the power of the Realm of Truth;
The complete sublime truth,
Achieve the goal of this, our prayer
Magically, just as we have hoped and dreamed!

Translated from the Tibetan by Richard Kohn and Lama Tsedrup Tharchin

Introduction

This double issue of Shenpen Ösel contains Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's teachings on Chandrakirti's *Entrance to the Middle Way*, which is a commentary on Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, which again is a commentary on the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* of the Buddha Shakyamuni's second turning of the wheel of dharma. It contains teachings on both absolute truth (the way things really are) and relative truth (the way things appear to be), which can be better understood by placing Chandrakirti's text in the larger framework of the Buddha's teachings.



In Buddhism, "Absolute Truth or Absolute Reality means the end point of one's analysis, in other words, the most basic or fundamental element of existence or experience.

"For example, if one takes a clay pot, a potter might say that in absolute terms it was clay, but a scientist might say it was a collection of atoms. If he were being more precise he might say the atoms themselves consisted of atomic particles moving in space, but even this would be a rough approximation to reality. In absolute terms atomic particles can no longer be defined precisely these days. They cannot be said to be this or that or here or there; they have to be expressed in terms of probability. No doubt scientists will express it differently again in a few years' time.

"In the same way Absolute Truth presents itself differently to practitioners at the various levels of their practice. Just as this emerges in the experience of an individual practitioner, it occurs historically in the way that the Buddhist Scriptures emerged as a progression of increasingly subtle teachings.

"The key stages in the Buddhist experience of the Absolute Truth of Emptiness . . . [are] five-fold:

1. the Shravaka stage,
2. the Cittamatra stage,
3. the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka stage,
4. the Prasangika-Madhyamaka stage,
5. the Shentong Madhyamaka stage."

Thus writes Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche as interpreted and arranged by Shenpen Hookham in the introduction to Rinpoche's *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*.

These increasingly subtle stages of meditative understanding and experience are first described in our historical epoch by the Buddha Shakyamuni in three major cycles of teachings that unfolded during his forty-five years of post-enlightenment teachings. These three major cycles of teachings are referred to in Buddhist literature as the three turnings of the wheel of dharma or the three dharmachakras. The writings of the various philosophical schools of Buddhism and the views of the nature of reality that they represent all emerge as commentaries on one or more of these three turnings. The shravaka teachings on not-self or one-and-a-half-fold egolessness (selflessness) represent the hinayana view of the first dharmachakra. The madhyamaka rangtong teachings on the emptiness of self-nature of all phenomena, including both the svatantrika madhyamaka and prasangika madhyamaka, represent the mahayana view of the second dharmachakra taught in the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* and further developed in the commentaries of Nagarjuna, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, and Chandrakirti. And the shentong teachings on the clear light nature of mind—that all things, including what we now see as external and solid sources of pleasure and pain, are mere appearances that are in reality the display or radiance or light of the mind which experiences them—represent the mahayana view of the third dharmachakra as developed by Maitreya in the *Mahayana Uttara Tantra Sastra*, and further developed in the vajrayana.

This vast and profound complex of Buddhist teachings, sutras, commentaries, philosophical schools, viewpoints, methods, and stages of practice Khenpo Rinpoche often divides into four:

1. Teachings on the way things appear to be, including the teachings on suffering, impermanence, rebirth, karmic cause and effect, atoms, and moments of consciousness, corresponding to the hinayana;
2. Teachings on the way all things are fundamentally mind and that there is no real distinction between mind and matter, corresponding to the doctrine of the Cittamatra;
3. Teachings on the way things really are—empty of true existence or self-nature, corresponding to the sutras of the second dharmachakra;
4. Teachings on the ultimate reality of the way things really are merely the play, the display, the radiance, or the light of the clear light nature of mind, corresponding to the sutras of the third dharmachakra, the shentong, and the vajrayana, including the teachings of tantra, mahamudra, and dzogchen.

It is important to realize that none of these teachings are worthy of being discarded simply because more subtle and profound teachings

were subsequently taught. Even in the Buddhist lineages that hold and practice the most advanced vajrayana practices, the teachings of these various other levels of understanding are also still presented, because they are all useful according to the various levels of meditative understanding of students. Furthermore, while it is important during one's meditation to see the emptiness of all relative dharmas—including the emptiness of the teachings of the Buddha on karmic cause and effect, klesha, rebirth, suffering, impermanence, etc.—it is equally important to live one's life in accordance with these teachings on relative truth when one is not meditating and therefore not free of grasping and fixation, and not free of attachment, aggression, and ignorance.



Because the teachings of the Buddha are presented at so many different levels, it is important to have a set of guidelines that will enable one to understand how to go about sorting them out. These guidelines were presented by the Buddha in what have come to be known as the four reliances.

As set forth by His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyamtso, the four reliances are: “Do not rely on the person but on the doctrine. Then, with respect to the doctrine, rely not on the word [or words] but on the meaning. Then, with respect to the meaning, rely not on the interpretable meaning but on the definitive meaning. And with respect to the definitive meaning, rely not on ordinary consciousness but on an exalted wisdom consciousness.” If one understands consciousness always to be dualistic and awareness to be non-dualistic, then this last reliance should read “exalted wisdom awareness.”

The first reliance is not to rely on the person teaching, but on the doctrine being taught. The Buddha enjoined his followers to apply this standard even to himself when he said, “Oh monks and scholars, you should not accept my word out of respect for me but rather upon analyzing and investigating it in the way that a gold-smith analyses gold by scorching, cutting, and rubbing it.” This means that regardless of the greater experience or perceived level of realization of the teacher, one should still rely on the teachings, ascertaining for oneself their truthfulness or lack thereof, rather than accept them simply because of the profound impression the teacher may have made on one or because of his or her reputation or hierarchical status.

The second reliance is, with respect to the doctrine or teaching, not to rely on the words of the teaching, but on the meaning. One should not, for instance, accept a teaching simply because the words are eloquent—as we know even the devil can quote scriptures and charm the birds out of the trees—but because the meaning is truthful and conducive to

happiness, personal liberation, and the benefit and liberation of others. This second injunction is very important when it comes to translating the teachings from one language into another. Oftentimes, for example, there does not seem to be any word in the recipient language exactly equivalent to the word used in the language from which the teachings are being translated. In determining whether the Tibetan word *dampa* should be translated as genuine or as holy or even as venerable; whether the Tibetan word *se* should be translated as sons and daughters, daughters and sons, children, offspring, progeny, heirs, spiritual heirs, heirs apprentice, or whatever; or whether the term dharmakaya, which is given eight different meanings in the *Mahayana Uttara Tantra Shastra*, should be translated at all, translators and students alike must rely on the meaning of the teaching rather than exclusively on the words themselves. Similarly, when we pray that Karmapa remain forever in the vajra nature, we have to understand that we are not praying for him magically to transform himself into a five-pronged iron ritual instrument, similar to what is used in advanced vajrayana practice, and remain that way in perpetuity.

The third reliance is, with respect to the meaning, not to rely on the interpretable meaning, but on the definitive meaning. This injunction is very important when it comes to distinguishing the various levels of the Buddhist teachings, understanding which teachings supersede which other teachings when it comes to understanding absolute truth, and understanding when certain teachings should be applied and when they should not. For example, the Buddha's teachings on karma—that good and bad actions as causes invariably lead to the results of happiness and suffering—must be interpreted in the light of his subsequent teachings in the Heart Sutra that all dharmas (phenomena) are emptiness and his teaching that there is “no suffering, no origin of suffering, no cessation of suffering, no path, no wisdom, no attainment, and no non-attainment.” The teachings on karma are thus interpreted to mean that, given the rather coarse, commonplace level of understanding of things that we have at the beginning of our path, it is important to understand and live in accordance with the law of cause and effect. It may be all well and good to understand that suffering is empty of true nature or of inherent existence, but if you have not realized that, the “you” that does not truly exist will still experience the immense suffering which also does not truly exist, and will take it all to be very real. Therefore, when one has not realized emptiness, and even after one has developed the ability skillfully to meditate on emptiness but not the ability to maintain that realization when not meditating, it is still important to accept such an interpretable meaning in one's post-meditation or between-meditations experience. But in meditation, because it is the realization of emptiness

or the true nature that liberates one from suffering and its causes, one should try to understand, meditate upon, and realize the definitive meaning, which in this example is that all phenomena, including suffering and its causes, are empty of true existence.

From the standpoint of the shentong madhyamaka teachings, the definitive meaning is that all things are merely the radiance of the clear light nature of mind, which can only be known non-dualistically by this non-conceptual wisdom mind itself. From this point of view, the teachings of the cittamatra that all things are fundamentally mind, that there is no real distinction between mind and matter—which point of view reflects the Buddha’s statement that “The three realms are merely mind”—must be interpreted in light of his subsequent teachings that all dharmas, including mind, are emptiness, a point of view developed by the svatantrika madhyamaka. The teachings that all dharmas are emptiness, however, from the standpoint of the prasangika madhyamaka (rangtong), is still subtly conceptual, implying that emptiness in some way exists. Their doctrine, i.e. the rangtong doctrine, which is taught in this commentary by Chandrakirti, therefore, is concerned with destroying any sort of conceptual formulation, fabrication, or elaboration of the nature of things. But from the standpoint of the shentong madhyamaka, the rangtongpas are thereby implying, though adamantly refusing to assert, that absolute truth is simply the absence of conceptual fabrication or the absolute freedom from concepts. This formulation, however, can not account for the existence of things, which are accounted for in the shentong philosophy as the radiance of the clear light nature of mind, which can only be realized non-conceptually and non-dualistically by the clear light nature of mind itself—which means that it is beyond the comprehension of the conceptual mind dualistically involved in the effort to refute any and all conceptual notions or understandings of reality.

All of these points of view were taught by the Buddha, and their meanings are applicable under different circumstances and at different levels of understanding and practice. But how can one truly know for oneself which of these truths is the definitive truth?


This question brings us to the fourth reliance, which is, with respect to the definitive meaning, not to rely upon ordinary consciousness, but on an exalted wisdom awareness. This means that in order to understand the definitive truth, in order to understand beyond the need to interpret the true nature of things and which of the Buddha’s many teachings lead directly to that understanding, one must rely ultimately on the wisdom that arises in meditation and not on any of the workings of conceptual mind. At the ultimate level, words and concepts are at best very useful lies; they are the finger pointing at the moon, not the moon itself.



Also included in this issue is Khenpo Rinpoche's commentary on Gyalwa Götsangpa's song, *The Eight Cases of Basic Goodness Not to be Shunned*, a wonderful song, direct from the heart of the practice lineage, that gives extremely practical and efficacious advice to all practitioners for whom the intensity of practice is met with the intensification of obstacles.



As always we would like to thank Khenpo Rinpoche for the great generosity and clarity of his teachings. In addition, we would like to thank his translator Ari Goldfield for his continual and prompt willingness to clarify various aspects of the original transcripts of his translation. We would also like to thank Shenpen Hookham, a long-time student of the dharma and of Khenpo Rinpoche, and one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of his translators in the West, for her masterful presentation of Khenpo Rinpoche's teachings in *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, from which much of the information in this introduction is drawn.

Finally, we would like to thank Michael Barraclough and Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal Publications in New Zealand for their gracious permission to use their graphic for the cover of our last issue of Shenpen Ösel. 

—Lama Tashi Namgyal

Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way
**The First Mind Generation:
Perfect Joy**



The Very Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

A very warm tashi delek* to Lama Tashi and all of you gathered here this evening. May your wisdom which arises from listening to, reflecting on, and meditating upon the teachings of the genuine dharma increase and increase, and as a result, may you perform great benefit for all the limitless number of sentient beings. Last year there shone a dependently arisen appearance of our meeting here, and again tonight, there shines another dependently arisen appearance of our meeting all together here. This is like the appearance of the moon in a pool of water.**

If we begin by singing *A Song of Meaningful Connections* (See page 12.) by the lord of yogins, Milarepa, that will create a very good and auspicious connec-

***Editor's note:** Tashi delek is a Tibetan greeting that literally means, "May everything be auspicious, blissful, and good."

****Editor's note:** The Tibetan word *shar*, which literally means "to shine," is the same word that is used when the sun comes out or comes up and begins to shine. In English it is sometimes translated as "to appear," and is often used in conjunction with *nangwa*, which, as a verb, also literally means "to emit light" or "to shine," and as a noun means variously "light" or "brightness," "an appearance or thing seen," "an apparition," "a visual seeing," or "a concept," "an idea," or "a thought." The use of these two words together gives the understanding that the world we experience is really nothing more than a kind of ever-changing projection of mind, something like a light-show in space to which we falsely impute objective reality, thereby taking it to be "real" and solidifying it.

A Song of Meaningful Connections

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

tion amongst us. [Students sing.]

Before listening to the teachings, please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, which means, for the benefit of all sentient beings who are as limitless in number as the sky is vast in extent, please aspire to attain the state of complete and perfect enlightenment. In order to do that we must listen to, reflect upon, and meditate upon the teachings of the genuine dharma with all of the enthusiasm we can muster in our hearts. This is the precious attitude of bodhicitta, please give rise to it and listen.

Tonight, from everything that comprises what is known as the genuine dharma the topic to be explained is the text composed by the one who was able to milk the painting of a cow and thereby effectively reverse everyone's clinging to things as being real. This was none other than the glorious Chandrakirti. His text is called *Entrance to the Middle Way*. The name of this commentary in Sanskrit, the language of India at the time, is the *Madhyamakavatara*. In Tibetan it is called *dbU.ma 'jug.pa'* and in English, *Entrance to the Middle Way*. This text is an explanation of an earlier text by the protector Nagarjuna known as *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, and so this text, *Entrance to the Middle Way*, is entering into the middle way in the sense that it is explaining this earlier text by Nagarjuna.

Nagarjuna's text called *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, *Mulamadhyamakakarika* in Sanskrit, is a commentary on the Buddha's intention when teaching the sutras of the middle turning of the wheel of dharma. These are known as the extensive, middle, and short versions of the great mother, the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*.

The first verse explains the causes of the three different levels of awakening:

Shravakas and intermediate buddhas arise from the Mighty Ones.

**Buddhas are born from the bodhisattvas.
And compassionate mind, non-dual awareness,
And bodhicitta are the causes of these heirs of
the Victors. (1)**

The commentary on this text that Rinpoche will be explaining was composed by Mipam Rinpoche. It begins by describing those who are known as shravakas, a Sanskrit term translated literally into Tibetan as *nyan.thös*, meaning "those who listen and hear." The commentary explains that, "Those who listen to the teachings given by an authentic spiritual teacher and then explain them to others are shravakas." That is

The topic to be explained is the text composed by the one who was able to milk the painting of a cow

the first type of realized being that is being described. Then the commentary continues, "Those who, because of their greater merit and wisdom, are superior to the shravakas and realize things more quickly, and, on the other hand, are inferior to the buddhas, are called pratyekabuddhas," solitary realizers or solitary sages. Here in the verse they are described as

being intermediate. Why? Because they are between the shravakas and the buddhas. They are superior to the shravakas but inferior to the buddhas. So they are called intermediate buddhas. Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are born from or arise from the speech of the Mighty Ones,* from listening to the teachings of the buddhas.

The buddhas themselves arise or are born from bodhisattvas, because at the time they are practicing the path they have to be bodhisattvas. The stage of bodhisattva comes first. That is one reason, and the second reason is that they have to rely on bodhisattvas as their teachers when they are practicing on the path. So for these two reasons the cause of being a buddha is the bodhisattvas.

Then one might ask, "What are the causes of being a bodhisattva?" There are three given here. The first is the mind of compassion, which

*Editor's note: An epithet for buddhas

means the mind that wishes to protect all sentient beings from suffering. The second is non-dual awareness, meaning the wisdom or the intelligence that does not fall into either the extreme of existence or non-existence. And finally, bodhicitta. These three are the causes of the Heirs of the Victors, which is another name for bodhisattvas.* So in this verse are pointed out the causes of being a shravaka, an intermediate buddha or solitary realizer, a buddha, and a bodhisattva. Therefore, compassion, wisdom, and bodhicitta are very important.

Next comes a praise of compassion, a praise of compassion in general wherein the different kinds of compassion are not differentiated:

**Since I assert that loving kindness itself is the
seed of the Victors' abundant harvest,
Is the water which causes it to flourish,
And is its ripening that allows it to be enjoyed for
a long time,
I therefore praise compassion at the very outset.**
(2)

***Editor's note:** The Victors or the Victorious Ones are the buddhas. The Tibetan word *se*, here translated as heir, literally means the offspring of nobility or of exalted individuals, and is used to refer to enlightened bodhisattvas. For those who are familiar with languages that have parallel sets of terminology employed for ordinary people and for people who are honored, it is an honorific term for son or daughter. It has been difficult over the years to arrive at a suitable translation of this term. At first it was unthinkingly translated as "son," but since the term *se* is not gender specific and bodhisattvas come in both female and male form, "son" is inaccurate. The use of sons and daughters is often employed, but it is a bit long, does not convey the honorific sense of the word, and by its word order conveys a cultural bias favoring males, not implied by the text, which cannot be avoided without adopting the artificial alternation of word order. Sometimes the word children or child is used, but this rendering of the term implies dependence and the need for care and looking after. Enlightened bodhisattvas do depend upon buddhas for teachings and guidance, but their status is much more akin to an adolescent apprentice than to a toddler or small child, which is the sense one gets from the word child or children. Enlightened bodhisattvas are already engaged in bringing great benefit to sentient beings in a great many different ways. Though their post-meditation experience is vastly inferior, their realization of the true nature of mind and reality when they meditate is said to be the same as the buddha's. If a buddha's realization is like the whole expanse of the sky, a first-bhumi bodhisattva's realization is said to be like looking at the same sky through a hole in a sesame seed. So "children" does not seem an adequate translation. The term heir recommends itself because of its non-specificity of gender and because it implies that sometime in the future the

Why is loving kindness, great compassion, so important? It is important in the beginning of the practice because it is like the seed of the Victors' abundant harvest, of the abundant harvest of the fruition of the buddhas. Compassion is the seed. It is important in the middle because it is like the water and the fertilizer that causes that harvest to flourish. Along the path one comes to realize that the sentient beings that one has set out to help are limitless in number, and that they do all kinds of bad things to oneself, and are sometimes not very grateful for the good things one does for them. It is because one has compassion that these different things do not cause us to regress on the path.** Finally, it is important at the end of the path because compassion is like the ripening of the harvest, which then can be enjoyed for a very long time. So, since compassion is important in these ways in the beginning, the middle, and the end [of the path], the venerable Chandrakirti

bodhisattva will have the status of a buddha. But an heir is basically someone waiting around for their parents to die so that they can inherit lands, money, and titles. No buddha must die for a bodhisattva to come into their "inheritance," and there is in fact no inheritance to come into. Nothing is transferred from a buddha to a bodhisattva at the time of the death of a buddha that will make the bodhisattva a buddha. And the term is inappropriate also because it focuses on an entirely passive relationship between two individuals, the meaning of which is that by virtue of no effort on their own part, the younger is going to come into a lot of wealth. Enlightened bodhisattvas are very hardworking, energetic individuals, who are in effect apprenticed to the buddhas, but at the same time are doing the same work as a buddha, though on a lesser scale. There are of course some heirs of large fortunes who go into the family business before the progenitor of it dies in order to learn the business and to lend a helping hand, but none of that is implied by the term "heir." For all of these reasons "heir" seems an unfortunate choice of words, though it is a popular one these days. Even the term "spiritual heir" conveys the unfortunate implication that if one could just get close enough to the guru, one might inherit some spiritual goodies at the time of his or her passing. Perhaps progeny would be a better choice of words, though it also does not convey the honorific sense. However, since the English language does not have any recognizable honorific language, this is a deficiency that will be difficult to make up in any case.

****Editor's note:** Without great compassion, the vast number of sentient beings and their manifest confusion would easily cause a bodhisattva to become dispirited, to despair, and to give up on sentient beings.

begins this text by praising compassion.

And then come praises of the different kinds of compassion. The first of these is compassion that has sentient beings as its focus:

**First thinking “me”, they fixate on “self,”
Then, thinking, “This is mine,” attachment to
things develops.
Beings are powerless, like a rambling water
mill—
I bow to compassion for these wanderers. (3)**

The commentary reads: “Before they cling to the idea of possessiveness, of something being mine, there comes the mode of perception that focuses on the self, the belief that the self exists.” So first thinking “me”, they fixate on self. After that they think, “This is mine.” For example, “These are my eyes.” So after you believe in self, then you start to believe in things in relation to the self with the idea of possessiveness, and you develop attachment to these outer things as being real. “Beings are powerless like a rambling water mill, like a bucket in a well that keeps going around and around. This well [or mill pond] that beings go around in is the cycle of existence, samsara, that stretches from what is called the very peak of existence down to the worst hell. I bow to compassion for these wandering beings who wander in this cycle of samsara.”

And so compassion is the mind that beholds all sentient beings, including even our enemies, and feels love towards them because they suffer first from clinging to the thought that there is a “me” and second from clinging to things as being “mine.” This compassion is something that is incredibly important. It is also difficult to give rise to it, and if one is able to do so, it is an incredibly important and wonderful

thing. For this reason, Chandrakirti begins his text by prostrating to this incredibly important mind of compassion.

Next comes the praise of the second specific kind of compassion, which in this case has the dharma—in the sense of the basic nature of sentient beings—as its focus. The third specific kind of compassion is non-referential compassion. These latter two go together in the first two lines of the fourth verse which read:

**Beings are like the moon on the surface of rippling water—
They move and are empty of any self nature.
(4ab)**

What are beings like? They are like the moon that appears on the surface of water that is being blown about by the wind. They do not remain the same even from one instant to the next. Therefore, they are of the nature of impermanence. This is the second type of compassion, seeing that beings are impermanent. And not only are they impermanent, but they are empty of any self nature. So the second type of compassion sees the quality of their impermanence, and the third type of compassion sees the quality of sentient beings’ emptiness.

In short, beings are completely impermanent. There is nothing remaining from one moment to the next in terms of the beings’ basic nature. However, because beings think that they are permanent and think that there is something there which remains and continues, they suffer. They suffer because they cling to their belief in permanence.

Moreover, not only are they impermanent, but also they are just like the moon’s reflection in a pool of water; there is nothing really there.

Compassion is the mind that holds all sentient beings, including even our enemies, and feels love towards them because they suffer first from clinging to the thought that there is a ‘me’ and second from clinging to things as being ‘mine’

They are completely empty of any self nature. They are empty of any inherent existence, and yet because they think that things are real, they suffer. So there are two kinds of compassion here. One focuses on their impermanence, and one sees their emptiness; and both of them see that because beings do not realize these two things, they suffer.*

Next we get to the main body of Mipam Rinpoche's commentary. First he gives an outline of how the text is divided. There are two main sections. The first is an explanation of the temporary state, which refers to the ten grounds or bhumis of the bodhisattvas. The second is an explanation of the ultimate state, meaning the state of enlightenment. The first section, the explanation of the temporary state, is again divided into two sections—an explanation of the ten bodhisattva grounds and then the qualities of these grounds. The ten bodhisattva grounds is in turn divided into three main sections. The first is the explanation of the first five of these grounds, beginning with the ground of *Perfect Joy*, and so on. The second is an explanation of the sixth ground, called *The Manifest*. And the

third is an explanation of the last four grounds, starting with the seventh, called *Gone Far Beyond*.

In the explanation of the first five bodhisattva grounds there is a section for each ground. These first five grounds are called in order *Perfect Joy*, *The Stainless*, *The Luminous*, *The Radiant*, and *Difficult to Overcome*.

In the section on the ground called *Perfect Joy*, there is the explanation of the ground itself, what it actually is, and an extensive explanation of the ground's qualities. Finally, by way of an expression of the ground's qualities, there is a one-sentence summary. So there are three sections.

The description of the essence of the entity of the ground itself is found in the last two lines of the fourth verse and the first two of the fifth:

**The Victors' heirs see this and in order to free
beings completely
Their minds come under the power of compas-
sion, (4cd)**

**And perfectly dedicating their virtue with
Samantrabhadra's prayer,**

***Editor's note:** These three types of compassion—compassion with reference to sentient beings, compassion with reference to phenomena (dharmas), and non-referential compassion—are described by Kalu Rinpoche in experiential terms in the context of the practice of tong len in the following way:

“One method for developing bodhicitta is called tong len [*gtong len*], which literally means ‘sending [and] taking.’ The attitude here is that each of us is only one being, while the number of beings in the universe is infinite. Would it not be a worthy goal if this one being could take on all the pain of every other being in the universe and free each and every one of them from suffering? We therefore resolve to take on ourselves all this suffering, to take it away from all other beings, even their incipient or potential suffering, and all of its causes. At the same time we develop the attitude of sending all our virtue, happiness, health, wealth and potential for long life to other beings. Anything that we enjoy, anything noble or worthy, positive or happy in our situation we send selflessly to every other being. Thus the meditation is one of willingly taking on all that is negative and willingly giving away all that is positive. We reverse our usual tendency to cling to what we want for ourselves and to ignore others. We develop a deep empathy with everything that lives. The method of sending and taking is a most effective way of developing the bodhisattva's motivation.

“The kind of compassion we have described so far is called ‘compassion with reference to sentient beings’ (*sem chen la mik pay nying je* [*sems can la dmigs pa'i snying rje*]). A dualism

lingers here, however, because we are still caught by the threefold idea of (1) ourselves experiencing the compassion, (2) other beings as the objects of compassion, and (3) the actual act of feeling compassion through understanding or perceiving the suffering of others. This framework prepares our path in the mahayana. Once this kind of compassion has been established, we arrive at a second. The realization begins to grow that the self which is feeling the compassion, the objects of the compassion, and the compassion itself are all in a certain sense illusory. We see that these three aspects belong to a conventional, not ultimate, reality. They are nothing in themselves, but simply illusions that create the appearance of a dualistic framework. Perceiving these illusions and thereby understanding the true emptiness of all phenomena and experience is what we call ‘compassion with reference to all phenomena’ (*chö la mik pay nying je* [*chos la dmigs pa'i snying rje*]). This is the main path of mahayana practice.

“From this second kind of compassion a third develops, ‘non-referential compassion’ (*mik me nying je* [*dmigs med snying rje*]). Here we entirely transcend any concern with subject/object reference. It is the ultimate experience that results in buddhahood. All these three levels of compassion are connected, so if we begin with the basic level by developing loving kindness and compassion towards all beings, we lay a foundation which guarantees that our path will lead directly to enlightenment.” *THE DHARMA That Illuminates all Beings Impartially Like the Light of the Sun and the Moon*, by Kyabje Dorje Chang Kalu Rinpoche, State University of New York Press, copyright 1986, Kagyu Thubten Choling, pages 46-47.

They perfectly abide in joy—this is called “the first”. (5ab)

The extensive explanation of the qualities of the ground is divided into three subsections: an explanation of the qualities that make the bodhisattva’s mind-stream beautiful, an explanation of the qualities that cause the bodhisattva to outshine the mind-streams of others, and an explanation of the superior qualities of the first ground. In the description of the good qualities that beautify the bodhisattva’s mind-stream, there is an explanation of why they are called bodhisattvas; an explanation of the qualities they gain on this ground, such as being born into the family of the tatagathas, the buddhas; and an explanation of the qualities of this ground from the perspective of what is abandoned, meaning that they abandon ever being born in the lower realms* and so forth. Why they get the name bodhisattva is explained in the last two lines of the fifth verse, which read,

**Having attained this ground
They are called by the name “bodhisattva”. (5cd)**

The commentary to this reads: “After attaining this first ground, since they have attained ultimate bodhicitta, the actual genuine mind of enlightenment, they are called actual genuine bodhisattvas.” It is at this point that they get the name or are praised with the name “actual genuine bodhisattvas.” They are noble beings.

The traditional Tibetan way of formulating and presenting the major commentaries always includes an extensive outline of all the different sections in the text. In India there was no tradition of these outlines in the commentaries. They

***Editor’s note:** Bodhisattvas, beginning with the first ground, are no longer impelled by the ripening of karma to take birth in the lower realms; for the benefit of beings, however, it is said that bodhisattvas often take birth voluntarily in the lower realms.

At the time the
bodhisattva
reaches this first
ground, Perfect
Joy, all paths to
the lower realms
are completely
cut off

would just give the verses and give little introductions to each verse explaining what they were about.

In the description of the qualities of bodhisattvas that cause them to outshine others, there are five different parts, five different ways in which they outshine others. First, they have the quality of the family, in this sense, the family of the buddhas. Additionally they have the quality of abandoning three things, the quality of what they realize, the quality of their power, and the quality of constant improvement.

These five qualities are referred to in the four lines of verse number six and the first line of verse number seven:

**They are born into the family of the tatagathas.
They abandon all three that entangle so
thoroughly.
These bodhisattvas possess extraordinary
happiness,
And can cause a hundred worlds to quake. (6)**

**Advancing from ground to ground, they fully
progress upwards— (7a)**

The commentary reads: “Since they have transcended or have gone beyond the levels of ordinary beings, of shravakas, and of solitary sages, they are born into the family of tatagathas, of buddhas, of thus-gone ones. They do not go on any other paths. It is certain that this is their level. Their potential places them in the family of the buddhas.”

Since they directly realize selflessness, they abandon the three which entangle so thoroughly. These three are the view of the transitory collection, meaning belief in the self;** the belief that their own conduct is what makes them superior; and doubt. These are all given up on the path of

****Editor’s note:** i.e. taking the five skandhas—the transitory collection—to be a truly existent self rather than a mere dependently arisen ever-changing appearance.

seeing, the path on which one becomes a noble bodhisattva.*

Next it is stated that, since the realization of the bodhisattva of the first ground is so extraordinary—since they have given up so many faults and have so many good qualities—they have extraordinary happiness, which is why this ground is called *Perfect Joy, Utter Joy*.

Fourth is an explanation of their power, one example of which is given in the line that says that through their miraculous abilities they can cause a hundred different world systems to quake. This is one of twelve qualities common to all the bodhisattva grounds, each of which qualities the bodhisattvas on the first ground have one-hundred fold.**

Finally, in terms of their progressing upwards, they move with incredible happiness from ground to ground. This happiness is what propels them further and further upward through the bhūmis.

The text continues:

At that time, all paths to the lower realms are sealed off.

At that time, all grounds of ordinary beings

***Editor's note:** The stages of the path to enlightenment are traditionally enumerated as five: **(1) the path of accumulation**—the preliminary path of a beginner on which one is gathering the accumulations of merit and wisdom through study, through eschewing the ten unvirtuous actions and adopting the ten virtuous ones while practicing the paramitas, and through learning to practice and to meditate, all of which leads to the heat of wisdom or the spiritual awareness that comes with the experience of meditative heat; **(2) the path of junction or application**, an intensive, highly concentrated, and patient stage of practice, which leads to; **(3) the path of seeing or insight**, corresponding to the first bodhisattva bhūmi, on which one realizes beyond mere conceptuality the Four Noble Truths and for the first time has direct, non-conceptual insight into emptiness; **(4) the path of meditation or practice**, corresponding to the second through the tenth bhūmis, and so called because during this stage one meditates on or practices what has been seen on the path of seeing; and finally **(5) the path of perfection or fulfillment**, corresponding to the stage of buddhahood.

****Editor's note:** In an instant they can enter one hundred meditative absorptions, emanate one hundred emanations, see all the karma of one hundred previous lives, make a hundred worlds move, etc. For more on the twelve qualities or powers of bodhisattvas of the ten grounds, see *Shenpen Ösel, Volume 3, Number 1*, pages 30-31.

**evaporate—
They are taught to be like the eighth ground of
the noble ones. (7bcd)**

At the time the bodhisattva reaches this first ground, the ground of *Perfect Joy*, all paths to the lower realms—meaning birth in the hells or as a hungry ghost or as an animal—are completely cut off. Actually, at the time they attain what is called the level of patience, which is on the preceding path, the path of junction, the conditions for their being born in the lower realms can no longer gather or come together. But here what happens is that as a result of the remedy of reaching the first bodhisattva ground, even the tiniest cause or seed of being born in the lower realms is wiped out. Furthermore, when bodhisattvas gain this ground, then all of the grounds of ordinary beings, which they were on before, just dissolve; they evaporate, because they are now noble beings and will no longer revert to being ordinary. They are described as being like the eighth of the noble ones, which refers to the path of the arhats. On the arhat's path there are eight stages—four levels, each of which is divided into two. For instance, there are arhats who are beginning arhats, and arhats who have actually gained the result of an arhat. If you count the stages of the hinayana path backwards, you get to the stream enterers and those who have attained the result of the stream enterer, which is the eighth down the line. Here Chandrakirti is comparing the bodhisattva path to the arhat's path, saying that the first-bhūmi bodhisattva is like the noble beings who have attained the result of the stream enterers on the path of the arhats. (Please see the boxed note on page 19.)

Then the first three lines of the eighth verse read:

**Even those abiding on the first ground of perfect
bodhicitta,
Through the power of their merit, outshine
Both those born of the Mighty One's speech and
the solitary sages.**

On the ground *Gone Far Beyond*, their minds also become superior. (8)

The commentary reads: “Even those abiding on the first ground which leads eventually to perfect enlightenment—and this mind which is going to lead to perfect enlightenment is bodhicitta—because of their relative bodhicitta and because of their non-referential compassion, outshine even those who have attained the level of fruition in a different vehicle, which refers to the shravakas, who are born of the buddha’s speech, and the solitary sages, who are the intermediate buddhas, the pratyekabuddhas or solitary realizers. So even the bodhisattvas on the first ground are superior to them, because of these two things, their relative bodhicitta and their non-referential compassion. The pure merit that comes from these two causes them to outshine realized beings of the hinayana path.

Moreover, on the ground *Gone Far Beyond* their minds also become superior. When bodhisattvas finally get to the seventh ground, *Gone Far Beyond*, their minds, realizing ultimate bodhicitta, also become superior to the shravakas and the solitary sages. So on the earlier bodhisattva grounds they are superior because of their

merit, but when they get to the seventh ground they are also superior because of their wisdom.

The next verse reads:

**At that time, the first cause of complete enlightenment,
Generosity, becomes preeminent.
When one is enthusiastic even about giving away one’s own flesh,
This is a sign of something that normally cannot be seen. (9)**

The commentary reads that on the first ground, at that time, the cause of gaining the

enlightenment of the buddha that becomes preeminent [in the life and activity of] the bodhisattva is the first of the ten transcendent perfections, the first of the ten paramitas, the paramita of generosity. It comes to the fore in the sense that the other ones are not so important here as this one. In this regard, when you see somebody who is giving away their own flesh without the slightest manifestation of clinging to it—not only are they not unhappy to give it away, not only do they not have any misgivings about giving it away, but they give it away enthusiastically—then, even

The reference to “the eighth noble one” by Chandrakirti in the Madhyamakavatara may be explained as follows:

When he composed his commentary, Chandrakirti’s audience was primarily composed of hinayana practitioners plus many mahayana students who were familiar with the hinayana path. The term “eighth noble one” refers to the hinayana path of seeing and specifically refers to the stage of “stream-enterer.”

There are four levels of attainment on the hinayana path, each of which is subdivided into two. The first is called “stream-enterer,” the second “once-returned,” the third “non-returned,” and the fourth is termed the “foe-destroyer” or arhat. (“Arhat” means “foe-destroyer,” and the terms are synonyms.) By dividing each of these four levels into two, there are eight levels.

Chandrakirti’s reference to “the eighth noble one” refers to this eight-fold division of the hinayana. The reference to the levels of the hinayana path is complicated by the fact that they are numbered in a different way than are the bodhisattva bhūmis. In counting the bhūmis, we count upward from the first up to the tenth level, which is followed by buddhahood. The levels of the hinayana path, by contrast, are counted from the top down. The arhat levels are counted as numbers one and two, the non-returned as three and four, the once-returned as five and six, and the stream-enterer as seven and eight.

—The Venerable Dzogchen Pönlop Rinpoche

though as ordinary beings we cannot really tell that they are on the first bhūmi, this is a sign

that they are. We can make this inference, just as we can infer that, when we see smoke somewhere, there is fire, even if we can not see the fire directly.

The next verse reads:

**All beings strongly desire happiness
But human happiness does not occur without
objects of enjoyment.
Knowing that these objects arise from generosity,
The Mighty One taught generosity first. (10)**

So why, given all the different transcendent perfections, did the Buddha first teach generosity? Ordinary beings, above all, want to be happy. That is, in fact, all they want. If we take people as an example, what makes them happy is the reversing of states in which they feel that they are lacking something. When you feel that you are lacking something, you are unhappy. If you are hungry or thirsty, happiness is the ending of those states. In order to end those states you need objects of enjoyment. In this case it is food and drink, and generosity is the provision of those objects to enjoy. Knowing this, the perfect Buddha, the Mighty One, out of all the different practices of virtue, like discipline, and so forth, first taught and praised generosity. Another reason that he taught it first is that it is the easiest virtue to practice.

The next verse reads:

**Even for those without much compassion
Who are extremely hot-tempered and self-concerned,
The objects of enjoyment they desire
And that pacify their suffering come from generosity. (11)**

This verse teaches that even the happiness you get in samsara comes from generosity. Someone who is a giver, who does not have much faith or compassion, who is extremely hot-tempered and gets angry easily, and who is really only concerned with their own benefit—even for them, everything that they want in terms of objects of enjoyment that can pacify their suffering, all of it, comes from generosity. If anybody

gets any of those things, it is because they have been generous in the past. Therefore, generosity is also the cause of samsaric happiness.

**Even they, through an occasion of giving,
Will meet a noble being, receive their counsel,
And soon after, completely cutting the stream of
cyclic existence,
They will progress to peace, the result of that.
(12)**

So even the givers of things who have no compassion, even they at some time will give something away, and when they do, they will meet a noble being rather suddenly. Why? Because the way things work in the world is that when somebody is giving something away, it attracts noble beings, who then show up. A noble being will come and then will teach the giver the dharma. As a result, such givers will turn their backs on samsara, meditate on the path, perfectly cut the stream of cyclic existence—the round of continuous birth and death—and proceed to the peace that is the result of this meeting with a genuine noble being.

The first two lines of the thirteenth verse read:

**Those whose minds vow to benefit beings
Quickly gain happiness from their acts of
generosity. (13ab)**

Bodhisattvas, who have the mind that has vowed to benefit others in ways that give them both short-term and long-term happiness—both temporary happiness and a deeper ultimate happiness—themselves gain happiness quickly as a result of their generosity. This happiness comes from seeing the satisfaction of the recipients of their generosity—for example, the satisfaction of beggars as a result of giving to them. This is what causes bodhisattvas to be happy; they always delight in giving. They love to give, because they love to see the satisfaction of others.

And finally the next two lines of the verse summarize all of this by way of a praise of generosity:
It is for those who are loving and those who are

not—
Therefore, generosity is foremost. (13cd)

The commentary to this reads: “It is for those who are loving, meaning the noble bodhisattvas, and for those who are not, meaning everybody else—all ordinary individuals, shravakas, and solitary sages. For all of these beings, and therefore for everyone, it is the source of all samsaric happiness and of all completely excellent happiness, referring to the happiness of liberation—the realization of the arhats—and the happiness of the omniscience of enlightenment of the buddhas. Therefore, the teachings on generosity are foremost, meaning that they are incredibly important.”

The fourteenth verse reads:

**The happiness of an arhat attaining peace
Cannot match the joy experienced by a
bodhisattva
Upon merely hearing the words, “Please give to
me.”
So what need to mention their joy when they give
away everything? (14)**

A bodhisattva experiences great happiness just by hearing a beggar ask to be given something—just by that mere thought and the mere thought, “Now I have the chance to help this beggar who has come to me to ask for something.” Even the happiness of an arhat at their highest level of realization, when they enter into the expanse of nirvana, cannot compare to the happiness of a bodhisattva under those conditions. And if that is the case, then what need is there to mention the level of happiness the bodhisattva experiences when they are *actually* able to give away everything inner and outer to this supplicating beggar and see the beggar satisfied as a result. Is that not something quite good?

**The pain one feels from cutting one’s own flesh
to give it away
Brings the suffering of others in the hell realms
and so forth
Directly into one’s own experience,**

**And awakens one’s vigor in striving to cut that
suffering off. (15)**

The commentary reads: “When the mind arises that is incredibly happy to give, then even when one is still an ordinary individual, one will cut one’s own flesh and give it away, and because one is still an ordinary individual, when one does that, one will experience pain. But the consequence of this pain is to bring into one’s own experience the suffering of those in the hell realms and other lower realms, and one realizes that their suffering is thousands of times worse than the suffering we feel just by cutting off part of our hand and giving it away.” So we do suffer as a result of cutting off our flesh, but the suffering of beings in lower realms is thousands of times worse than that. And realizing this, one realizes that one’s own suffering is insignificant. It is really nothing in comparison. This realization awakens one’s vigor in striving, to eliminate the suffering of others, which one now realizes is so much greater than what we ourselves are going through.

The sixteenth verse describes the different ways of giving:

**Giving empty of gift, giver, and recipient
Is a transcendent perfection beyond the world.
When attachment to these three arises,
That is a mundane transcendent perfection. (16)**

Generosity that is empty of generosity—in the sense that one realizes that there is no gift, there is no one giving, and there is no one receiving—is called the wisdom that has no focus on any of the three spheres. The three spheres are the gift, the giver, and the recipient. Such giving is called, “undefiled generosity,” and it is a transcendent perfection, a paramita, which transcends the world, which transcends the mundane and the ordinary. On the other hand, when there is attachment to these three spheres as being real, then that is still a paramita, a transcendent perfection, but it is called a worldly or mundane transcendent perfection, for the very reason there is still a focus on these

three spheres as being real.

The last verse, which is a concluding summary, reads:

Like that, the Victors' heirs utterly abide in the
mind of bodhicitta
And from their excellent support, joy's light
beautifully shines.
This joy, like the jewel of the water crystal,
Completely dispels the thick darkness—it is
victorious! (17)

Here the bodhisattva is being compared to the moon resting high in the sky. The bodhisattva, the heir of the Victorious Ones, utterly abides in the mind of bodhicitta that has developed on this first ground, because this bodhicitta is now a part of their mind. That is why they can abide in it perfectly. And from the genuine and supreme support that is this mind of bodhicitta of the first ground shines the light of perfect joy. This beautiful light is the radiance of their primordial wisdom. It is like the light of the jewel known as the water crystal, which is another name for the moon. And so the bodhisattva and their wisdom and joy are like the beautiful light of the moon, and everything that they abandon on the path of seeing, which corresponds to this first ground, is compared to thick darkness. The remedy that completely dispels this thick darkness is their primordial awareness, by virtue of which they emerge victorious, meaning completely free.

The concluding line of the chapter states that this is the first ultimate mind generation in the text known as the *Entrance to the Middle Way*. Each succeeding chapter explains a different level of the generation of the mind of bodhicitta. Now let us recite the verses from this chapter. [Students recite.]

Question: The second to last verse makes reference to a “mundane transcendent perfection,” and I’m wondering what is the distinction between a mundane transcendent perfection, for instance of generosity, and just the mundane virtue of generosity. What is the distinction? The second part of the question is, is it in fact the fact of seeing gift, giver, and recipient as being empty that makes a virtue or perfection transcendent? And if one is not seeing them as empty, then how can it be a transcendent perfection if it is in fact mundane?

Translator: So, the question is about the sixteenth verse. The first part of the question is, what is the difference between a mundane

transcendent perfection, the mundane transcendent perfection of generosity, and the mundane virtue of generosity or the worldly virtue of generosity? And secondly, if there is fixation on gift, giver, and recipient as being real, then what is it that causes it to be a transcendent perfection?

Rinpoche: The difference between the virtue of generosity and the *worldly* paramita of generosity is that the virtue of generosity’s result is samsaric happiness and the *worldly* paramita’s result is eventually the transcendence of samsara through the attainment of enlightenment. And that is what makes the distinction and that is why this is called a paramita and not just an ordinary virtue or something else.

Question: What is the difference in the manner of practicing generosity in these two cases?

Rinpoche: The difference is that when beginners practice generosity, it is the virtue of gener-

When beginners practice generosity, it is the virtue of generosity, which leads to samsaric happiness. Eventually, this becomes the practice of the paramita of generosity, which will eventually lead to the attainment of enlightenment

osity, which leads to samsaric happiness. Eventually this becomes the practice of the paramita of generosity, which will eventually lead to the attainment of enlightenment. The way this progression works is that first somebody practices generosity; they do not have a lot of compassion, but they practice generosity, as a result of which they get rich. Then they practice more generosity, and in time a noble being appears to receive their generosity. Then the noble being gives the beginning giver teachings, and then the giver starts to practice the dharma, and then they go on from there. That is one way it works. We can also see a distinction between the ordinary virtue of generosity and the worldly paramita of generosity based on whether there is a dedication of merit of the generosity to the enlightenment of all sentient beings, on how

***Editor's note:** Any casual observation of generosity reveals that it in time endows the giver with some sort of additional energy and power due to the appreciation of the recipient of the gift. If one looks at generosity from the standpoint of karma as it might ripen over the course of lifetimes, one will see that when generosity is practiced consistently over a significant period of time, it will result in one's being increasingly surrounded by beneficiaries of one's generosity who harbor a great deal of appreciation for one, even if they do not know why. As a result, surrounded by such good will, the giver will be increasingly successful in their endeavors, and as a consequence will find it easier to amass wealth. They will be born as a rich human being, or in the god's realms, etc. But the difficulty of this type of generosity—practiced either without any specific motivation or motivated by the desire simply to make another happy or to curry favor, to fulfill one's duty as a parent, or for some other samsaric motivation—is that when the merit accumulated by such generosity exhausts itself, if such generosity has not been continued, the giver will fall in samsaric status and will once again know poverty, etc. Furthermore, if in one's relationship to wealth—whether one is gaining it or losing it—one begins to be fearful of losing wealth or never gaining wealth, and as a consequence begins to grasp at it, becomes miserly and ungenerous, or even begins to practice financial fraud or theft in order to gain wealth, then one will sooner or later be reborn in the lower realms. Thus, this type of generosity, which is being referred to here as *the ordinary virtue of generosity*, while leading temporarily at some time in the future to the higher realms, in no way endows one with permanent happiness, nor does it prevent one from constant and unending wandering in conditioned existence fraught with suffering.

The karmic consequence of one's generosity, however, can be conditioned by changing the motivation with which it is practiced and by dedicating the merit or virtue or energy and power arising from it. Thus the bodhisattva path teaches that we should practice generosity out of compassion for sentient beings with the motivation to establish all sentient beings in liberation from suffering and in the enlightenment of buddhahood. It also teaches that following any act of generosity

much compassion is involved, and on how much wisdom is involved. So these things also help to distinguish. Does that answer the question?

Question: Yes, though I'm still a little confused. Is it because of their compassionate motivation, even though they are not transcending the three spheres, that it is still called a transcendent perfection?

Rinpoche: That is a good explanation. Because of the giver's motivation, even though they do not transcend focus on the three spheres, their action is still given the name transcendent perfection. It is a transcendent perfection as practiced by ordinary mundane beings.*

we should dedicate the merit arising from that generosity to the liberation and enlightenment of all sentient beings. By so doing, we gradually increase our impulse to dharma practice, our concern and compassion for sentient beings, the strength of our intention to attain buddhahood for the benefit of beings, and the energy and power with which we are able to practice the path leading to buddhahood. This is what is called the *worldly or mundane paramita of generosity*, or in the language of the translator, *the worldly or mundane "transcendent perfection" of generosity*, and it leads eventually to buddhahood.

The worldly paramita of generosity leads to the *transcendent paramita of generosity*, or the *transcendent "transcendent perfection" of generosity*, when we come to understand that sunyata, the wisdom realizing emptiness and the true nature, is what ultimately liberates one from samsara altogether and is the cause of buddhahood. When one comes to understand that, one comes to understand that for generosity to lead to buddhahood, it must be practiced within the context of the view of emptiness, which means without reference to, attachment to, or fixation on the three spheres—the giver, the gift or act or giving, and the recipient—which is often called three-fold purity. Three-fold purity can also be one-hundred fold purity, in the sense that the term implies ultimately seeing the emptiness of all things interdependent with any particular act of generosity: the giver, the gift, the giving, the recipient, the attitudes and thoughts and remarks of others with respect to the act, the motivations of giver and recipient, the results of such giving, etc. Such generosity—the transcendent paramita of generosity—and the practice of the other transcendent paramitas or perfections—discipline, patience, exertion, meditative concentration, and prajña—are the direct cause of buddhahood. One can begin to practice the transcendent paramitas effectively after one has had decisive insight into emptiness.

Thus we can see that the ordinary virtue of generosity with a little luck leads to the practice of the worldly or mundane paramita of generosity, which in turn leads to the practice of the transcendent paramita of generosity, which in turn is one of the causes of buddhahood.

Question: What is non-referential compassion, the third type of compassion, and how is it different from the second type, compassion with reference to phenomena, which was translated as being the reality of the situation, referring to impermanence?

Rinpoche: If one looks at this second type of compassion, *chö la mikpay nyingje* in Tibetan, etymologically, one finds the word *chö* in Tibetan or dharma in Sanskrit, which has a lot of different meanings, [including the meaning “phenomena,”] but here it is better translated as “quality,” the quality of the situation. Here the quality of the situation refers to the sentient being’s quality and the sentient being’s quality is of the nature of impermanence. Sentient beings completely change from moment to moment, but they do not know that, they do not realize that, and so they think that things are permanent and as a result of that they suffer. So, if we see sentient beings and wish that they be free of the suffering of thinking that things are permanent when in fact they are not, then that is compassion that focuses on the quality of the nature of sentient beings. In fact, beings suffer greatly because they think things, particularly suffering, are permanent. But suffering is also of the nature of impermanence; it completely disappears in the next instant. If we suffer and think that this suffering is real, in the sense that it is permanent, and that it is going to last and just get greater and greater, then that causes even more suffering. The alternative is just to realize that the suffering is completely momentary and that it vanishes instant by instant.

Non-referential compassion describes the compassion that knows and understands the analogy of the water moon.* Not only is the

***Editor’s note:** The reflection of the moon in water.

water moon constantly moving around, changing, and thus impermanent, but because it is just a water moon, there is really nothing there. Sentient beings, like the water moon, are empty of any real existence, they are just like a reflection. There is nothing really there, but they do not realize that. And so, because they think that they are real and that other things are real, they suffer. The compassion that focuses on this

Sentient beings completely change from moment to moment, but they do not know that, and so they think that things are permanent and as a result of that they suffer

absence of real existence and makes the aspiration, “Would it not be wonderful if beings were free from the suffering which they experience because they think that they themselves and everything around them are real!” This suffering is just like the suffering one experiences in a dream when one does not know one is dreaming. For example, you could dream of being burned in a fire, and the fact is that the fire and the body being burned in it are just merely dependent appearances. But if you do not know you are dreaming, then you will think that the fire is real and that you are really being burned in it. Not only

that, you will think that this burning is something that is going to go on until you die. This confusion creates great suffering, great fear, and great pain. Non-referential compassion is the aspiration that beings be free of this type of suffering, which they experience only because they think things, which are not real, are real. This type of compassion understands that the only reason that beings suffer is that their thoughts are confused.

Question: In the beginning, when Chandrakirti is describing the causes of being a bodhisattva, he says that the first one is the mind of compassion, the second is non-dual awareness, and the third is bodhicitta. I couldn’t tell from your brief explanation what the difference was, if any, between compassion and bodhicitta. And then, where the text describes bodhisattvas as supe-

rior to shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, you explained that until they reach the seventh bhumi, their superiority is based on their greater merit, after which it is based on their greater wisdom. How do you reconcile this with the notion of the inseparability of compassion and emptiness as the essence of the bodhisattva path?

Rinpoche: The compassion which wants to free all beings from suffering is the cause of bodhicitta. Compassion is something that one can experience even before one becomes a mahayana practitioner. What determines becoming a mahayana practitioner is giving rise to the mind of bodhicitta, which is the desire to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. That is the difference. When we see the suffering of sentient beings, and the wish for them to be free from all their suffering arises, that is compassion. When we actually aspire to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, in order to be able to liberate them from their suffering, that is bodhicitta. With regard to the second question—if it is the case that compassion and wisdom are inseparable on the bodhisattva path, then why is it that the first-bhumi bodhisattvas because of their merit and their compassion outshine the shravaka and arhats, but it is not until the seventh bhumi that they are able to outshine them with their wisdom?—the way it is explained here is that this is in essence a great praise of the arhat’s realization of selflessness. Since their realization of the selflessness of the individual is so great, it is comparable to the bodhisattva’s realization of emptiness on the seventh bhumi. The arhat’s realization of selflessness completely wipes out all of their mental afflictions,* which does not occur for the bodhisattva until the seventh bhumi.

***Editor’s note:** but not all of their cognitive obscurations.

Merely taking the refuge vow is not enough. You also have to practice in accordance with the vow

Question: The text states that when one becomes a bodhisattva, all the paths to the lower realms are sealed off. And Rinpoche further explained that the commentary says that when you reach the level of patience on the path of junction, which is the path that leads to the first ground of the bodhisattva, then the conditions for being reborn in the lower realms do not assemble, and that subsequently, when you reach this level of realization on the first bhumi, then the seed of being reborn in the lower realms is also destroyed. But it is stated in the eighth chapter of *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* as one of the eight benefits of going for refuge that merely going for refuge prevents rebirth in the lower realms again. What does this latter statement mean in light of the explanation you have just given?

Rinpoche: If you take the refuge vow and practice properly in accordance with it, then you will not be reborn in the lower realms. Merely taking the refuge vow is not enough. You also have to practice in accordance with the vow. When you go for refuge in the dharma, then one of the things you vow is to give up harming other beings, and if you never harm another being then you will not be reborn in the lower realms. Also when you go for refuge in the dharma, you vow to listen, reflect, and meditate on the dharma well, and if you do that, you will not be born in the lower realms.

We should know that, though bodhisattvas are not constrained by their karma to be reborn in the lower realms, out of compassion they often willingly take rebirth in the lower realms to be of benefit to others. When the Buddha was not yet a buddha, but was a bodhisattva practicing the bodhisattva path, he was born as a turtle, as a fish, as a rabbit, and as a special kind of deer called a rooroo.** In order to benefit beings,

****Editor’s note:** The Buddha is said to have related the stories of some 500 of his previous lives as a bodhisattva, which are said to be contained in the *Jataka Tales*.

bodhisattvas take birth as many different kinds of animals. Bodhisattvas need to be willing to take birth in the hells, as hungry ghosts, and as animals to benefit others, and there are many stories of bodhisattvas doing so just to be of benefit to a single sentient being. There are actually prayers to take birth in the lower realms that go something like, “In order to benefit other beings, may I be born as a fish, as a deer, as a beggar in a city.” So that is how we have to pray. Any other questions?

Question: Rinpoche, is it sometimes more compassionate not to give if by giving we encourage the recipient to be lazy or dependent on us?

Rinpoche: It is better to give, actually. For example, if we see poor people who are hungry or thirsty, then our concern should be for the alleviation of their hunger or thirst; we should not be thinking about any sort of consequence other than just alleviating their hunger and thirst.

At the same time, we should make aspiration prayers that this act of generosity will be the cause of their proceeding on the path to enlightenment. In the text called *The Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras*, the *Mahayanasutralankara*, there are listed the characteristics of generosity as practiced by bodhisattvas. First the generosity of bodhisattvas causes the opposite of generosity to decrease, the opposite of generosity being avarice and miserliness. Second, the generosity of bodhisattvas is embraced by non-conceptual primordial wisdom. Third, it fulfills the wishes of beings, both their temporary and their ultimate ones and makes them happy. And finally, it causes beings to be ripened in one of the three ways, either along the path of the arhats as shravakas or solitary sages, or on the bodhisattva path leading to buddhahood. The

bodhisattvas’ practice of generosity has these four characteristics.

We can distinguish three kinds of generosity: the generosity of bodhisattvas, the generosity of ordinary individuals on the path, and the generosity of ordinary individuals who are not on the path of dharma. So for example, the Buddha, when he was a bodhisattva, was once born as a sea tortoise and was attacked by 80,000 bugs, who sucked out his blood. At the time he made an aspiration prayer, and later, after he had become enlightened as the Buddha, he taught the dharma to these same 80,000 bugs, who had been reborn as 80,000 worldly deities who had come to listen to his teachings. In another of his lives as a bodhisattva, he was born as a prince and gave his body to five tiger cubs to eat. Those tiger cubs were reborn as the first five students of the Buddha because at the time of his generosity he made aspiration prayers that his generosity would cause them to proceed on the path to enlightenment. Ordinary beings do not do that. When ordinary people who are not on the path give they do not make such noble aspiration prayers. This is the distinguishing feature of generosity as it is practiced on the path.

What is not appropriate is to give things which are harmful to others, like poison or weapons. It is not appropriate to give those things because they are harmful to others. But if you can give in a way that pacifies people’s suffering, that alleviates their thirst and hunger, and so forth, and that does not harm others, then it is good to give. And at the same time, we should make aspiration prayers in the following way. We should think, “Now I’m giving materially. I pray that in the future I can give this person the dharma that allows them to be liberated from the suffering of samsara.”

So now we should meditate on compassion—

It is better to give, actually. For example, if we see poor people who are hungry or thirsty, then our concern should be for the alleviation of their hunger or thirst

on compassion that focuses on sentient beings, on compassion that focuses on the quality of sentient beings, and on compassion that is without reference. “First thinking ‘me,’ they fixate on ‘self.’ Then thinking, ‘This is mine,’ attachment to things develops. Beings are powerless, like a rambling water mill—I bow to compassion for these wanderers. Beings are like the moon on the surface of rippling water—they move and are empty of any self nature.” [Students meditate, and Rinpoche and students recite dedication prayers.]

Now let’s sing the prayer for all sentient beings with whom we have good and bad connections. There are those with whom we have good

connections, those with whom we have bad connections, and those with whom the connections are changing from one to the other so that we have both good and bad connections.

*All you sentient beings I have a good or bad connection with
As soon as you have left this confused dimension
May you be born in the west in Sukhavati
And once you’re born there, complete the bhumis
and the paths*

[Students sing.]

Rinpoche: Goodnight. Sarva Mangalam!



Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way

The Second Mind Generation: The Stainless

Let us begin with the *Song of Meaningful Connections*. [Students sing. See page 12.]

Before listening to the teachings, please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, aspiring for the benefit of all sentient beings, who are as limitless in number as the sky is vast in extent, to attain the state of complete and perfect buddhahood. In order to do that, we must listen to, reflect upon, and meditate upon the teachings of the genuine dharma with all of the enthusiasm we can muster in our hearts. This is the precious attitude of bodhicitta. Please give rise to it and listen.

Tonight Rinpoche will explain the second mind generation, meaning the second generation of the mind of bodhicitta, which is the second chapter in this text. It is connected with the second of the ten paramitas or transcendent perfections, the paramita of discipline, and is the principal practice of the bodhisattva on the second bodhisattva bhumi. The first verse reads:

**Because the bodhisattvas' discipline has such excellent qualities,
They abandon the stains of faulty discipline even in their dreams.**



**Since their movements of body, speech and mind are pure,
They gather the ten types of virtue on the path of the genuine ones. (1)**

The commentary reads: "For those who have reached the second ground, the second bodhisattva bhumi, their discipline is excellent and their qualities are completely pure. Therefore, not only when they are awake, but even in their dreams, they give up all the stains of faulty discipline." They do

not commit any transgression of their vows or any transgression of their discipline, even in their dreams. "Since their conduct of body, speech, and mind—the movement of their body, speech, and mind—is free of even the slightest flaw or most subtle transgression, it is pure. Therefore, they gather the ten types of virtue, including the seven of body and speech, which are considered to be karma." There are seven types of conduct of body and speech that one must abandon. These are called karmic activities, and then there are three activities of mind, which are considered to be the motivations for these activities. They are motivational in nature because they are mental activities. And so,

adding these together, you get ten. Bodhisattvas on the second ground gather those on the path of the genuine ones.

The quality of discipline in the great vehicle of the mahayana is that it is conduct motivated by loving kindness, love for others. With this motivation of love, one conducts oneself in a way that is of benefit to others; that is one's discipline. Bodhisattvas on this bhumi conduct themselves in this way even in their dreams, and there is no degeneration from that.

Next, in the second verse, comes a presentation of how it is that the transcendent perfection or the paramita of discipline is the one that comes to the fore on this particular bodhisattva ground:

**These ten types of virtue have been practiced before,
But here they are superior because they have become so pure.
Like an autumn moon, the bodhisattvas are always pure,
Beautified by their serenity and radiance. (2)**

And the commentary reads: "This path of virtue, which is comprised first of the three positive motivations of mind and then the seven positive activities of body and speech, making ten, has been practiced before. These ten virtues were present and practiced by the bodhisattvas on the first ground, but here they are superior. They outshine what the bodhisattvas had practiced before in an incredible way because they have become so pure, so excellent, and glorious." The example that demonstrates this is the autumn moon, a harvest moon in the sky that is completely free of clouds. Like that, the bodhisattva's discipline is always completely pure and is endowed with two qualities that are

compared to the way that the light of this moon is said to cool the heat. The light of a pure autumn moon is very soothing and cooling, and like that, the bodhisattvas on this ground have the serenity of their sense doors' being bound by their discipline and the radiance of a beautiful white light. These two make the bodhisattvas quite beautiful.

**But if they thought their pure discipline had an inherent nature,
Their discipline would not be pure at all.
Therefore, they are at all times completely free
Of dualistic mind's movement towards the three spheres. (3)**

The commentary reads: "If it were the case that the bodhisattvas had incredibly pure conduct of their pratimoksha vows, the vows of individual liberation, and yet were arrogant in the sense that they conceptualized themselves as having pure discipline—if they thought, 'Wow, I keep my discipline very well'—then they would

be taking their discipline to be truly existent, to have an inherent nature. If that were the case, then their discipline would not be pure at all. Therefore, bodhisattvas on this ground do not conceptualize either the flawed conduct which they are abandoning, the antidote they use to give it up, or the person who is giving it up. They do not conceptualize any of these three to be real. They are free of the movements of dualistic mind, which perceives some things to be existent and other things to be non-existent. They are completely free of the movements of dualistic mind towards these three spheres."

To put this in the form of a logical reasoning, we would say, "Given the individual who has pure conduct of their

pratimoksha vows, the vows of individual libera-

With this motivation of love, one conducts oneself in a way that is of benefit to others. Bodhisattvas on this bhumi conduct themselves in this way even in their dreams

tion, but takes their conduct to be real, their discipline is not pure at all, because they believe that their conduct has an inherently existent nature.” The discipline of the bodhisattva on the second ground is completely pure because they do not conceive any of the three spheres to be real. In short, so long as a person believes that the three spheres related to discipline are real, their discipline will never be pure. But when the individual is free of attachment to these three spheres as being real, then their discipline is pure.

When one has attachment to the three spheres of discipline as being real, then that is like discipline conducted in a dream when we do not know that we are dreaming. But when one is free from attachment to these three spheres as being real, that is like the conduct of discipline in a dream when one knows that it is just a dream. Thus, if one wants to have a pure practice of the transcendent perfection of discipline, one must also realize emptiness.

**Generosity can result in wealth gained in the lower realms
When an individual has lost their legs of discipline.
Once the wealth’s principal and interest are completely spent,
Material enjoyments will not come again. (4)**

The material enjoyment that is the result of the practice of generosity in previous lives can come to fruition in the lower realms if the individual had lost the legs of discipline at the same time the individual was practicing generosity. Discipline is said to be like legs, because discipline is what allows you to progress to the higher realms. If you do not have those legs, you fall into the lower realms, where you can experience life as, for instance, a very wealthy naga, a very wealthy sea serpent, or as other kinds of beings in the lower realms who have material enjoyments. The problem with that is that, when

Discipline is said to be like legs, because discipline is what allows you to progress to the higher realms

you are born in the lower realms, you are naturally quite stupid in that state, and so you do not practice generosity again and as a consequence, do not accumulate the causes of having material enjoyments in the future. The example given here is that of money. When you have money, once you spend all the interest and all the principal, there is nothing left to produce anything more. Therefore, material enjoyments do not come again, because there is no cause for them to be reproduced. You have exhausted

all of your profit from before and there is nothing left to replace it. So this verse teaches the disadvantage of having generosity without the right conduct of discipline.

The fifth verse reads:

**If when independent and enjoying favorable circumstances,
One does not protect oneself from falling into the lower realms,
Once one has fallen into the abyss and has no power to escape,
What will be able to lift one up and out of that?
(5)**

The example here is that of a warrior who has entered a friendly land where he is able to move about freely. If, when one is independent—not needing to rely on anyone else and enjoying favorable circumstances of being born as either a human being or a deity—and one does not protect oneself from the conduct that would cause one to fall into the lower realms, then one becomes like a warrior in an unfriendly land who is bound up and thrown off a mountain. When one falls into the abyss of the lower realms, one loses one’s independence. One comes under the power of others and is powerless to do anything about it. What method will there be to lift one up and out of that? Once you have fallen into the abyss, how can you possibly get out?

Therefore, after giving his advice on generosity,

**The Victor taught about accompanying it with discipline.
When good qualities thrive in discipline's field,
The enjoyment of their fruits is unceasing. (6)**

For the reasons given in the above verses, the Victor, the completely perfect Buddha, after first giving teachings and advice on the practice of generosity, taught that the practice of generosity should be accompanied by the practice of discipline. The reason for this is that when the good qualities that come as a result of practicing generosity thrive in the field of discipline, then the result or the fruits of those practices of generosity, like attaining a precious human body, material enjoyments, and so forth, can be enjoyed in an ever increasing and uninterrupted way.

The seventh verse reads:

**For ordinary individuals, those born of the Buddha's speech,
Those set on solitary enlightenment,
And heirs of the Victor,
The cause of the higher realms and of true excellence is nothing other than discipline. (7)**

For ordinary beings, those who do not see the true nature of reality; for those born of the Buddha's speech, which refers to the shravakas, the hearers; for those set on solitary enlightenment, which refers to the solitary sages, the pratyekabuddhas; and for the heirs of the Victors, which refers to the bodhisattvas, both the cause of the higher realms—being born as a god or a human—and of true excellence—which refers to the various stages of realization on the path—is nothing other than discipline. When it says that it is nothing other than discipline, it means that if there is no discipline, then these results cannot be attained. This statement is not excluding the importance of other causes. It is just saying that if you do not have discipline, you definitely will not attain these results.

Like the ocean with a corpse,

The completely perfect buddha taught that the practice of generosity should be accompanied by the practice of discipline

**And auspiciousness with misfortune,
When great beings come under discipline's power,
They do not abide together with its decay. (8)**

The ocean is said to be inhabited by nagas. Nagas are sea serpents and are incredibly clean creatures, which is why, if a corpse ever falls into the ocean, it always washes up on the shore. The nagas will not allow it to stay in the ocean.

Similarly, when you have auspicious circumstances, you will not have the opposite of that at the same time. Auspiciousness and misfortune do not coexist. Similarly, when great beings—referring here to those who have reached the second bodhisattva ground—come under the power of discipline, they do not abide together with the decay of that discipline. Here the commentary says that this means that those around them, their retinue and friends, will also have pure discipline.

They will not be together with

those who do not have pure discipline.

The ninth verse teaches the different kinds of discipline:

**If there be any focus on these three—
The one who abandons, the abandoned act, and
the one with regard to whom it is abandoned—
Such discipline is explained to be a worldly
transcendent perfection.
Discipline empty of attachment to these three has
gone beyond the world. (9)**

Finally:

**Free from stains, *The Stainless*, the bodhisattvas
arising from the moon
Are not of the world, yet are the world's glory.
Like the light of the moon in autumn
They assuage the torment in the minds of beings.
(10)**

Bodhisattvas, the heirs of the victors, arising from the moon of the second ground, even though they are not included among those who are still stuck in worldly existence, are the glory

of worldly existence.* Since they are free of the stains of faulty discipline, this second ground is called *The Stainless*. Just like the soothing light of the harvest moon, bodhisattvas on this ground assuage the torment of faulty discipline that exists in the minds of wandering sentient beings. It is not taught that these bodhisattvas have brought the practice of discipline to its highest degree; they have not completely perfected it. But it does become their foremost or most important practice on this ground.

The summarizing line states that this completes the second mind generation from the text called *Entrance to the Middle Way*. So let us recite this section together. [Students recite]

Now are there any questions?

Question: Can Rinpoche tell us in some detail about the virtues?

Rinpoche: The ten virtues are the three positive activities of body, the four positive activities of speech, and the three positive activities of the mind. Is that okay?

Question: What are they?

Rinpoche: There are three virtuous activities of body and four of speech, which consist of giving up the three unvirtuous activities of body and the four unvirtuous activities of speech and practicing their opposites. With respect to body, first you give up killing others and engage in the activity of protecting lives. Then you give up stealing and engage in the activity of giving to sentient beings. Instead of taking things from them you give them things. And third you give up improper sexual activity and protect proper sexual conduct from degenerating.

***Editor's note:** Meaning that because they are in the world but not of the world, they are the glory of the world.

Since they are free of the stains of faulty discipline, this second ground is called *The Stainless*

With respect to speech, first you give up lying and speak honestly, telling the truth. Second, you give up speech that is divisive, that causes people to become enemies with each other, and speak in a way that brings people together. Third, you give up harsh speech towards others and adopt a pleasant way of speaking, a soft way of speaking that makes people happy. Finally, you give up gossiping and engaging in meaningless chatter—which distracts others from listening, reflecting, and meditating on the dharma—and adopt speech that encourages them to engage in dharma practices, such as recitation of mantras, and so forth.

With respect to mind, first you give up covetousness, reduce attachment, and develop contentment. Second, you give up maliciousness and adopt an attitude of loving kindness. Third, you abandon wrong views concerning cause and effect, the truth of cessation and the path, and the three jewels and abide in the authentic or correct view.

The seven types of conduct of body and speech are considered to be karma, and the three of mind are the motivation with which you act.

There are extensive explanations of the ten unvirtuous actions and the ten virtuous actions in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* and in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, and a briefer description in the *Torch of Certainty*.

Question: In the third verse it mentions the three spheres. What are they?

Rinpoche: The three spheres, with regard to the practice of discipline, are, first, the person, the self who is practicing the discipline. The second sphere is the way in which you conduct yourself, the discipline or conduct itself, and the third is the one with regard to whom you are practicing such conduct or discipline. If there is attachment to these three as being real, then it

is still a worldly practice. If there is no attachment to these as being real, then you have transcended the world. Connected with generosity, the three spheres would be the one who is giving, the one to whom you give, and the act of generosity itself.

Question: I would appreciate a further explanation of the ninth verse, particularly the part, “the one who abandons, the act of abandoning, and the one with regard to whom it is abandoned.”

Rinpoche: If we look at the discipline of not killing, the one who abandons would be the one who abandons the activity of killing. The abandoned act is the killing, and the one with regard to whom it is abandoned is the one you do not kill. So, if there is realization that these three do not really exist, that they are just mere dependently arisen appearances, then that is called a paramita, a transcendent perfection which has gone beyond the mundane. If, however, there is still fixation on these three as being real, when the same activity is practiced, it is a worldly transcendent perfection. Other questions?

Question: Are there still beings who are progressing along these paths, following the mahayana path exclusively, when we have the vajrayana now, and if there are, what does that mean for us? Could you put that into context for us? What causes a being to choose the vajrayana over the mahayana, and what are the results of that choice?

Rinpoche: It is possible to attain these bhūmis by practicing the mahayana path of cultivating loving kindness and compassion, and by meditating on emptiness—doing these two practices together. This approach is summed up in the two practices of relative and ultimate bodhicitta. By practicing ultimate bodhicitta, you gain the

It is explained that it takes a very long time to progress along the mahayana path, but the fact is time does not really exist. There is no such thing as time

realization of the nature of reality, which leads to the attainment of the bodhisattva grounds. The loving kindness and compassion and the desire to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings that serve as your motivation for doing that is relative bodhicitta. If you do not have ultimate bodhicitta, the mind of awakening, you cannot realize the nature of genuine reality, nor can you cleanse your own mind of its confusion. Therefore, we need to practice the stages of meditation that allow us to gain realization.

If you do not have relative bodhicitta, then you will neither want to benefit anyone else nor will you benefit anyone else. Thus you need both ultimate and relative bodhicitta to attain the state of enlightenment; both practices are necessary. In order to progress along the entire mahayana path from the beginning through all of the ten grounds to the level of enlightenment, it is explained variously that it takes either 3 times 10 to the 59th eons, 7 times 10 to the 59th eons, or 37 times 10 to the 59th eons. So it takes quite a long time.

Question: How long is an eon?

Rinpoche: An eon is the period of time it takes for a universe to come into being and then disintegrate again. But the point is that at the same time one is progressing on this path, one has great loving kindness and compassion for others and is doing wonderful things to benefit others. It is explained that it takes a very long time to progress along the mahayana path [in a mahayana way without the benefit of vajrayana], but the fact is time does not really exist; it is not real. There is no such thing as time. In the explanation of the sixteen emptinesses,* this is

***Editor’s note:** See *Shenpen Ösel, Volume 3, Number 1*, pages 55-62, for commentary on the twenty emptinesses, which includes commentary on the sixteen emptinesses.

called the emptiness of that which is imperceivable, the emptiness of the three times. It was to assuage people's discouragement at thinking that it would take such a long time as 3 times 10 to the 59th eons to attain enlightenment that the emptiness of time was taught.

When people realize that there is really no such thing as time anyway, they do not get discouraged. In fact, a short period of time and a long period of time are fundamentally the same. They are just like time in a dream. In a dream it does not matter if you think it is a long time or a short time; there is really no difference at all between them. None of these conceptual notions have any reality. The Buddha said that an eon and an instant are of the nature of equality. A particle and a planet are of the nature of equality. If you think of a dream, you can understand how this is true. The tiniest particle of dust and the biggest mountain that appear to you in a dream are fundamentally the same. Whether it is your finger or the king of all mountains, Mount Sumeru, does not matter; there is really no difference in their size when they appear in dreams, because both are just dependently arisen mere appearances.

Bodhisattva, which is the name given to a mahayana practitioner, whether man or woman, is a heroic name. Part of the term in Tibetan is *pawo*, which means a warrior or hero, someone who is brave. Their bravery consists of three types of fearlessness. Bodhisattvas are not discouraged by the fact that the beings whom they vow to liberate are limitless in number. They are not discouraged by the fact that it will take them an incredibly long time to attain enlightenment. And they are also not afraid to give away their head and their limbs, if that is what they need to do to benefit others. They have these three types of fearlessness.

The vajrayana practices of the generation and

completion stages are very profound methods that can cause one to advance on this path quickly. In fact, if one has practiced on the path in previous lifetimes and is of very sharp faculties, like Milarepa, then one can attain buddhahood in a single life.

In short, the tradition of the mahayana explains that samsara is just a mistake. It is a mere error in perception, and if you ask what enlightenment is, it is just the elimination of that mistake. Nothing more; that is all. Does that answer the second part of your question?

Mahayana explains that samsara is just a mistake. It is a mere error in perception, and if you ask what enlightenment is, it is just the elimination of that mistake

Question: What happens when you clear away this mistaken perception?

Rinpoche: When you clear away this mistake, what appears is the infinite expanse of purity.

Question: Does the infinite expanse appear to be permanent in its essence?

Translator: When people who do not know how to speak Tibetan [very well] ask questions, then they can confuse the Tibetan terms for purity and permanence, which, coming from an

English speaking tongue, sound quite the same in Tibetan. So we got a little bit of unexpected explanation because I did not pronounce the Tibetan for permanence properly. Instead of asking Rinpoche about permanence, I asked him about the purity aspect of this infinite expanse of purity.

Rinpoche: Here* to say that it is an expanse of purity means that there is nothing impure. As in a dream, you can dream of seeing different kinds of things which look very dirty and repulsive, but none of these things exist, because it is

***Editor's note:** In the context of the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, to which the commentaries of Chandrakirti and Nagarjuna pertain.

just a dream. From the perspective that there is no impurity it is called the infinite expanse of purity.

As to the second aspect of the question, whether or not what is left when one clears away all mistaken perception is permanent in essence, the answer is that it transcends both permanence and impermanence. Sometimes it might be explained with the word permanent, but what this means is not the permanence that is the opposite of impermanence; it is the permanence which transcends both concepts of impermanence and permanence. In the tradition of the mahayana it is explained that clean and unclean, permanent and impermanent, and so forth exist only in dependence upon each other. You can only have one if you have the other. Therefore, they are just mere appearances that are dependently arisen; they have no inherent existence. The nature of all of them is undifferentiated appearance/emptiness. For example, you could have a dream of a big rock mountain and think, "Wow this is something very stable and permanent," and in dependence upon that you could have a notion of something else being impermanent. But we have to understand also that our notion of permanence in the first place depends upon first having a notion of something impermanent. You cannot have one without the other. But since it is just a dream, neither of them is real; they are just mere appearance.

Question: What is a shravaka, and is there a path to being a shravaka? And do they not have some qualities of being of the mahayana in that they listen to the dharma and explain it to others?

Rinpoche: There are shravakas, those who listen and hear, and according to the description of them they have very little compassion, certainly less compassion than mahayana practitioners. They have great disgust for and renuncia-

Arhat means destroyer of the enemy. Here the enemy is your mental afflictions, your kleshas

tion of samsara. Of the two kinds of selflessness, they believe that there is no self in the individual, but they do not believe in the selflessness of phenomena. So they practice according to the selflessness of the individual alone, and follow this path exclusively. In places like Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka, they practice only the shravaka path without accepting or practicing the mahayana or the vajrayana teachings. They do not believe in the mahayana, and do not practice it.

Question: What is an arhat?

Translator: An arhat is the highest level of realization attained by both pratyekabuddhas and shravakas.

Rinpoche: Arhat, as it was translated into Tibetan, literally means "destroyer of the enemy." Here the enemy is your mental afflictions, your kleshas. The way you destroy that enemy is by realizing selflessness, because when you realize that there is no self, then there is nobody to have any mental afflictions. When you first attain that state, you are still alive, so you are called an arhat with remainder, because you still have a body. When you die, you are called an arhat without remainder. When that happens, it is described as being like a candle flame that just goes out, or water that completely evaporates. There is no more rebirth in samsara. There is just the expanse of peace. There is no more rebirth, because there is nothing left. That is how they describe it.

The Tibetan tradition is to practice the paths of the shravakas, of the mahayana, and of the vajrayana altogether. In Tibetan monasteries the conduct is the conduct of the shravakayana, what the monks and nuns study is the mahayana, and what they practice is the vajrayana. It is like that.

Question: Is there an eternal soul, and if there

is not, how do we explain rebirth and karma?

Rinpoche: In Buddhism there is no such thing as a self or a soul, whatever you want to call it. That which is pointed to by all of these terms that imply a truly existent, permanent self-entity does not really exist. What there is is a mere appearance of a self, an illusory being, just like the self that appears in a dream. So when we talk about going from past lives to future lives, it is this dream-like self, this mere appearance of a self, that is held to go from one life to the next. But really there is no self at all. Since actually there is no self or soul, then there is no permanent self or soul either. This recognition prevents one from falling into the extreme of permanence or realism. But since no one denies the mere appearance of a self, just as you cannot deny the appearance of a self in a dream, then that prevents one from falling into the extreme of nihilism or annihilation. We dream, and in dreams we do all kinds of different things, but really there is nothing happening. There are no actions being performed. When we dream and we do not know that we are dreaming, then it appears that this activity is real. When we know that we are dreaming, we see that the dream is just a mere appearance, and we see that the ultimate nature of the dream is that there is no self and that there is no activity. The nature of reality transcends the existence of self, phenomena, and activity in the same way. This is a good way to think about it.

Another way to understand these three levels of thinking about it is that if you dream and you do not know you are dreaming, then that is like the one that thinks things are real. If you dream and you know you are dreaming, then that is like understanding that this reality is just a mere appearance; there is nothing more to it than that. And then there is the stage of

The first bodhisattva ground is called the path of seeing. The second through the tenth grounds are called the path of meditation

waking up in the morning and knowing that there is really no difference between knowing you are dreaming and not knowing you are dreaming. Where is this person who did not know they were dreaming? Where is the person in the dream who knew they were dreaming? There is really no difference, and that describes the nature of ultimate reality. So it is like that.

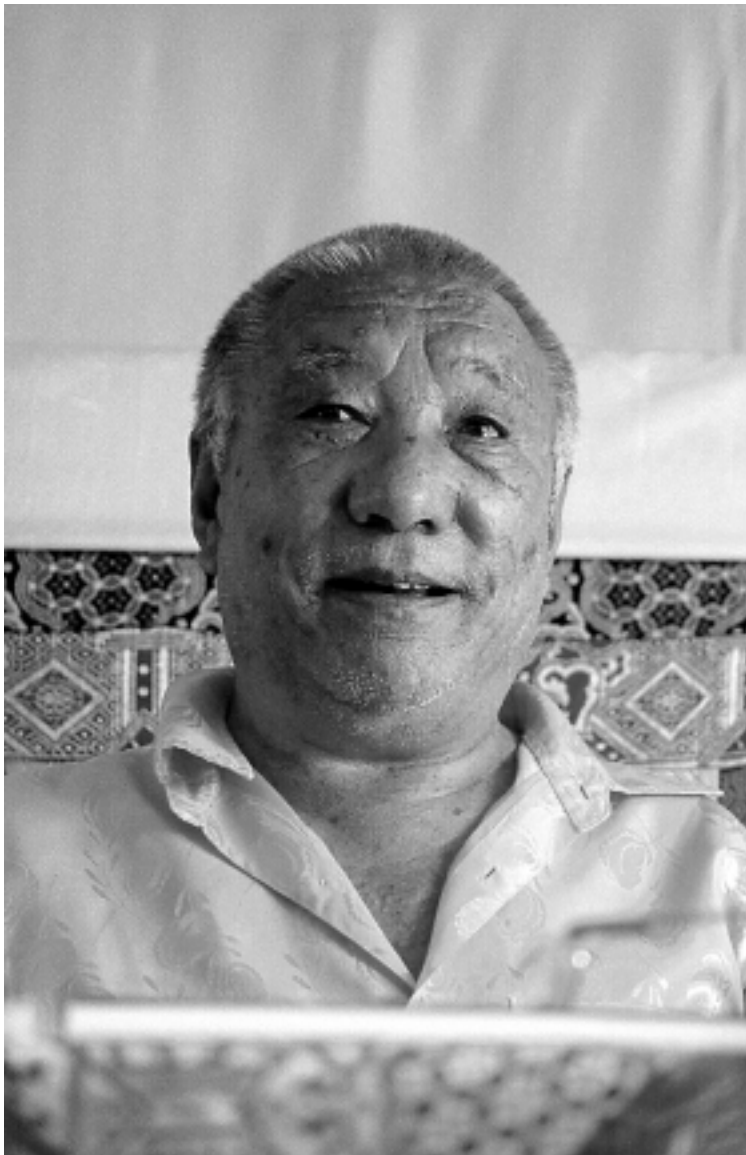
Question: Can Rinpoche talk a little bit or explain a little bit about the idea of the second mind generation? What does that really mean? Is that just another name for the second bhumi?

Rinpoche: The second mind generation and the second bhumi mean the same thing. Mind generation is a condensed way of saying generating the mind of bodhicitta. Generally you could say that there are many different ways to generate the mind of bodhicitta, which also includes relative bodhicitta. But here we are not talking about relative bodhicitta, because we are talking about beings who have reached the noble grounds. On each successive ground, as bodhisattvas progress in development through the ten bodhisattva grounds, they give rise to ultimate bodhicitta in a progressively more subtle and profound way.

These ten bodhisattva grounds or bhumis are stages in the realization of the genuine nature of reality. The first bodhisattva ground is called the path of seeing because you see something that you never saw before, namely emptiness. The second through the tenth grounds are called the path of meditation, on which you become accustomed to what you have seen and your realization of it grows. Then at the end of the tenth bhumi you reach the ground of enlightenment. Now we will recite the verses one more time and then meditate. [Students recite the verses and meditate. Rinpoche and the students dedicate the merit.]

Good night. 

Chandrakirti's
Entrance to the Middle Way
**The Third Mind
Generation:
The Luminous**



Sarva Mangalam! Let us sing *The Song of Meaningful Connections*. [Students sing. See page 12.]

Before listening to the teachings, please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, which means that for the benefit of all sentient beings who are as limitless in number as the sky is vast in its extent, please aspire to attain the state of enlightenment, which abides neither in existence nor in peace. In order to do that we must listen to, reflect upon, and meditate on the teachings of the genuine dharma with all of the enthusiasm we can muster in our hearts. This is the precious attitude of bodhicitta; please give rise to it and listen.

Tonight we will look at the third bodhisattva ground, *The Luminous*. There are three sections to the explanation of this ground. The first looks at the etymology of the name for this particular ground, which is based on the qualities of this ground. Then there is an explanation of the qualities themselves that distinguish this ground. And finally, through a praise of these qualities, there is the conclusion.

The first verse reads:

**Here the kindling of all objects of knowledge is consumed in a fire
Whose light is the reason this third ground is called *The Luminous*.
At this time, an appearance like the copper sun
Dawns for the heirs of the sugatas. (1)**

Here all objects of knowledge are compared to kindling, and primordial awareness—the wisdom, the mind of the bodhisattvas—is compared to a fire which consumes these objects of knowledge. It is said to burn them up because all objects of knowledge are perceived dualistically, and all dualistic fabrications of something to perceive and a perceiver are completely pacified in the

meditative equipoise of the bodhisattva on this bhumi. Because there is a light which comes from this fire of the bodhisattva's wisdom in meditative equipoise, this third ground is called *The Luminous*. In post-meditation, the stage of subsequent attainment of the bodhisattva on the third ground, there is an appearance like the copper light of the sun before it rises. This is described in Tibetan with an experiential word, *marlamewa*, which refers to the light in the sky of a beautiful sunrise; everything is a beautiful copper color. That is how the bodhisattvas on this ground experience their post-meditation.

The next section is an explanation of the qualities of the ground itself, and has two parts. The first is an explanation of how the practice of the perfection of patience becomes superior here, how it comes to the fore. And then there is an explanation of the other good qualities that come on this ground. First, in the description of patience, there is a description of how patience itself becomes superior. Then there is a description of how patience is meditated upon, and finally, there is a description of the different types of patience.

As to the description of how patience becomes superior, the second verse reads:

**Even if someone becomes enraged with a bodhisattva, who is not an appropriate object of anger,
And cuts the flesh and bone from their body
Ounce by ounce over a long period of time,
The bodhisattva's patience with the one who is cutting grows even greater. (2)**

The commentary reads: "If it should happen that even though there is no good reason why anybody should get angry at this bodhisattva on the third ground, this bodhisattva who is not an appropriate object of anger, if some angry person wants to fight with them and cuts the

bodhisattva's flesh down deep to the bones in their body, cutting off parts of their body, and, in order to make it really hurt, cutting them off piece by piece and ounce by ounce in different sections, slowly over a long period of time, even if that should happen, since the bodhisattva has such great patience, their patience with the one who is cutting them into little pieces will grow even greater."

Then there is a description of the way in which the bodhisattvas cultivate and meditate on patience. This has two parts. The first is how they meditate from the perspective of the genuine nature of reality, and the second is how they meditate on it from the perspective of relative reality, from the perspective of superficial appearances or conventional reality. From the perspective of ultimate or genuine reality, the third verse reads:

**For the bodhisattvas who see selflessness,
The flesh cut off of them, the one who is cutting,
the length of time cut, and the manner in which
it is done—
All these phenomena they see are like reflections,
And for this reason as well they are patient. (3)**

The commentary reads: "And not only this, which refers to what just came before, but the bodhisattvas who see selflessness see that the flesh that is cut off them, the person who is cutting them, the length of time during which it is being cut, and the way in which the person is cutting them, their style, all of these phenomena, the bodhisattvas see are just like reflections and nothing more than that. And it is for this reason as well that the bodhisattvas are able to be so incredibly patient."

From the perspective of relative truth, there are three main subdivisions. The first is that one meditates on patience after having thought

In post-meditation, the state of subsequent attainment of the bodhisattva on the third ground, there is an appearance like the copper light of the sun before it rises

about the faults of anger, about what is wrong with anger. The second is to meditate on patience after thinking about the good qualities or the benefits that patience brings. These are the two main points, and the third section, which is a concluding verse, brings these two ideas together, the faults of anger and the good qualities of patience.

Concerning the faults of anger, there are four different parts. The first is that anger is illogical because it brings no benefit. The second is that anger is illogical because it turns something good into something bad. The third is that one thinks about what an incredibly powerful negative state of mind anger is. And finally, one thinks of the great variety of faults that come about due to anger. For each of these reasons one meditates on patience. Anger brings no benefits, turns something good into something bad, is an incredibly powerful state of negativity, and has many flaws. The fourth verse, stating that anger brings no benefit, reads:

**Once the harm is done, if one
becomes angry,
Does that anger reverse what has
happened?
Therefore, anger certainly brings
no benefit here,
And will be of detriment in future
lives as well. (4)**

The commentary reads: “If someone does one harm, and then one gets angry at the person who has committed this harm, then the question is, ‘Does that anger change anything? Does it reverse what has already happened?’” This is a rhetorical question, because the text goes on to say, “Therefore, getting angry definitely brings no benefit; it does not accomplish anything and does cause one suffering, because anger is not a very pleasant state to be in. It does not bring any benefit here in this life, and also after death, in future lives, it will bring suffering, because the result of being angry is the experience of unpleasant karma in

the future.”

The second way to meditate on patience is to think about how anger is illogical because when you get angry, it turns something good into something bad. This is explained in the fifth verse, which reads:

**The harm one experiences is said to be the very
thing
That exhausts whatever wrong deeds one per-
formed in the past.
So why would the bodhisattva, through anger and
harming another,
Again plant the seeds for future suffering to be
endured? (5)**

And the commentary reads: “When somebody harms us now, that is the result of some negative action that we did to them in the past. So we are just getting that harm in return.

Anger brings no
benefits, turns
something good
into something
bad, is an
incredibly
powerful state of
negativity, and
has many flaws

And when we experience that harm in return, then that eliminates the debt; it exhausts the negative deeds we performed in the past. It is the harm we experience that causes this exhaustion of negative deeds. So if that is the case, then why would bodhisattvas get angry at the person who is doing them harm? Why would they bring suffering to themselves through further anger? When you get angry, you only plant again the seeds for future suffering. So why would you turn something good, which is the exhaustion of negative

deeds, into something bad, which would be the seed of experiencing suffering in the future? It makes no sense, which is why bodhisattvas do not get angry, but instead practice patience.”

The sixth verse explains how bodhisattvas meditate on patience, contemplating what an incredibly powerful negativity anger is:

**Since getting angry with bodhisattvas
Instantly destroys all the virtue
That generosity and discipline have accumulated
over a hundred eons,**

There is no greater negativity than impatience.
(6)

So the commentary here reads: “If one gets angry at a bodhisattva—bodhisattvas who have only great loving kindness and compassion—then in an instant this anger destroys all the virtue, generosity, right conduct or discipline that one has accumulated over the course of a hundred eons. Therefore, there is no more powerful, no stronger or greater negativity than impatience.” To explain this further it says, “If it is a bodhisattva who gets angry at a bodhisattva—if they are equal bodhisattvas—then one instant of anger destroys a hundred eons [of accumulated merit and virtue,] but if it is an ordinary person who gets angry at a bodhisattva, then it destroys a thousand eons’ worth.” And if a bodhisattva gets angry at a bodhisattva in a way that does not even manifest as actions of body and speech, but just as a mental state, then for however many instances of angry mind they have, for that many kalpas do they have to continue to wear their armor [of patience]. For that many kalpas do they have to continue to practice. For example, if the bodhisattva is on the great path of accumulation, on the highest level of the first of the five paths leading to buddhahood, and they are ready to progress to the path of junction, but they get angry at a bodhisattva who has already received a prophecy of enlightenment,* then for as many instances as they had that angry mind, for that many eons will they not be able to progress to the next path, the path of junction. For that many eons they will have to continue training where they are.** The reason that this is so is

***Editor’s note:** It is taught that when a bodhisattva attains the eighth bodhisattva ground—after which they experience no further kleshas and therefore no longer create karma—they receive a prophecy directly from the buddhas or from their yidam predicting precisely when they will attain buddhahood and bestowing on them a new name.

If a bodhisattva gets angry at a bodhisattva, then one instance of anger destroys a hundred eons of accumulated merit and virtue

that the bodhisattva’s vow is to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Getting angry with somebody is contradictory to that vow, [and so it has grave consequences.]

The first three lines of the seventh verse explains how bodhisattvas meditate on patience, contemplating the many flaws of impatience:

**It makes one ugly, brings one close to those not genuine,
And robs one of the ability to discriminate right from wrong.
Impatience quickly hurls one into the lower realms— (7abc)**

The first fault of anger mentioned here is that it makes one look ugly. You may be a very beautiful looking person, but anger instantly makes your face into something repulsive. Anger also leads you into the company of those who are not genuine beings. This could also be read to mean that it causes you to be reborn as someone who is not a genuine being.*** Anger also robs one of the ability to discriminate right from wrong. It agitates the mind, makes us blind, covering over our intelligence or prajna. Thus, we no longer make good decisions. These flaws of anger affect us in this life, but anger and impatience can also affect us in our next life, because they can quickly hurl us into the lower realms. So, thinking about all of these faults of anger, one meditates on patience.

Having examined the faults of anger, the text

****Editor’s note:** In 1982, when teaching the paramita of patience, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche taught that one instance of anger destroys kalpas and kalpas of accumulated merit, but added that one should also know that one instance of patience in the face of great anger accumulates many kalpas of merit.

*****Editor’s note:** The word genuine is very often now being used to translate the Tibetan word *dampa*, which previously had been translated as holy. Whether genuine is being used here in this sense, or in the ordinary sense of being sincere, straightforward, and non-deceptive is not clear.

in the last line of the seventh verse and in the eighth verse examines the good qualities of patience:

Patience brings out the good qualities opposite to these. (7d)

**Patience makes one beautiful and endears one to the genuine beings.
It brings one skill in knowing what is appropriate and what is not.
Later it brings birth as a human or a god
And exhaustion of negative deeds as well. (8)**

The good qualities that patience brings out, which are the opposites of the faults of anger, are listed in the eighth verse. Patience gives one a beautiful appearance. The practice of patience endears one to the genuine beings. Furthermore, the practice of patience protects one's intelligence from degeneration; in fact one's intelligence will grow stronger, enabling one to know even more clearly what is and is not appropriate to do. A further good consequence of patience is that its practice brings one birth as a god or as a human being in the future, as well as the exhaustion of negative actions and negative mental states such as anger.

The concluding verse of this particular subsection states both the faults of anger and the good qualities of patience:

**Ordinary beings and heirs of the Victor
Should realize the faults of anger and the good qualities of patience,
Abandon impatience, and always quickly rely
On the patience praised by the noble ones. (9)**

The commentary reads that, "Ordinary individuals, meaning those who do not realize the truth, and the spiritual heirs of the Victor, the bodhisattvas who do, should both know the faults of ordinary beings' anger and the good qualities of the patience practiced by bodhisattvas, and knowing that, should abandon impatience and always quickly and closely rely on the patience praised by noble beings."

Next there is a discussion of the different types of patience. Verse ten reads:

**Even though dedicated to the enlightenment of perfect buddhahood,
If it focuses on the three spheres, it is worldly.
When there is no focus, the Buddha taught,
This is a transcendent perfection beyond the world. (10)**

When one practices patience, meaning that one refrains from being angry at the person who does one harm, even if one practices this patience as a means to attain the enlightenment of perfect buddhahood and dedicates the merit arising out of one's practice of patience to that attainment, still, if while practicing patience one focuses on the three spheres as being real, then one's practice is still worldly. However, if there is no such focus on these three spheres as being real, then the Buddha taught that one's practice of the paramita is a transcendent perfection which goes beyond the world. Therefore, it would be better if we did not take these three spheres to be real.

Next is a praise of the other qualities that come on this third ground:

**On this ground the Victor's heirs gain the samadhis and clairvoyances,
Desire and aversion are completely exhausted,
And they are ever able to vanquish
The desire experienced by worldly beings. (11)**

The commentary reads: "On this third ground, *The Luminous*, the heirs of the Victor gain four formless samadhis or states of meditative concentration, the four immeasurables, as well as the five types of clairvoyance." They gain these special meditative and mental abilities, as well as seeing, according to the root verse, that desire and aversion are completely exhausted.* According to the commentary, desire, aversion, and ignorance—which are the three root mental afflictions—are completely exhausted, meaning

***Editor's note:** As translator Ari Goldfield explained, the root text explicitly mentions desire and aversion as completely exhausted; the commentary also mentions ignorance as being exhausted. This is definitely the case—on each bhumi, the bodhisattvas eliminate more and more of the cognitive obscurations as their realization of emptiness gets clearer and clearer. These cognitive obscurations come under the heading of ignorance.

that everything which they give up on this particular ground they give up completely. The reason that they are able to realize these qualities and to give up what they need to give up is that they have the patience which is not afraid of profound emptiness. This particular type of patience is able to bear patiently and without being afraid the profundity of the true nature of reality. Therefore, these bodhisattvas are always able to vanquish the desire experienced by ordinary beings in the desire realm, and in this way they become like Indra* in the sense that they are able to lead beings out of the mud of their desire. Indra is just an example here. It is not particularly clear why he is used, but the main point is that bodhisattvas on this ground are able to lead beings out of the mud of desire and attachment in which they are stuck.

The concluding two verses of this chapter are a common summary of the three paramitas discussed this far in the text and a further particular summary of this third ground. The common summary, contained in verse twelve, reads:

**Generosity and so forth—these three dharmas
The Sugata particularly praised to lay people.
They are also the accumulation of merit
And the causes of the Buddha’s form body. (12)**

The commentary reads: “Generosity and so forth—meaning generosity, discipline, and patience—the Buddha in his teachings particularly praised to lay bodhisattvas. Their practice also generates the accumulation of merit, and at the time of the fruition of buddhahood, these accumulations of merit become the cause of the Buddha’s form kaya, form body.

The thirteenth verse is a particular summary of the third ground:

Because of the
brilliance of their
luminosity, it is as
though the heirs
of the Victor who
have reached the
third ground
abide in the sun

**The heirs of the Victor, abiding in the sun, these
luminous ones,
First perfectly dispel the darkness present in
themselves,
And then fervently yearn to vanquish the dark-
ness in others.
On this ground, though incredibly sharp, they do
not become angry. (13)**

The commentary reads that, because of the brilliance of their luminosity, it is as though the heirs of the Victor who have reached the third ground abide in the sun. Their brilliance first perfectly dispels the darkness of ignorance in their own mind-stream; the darkness, which was the obstacle to their reaching the third ground, is dispelled by their brilliance the moment they take birth on it. Thereafter, they fervently yearn to remove the

darkness in the mind-streams of other beings, which darkness prevents these other beings from reaching the same level of attainment, and through teaching the dharma the luminous bodhisattvas are able to cause them to do so. Since they have been able to eliminate the darkness and the faults that had prevented them from reaching this ground, the faculties of these bodhisattvas are incredibly sharp, like the brilliance of the rays of the sun. Even so, they do not get frustrated with people who are not so sharp. They do not get angry at beings who still have lots of faults, because the bodhisattvas’ mind-streams are oiled by the good qualities of their compassion. They are made soft by the quality of their compassion and because they practice patience.

Next comes the name of the chapter from the text called *Entrance to the Middle Way, The Third Generation of the Mind of Ultimate Bodhicitta*. Now let’s recite the root verses together. [Students recite.]

Now let’s sing *The Anger Cooling Song*. (See page 43.) Milarepa sang this song to Rechungpa

***Editor’s note:** Indra is one of the gods in the Hindu pantheon.

The Anger Cooling Song

(Sung to restrain Rechungpa from attacking the scholar insulting his guru)

Oh jewel that crowns my head, oh lord and guardian of beings,
Kind Marpa, yours the feet at which I bow.
Send your blessing that turns adverse conditions into path.
Rechung, son, please listen just a moment,
keep your head.

Practitioners whose bellies and mouths are full,
When things go against them act like everybody else,
Let their tempers run away, make their own suffering.
To pick a fighting partner is to lose it all for sure.
Son, wait a minute, listen to your lama's words.

The king of dharmic view is like the sky.
Son, train awareness' garuda chick-like wings.
Don't let your garuda youthful wings go weak on you.
If you let your garuda wings go weak on you,
There's a danger you'll fall down in the ravine of narrow mind.
Son, Rechungpa, please listen to your lama's warning words.

The king of dharmic meditation is the sea.
Son, make your little fish of awareness extra strong.
Don't let your little fish's extra strength go weak on you.
If you let your little fish's extra strength go weak on you,
There's a danger it will slip into delusion's net.
Son, Rechungpa, please listen to your lama's warning words.

The king of dharmic conduct is the snow mountain.
Son, make your lion cub of awareness extra strong.
Don't let your lion cub's extra strength go weak on you.
If you let your lion cub's extra strength go weak on you,
There's a danger in the blizzard of eight dharmas it will get lost.
Son, Rechungpa, please listen to your lama's warning words.

The king of dharmic fruit is like a jewel-encrusted isle.
Let your merchant youngster of awareness set up shop.
Don't let your merchant youngster's vigilance go weak on you.
If you let your merchant youngster's vigilance go weak on you,
There's a danger that the jewel of pure being will get lost.
Son, Rechungpa, please listen to your lama's warning words.

Don't let your anger get out of hand, my son.
The first one to be burned will be your own mind-stream.
Don't let your feelings get the upper hand, my son.
But use the remedy, apply the antidote.

Kamalashila, Schloss Wachendorf, Germany, August 23, 1994

when he was about to beat Dharlo. After hearing it, Rechungpa calmed down, so it is a very good song. It gives instructions on how to meditate on patience by remembering the profound view, how to meditate on patience by remembering the profound meditation, how to meditate on patience by remembering the profound conduct, and how to meditate on patience by remembering the profound fruition or result. Having heard the song, Rechungpa thought about the profound view, meditation, conduct, and fruition, and this helped him to practice patience. If you do not meditate on and practice patience, your view, meditation, conduct, and fruition may all be very profound, but they will still fall apart. But if you do meditate on patience, they will get better and better. [Students sing.]

Are there any questions?

Question: In verses 7 and 8, there is a reference to bringing one close to those not genuine. Does that refer to those who have an understanding of the genuine nature of reality?

***Editor's note:** Translators into the English language have for some time struggled with how to translate the Tibetan term *dampa*. Originally it was generally translated as "holy," but because in our daily western experience there was very little objective frame of reference for the term holy, and because the frame of reference that came from the interface with Tibetan Buddhism—the many extraordinary beings who were so direct, down to earth, humorous, unpretentious, and genuine, and yet were able to show one profound dimensions of experience and awareness that one had never seen before and could never have imagined existed before meeting them—because these interfaces had so little to do with the notions of holiness that we had imagined in the absence of genuine examples of it, an effort has been made to find an alternative translation to the term "holy" that would avoid all the theistic overtones of perfect conventional goodness and righteousness and any notions of elevated status that had accreted in our ignorance to the term "holy." One alternative to "holy" is the term genuine. In this regard, Rinpoche's translator Ari Goldfield writes:

"The Tibetan for 'genuine being' is 'skyes bu dam pa.' 'Holy being' is how it used to be translated, which is how Rinpoche picked up on "holy man." But most translators these days avoid the word 'holy,' not only because of its theistic religious connotations, but also because 'genuine' seems more accurate. 'sKyes bu' means person. The adjective 'dam pa' is used in 'don dam bden pa,' frequently translated as 'ultimate truth,' but better translated, I think, as 'genuine reality.' 'Dam pa' is also found in 'yi dam' where, Ponlop Rinpoche says, it means 'close,' as in this case, close to your 'yid' or mind. So it seems there to have the sense of 'genuine' and 'true.' According to the *Great Tibetan Dictionary* (tshig mdzod chen mo) a 'skyes bu dam pa'

Translator: The Tibetan for a genuine being, or as Rinpoche prefers, a holy person, used to be translated as saint.

Rinpoche: Genuine beings are those one will become close to or by whom one will be well regarded. There is some quality of being good here, of having a quality of genuineness. Those who do not have this good quality will regard an angry person as being good. So, if you get angry, you will find yourself attracting the company of those who do not have this quality of goodness or genuineness.*

If you get angry at somebody, then** we can tell that you are not a genuine being. Whether or not someone is a genuine being is not something that we can know directly. We can only know it through inference, through watching what happens. If somebody practices patience very well, even though they are experiencing a lot of harm, that is a sign that they are such a genuine being.

Even worldly good qualities diminish

is a 'pags pa,' meaning, someone who has realized 'don dam bden pa.' In English, this would be: A 'genuine being' is someone who has realized 'genuine reality,' and therefore is genuine and true, undecieving and totally dedicated to helping others to realize the same thing."

However, if one returns to the Old English root of the word "holy," which is *halig*, we find that it is a cognate of the Old English *hal*, meaning whole. Here, one gets back to the notion of whole, to the notion of being undivided in any sense, undivided against oneself in the sense of not engaging in actions of body, speech, and mind that one does not thoroughly believe in, and, more fundamentally, undivided in the sense of not still being subject to dualistic perception and the fundamental samsaric split between a self, to whose falsely imagined self interest we cling, and others, on whom we fixate as being desirable, threatening, and/or irrelevant, and whom we strive to manipulate to fulfill our most current samsaric agenda for personal happiness. If we understand holy as that fundamental non-conceptual absence of dualistic clinging and fixation, not only as it pertains to behavior, but more importantly, as it pertains to the very root of perception, then holy might seem to be quite a good translation for *dampa*. It is, after all, that very absence of dualistic clinging and fixation that makes great beings so totally present, so down to earth, so alive, friendly, humorous, and affectionate, and at the same time makes them the embodiment of primordial, undeluded, transcendent knowing and compassionate skillful means.

****Editor's note:** Bodhisattvas sometimes manifest anger or wrath, as Rinpoche indicates in the question and answer period, because it is either the only way or the most effective way of benefiting a particular student.

through anger. People in the world like to look beautiful, but when they get angry, their beautiful faces turn ugly. Also, when people get angry, their intelligence and common sense go away, and they are no longer able to know what is right to do and what is not right to do.

Question: Could you talk a little more about patience when you are listening to the dharma, patience with your own mind in practice, and patience and fearlessness with regard to emptiness?

Rinpoche: It is possible to be afraid of the profundity of emptiness, so we need to develop the patience that is not afraid of that profundity. If we do, then we will be able to realize the emptiness that is the nature of reality, and then meditating on and practicing patience will be even easier.

If you have this patience which is not afraid of emptiness, then you can also see that the person who is doing us harm is just a mere dependently arisen appearance, that the harm they are doing is just a mere dependently arisen appearance, and that we who are experiencing the harm are just a mere dependently arisen appearance, too. None of these three spheres is real, and realizing this enables us more easily to meditate on and practice patience. If we dream but do not know we are dreaming, we will not be able to practice patience because we will think that the one who is doing us harm, the harm we are experiencing, and we ourselves who are the one experiencing harm are all real. On the other hand, if we dream and we know we are dreaming, then when somebody comes along and treats us badly, we know it is just a dream and, therefore, no big deal. The harm we are experiencing and we ourselves are also just dream appearances. It is very easy to meditate on and to practice patience when you know that it is all just a dream. That is the difference.

It is possible to be afraid of the profundity of emptiness, so we need to develop the patience that is not afraid of that profundity

Question: Can Rinpoche expand on what constitutes a god and when do humans, for instance, become gods?

Rinpoche: The type of god or deity referred to here is not a yidam deity. These are samsaric gods living in samsaric realms. There are gods in the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. Here in particular, Chandrakirti is talking about gods in the desire realm who still like to enjoy material pleasures. One can be reborn in any one of six levels of god realms in the desire realm. But these are samsaric beings, not yidam deities. Of these six types of gods, two of them live on the earth and four live in the clouds in the sky, and they all have a great amount of attachment to material things. They are attached to objects of

pleasure, so they are just like people in this regard, and that is why they are in the desire realm. The bodies of these gods are very subtle, so normally we cannot see them. Our bodies are coarse, so the gods can see us, but ordinarily we cannot see them. There are some human beings who can see them, but if we do not have the eyes of wisdom that can see that sort of thing, we will not be able to see them.

The bodies of deities are similar to our body in a dream. Our body in a dream is something subtle that other people cannot see and bodies of deities are just like that. If there are gods, there are also demons. If you exist in a system that believes in these things, you have gods on the one hand and demons on the other. And if there can be gods that you cannot see and demons that you cannot see, then there can also be yidam deities on which we can meditate. So everything works out well. Most religious traditions, in fact, assert the existence of beings you cannot see, assert that there exist beings, gods and demons, who have subtle bodies. We just cannot see them. Of course nowadays there are also a lot of people who think that if you cannot see it, it does not

exist. But once you think a bit about how sentient beings appear in dreams with subtle bodies that others cannot see, then slowly one will begin to accept the possibility that there might be sentient beings who exist even though we cannot see their subtle bodies. In the tradition of the mahayana, the great vehicle of Buddhism, beings with coarse bodies and beings with subtle ones are the same in that neither of them are real; neither of them really exist. They are all equally like dreams, like illusions, like the reflection of the moon in a pool of water. As the bodhisattva Shantideva said in his wisdom chapter of *The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Conduct*,

*Then wanderers, these dream like beings, what are they?
If analyzed they're like a banana tree.
One cannot make definitive distinctions
Between transcending misery and not.*

The comparison of beings to a banana tree has to do with their bodies. If you cut open a banana tree, there is nothing on the inside, and it is similar with sentient beings. If you analyze their bodies, you only find smaller and smaller particles that in the final analysis, or under more and more subtle investigation, do not themselves exist. It turns out that there is nothing really there. This is an analysis of the bodies of sentient beings, not an analysis of their minds. If you analyze beings' minds in contrast to their bodies, what you find is that the nature of mind transcends all conceptual fabrication as to what it might be, and that therefore it is of the nature of great openness and spaciousness and relaxedness. If it is luminosity, it is not like a banana tree. If you realize the nature of mind, then everything becomes open, spacious, and relaxed. Just let go and rest very naturally and loosely. If you do so, sooner or later you will see why the mahasiddhas, the great men and women who realized and still realize the nature of mind

If you realize the nature of mind, then everything becomes open, spacious, and relaxed

have sung a lot of songs about how wonderfully open and spacious and easy an experience it is. This verse by Shantideva has been put to song and it goes like this: [Translator sings, then students sing.]

Question: When the text talks about a transcendent perfection's being either worldly or beyond the world, what is the world being talked about here, and what does it mean to say that something is beyond it?

Rinpoche: Here, world and beyond the world refers to the individuals or beings, both human and non-human, in question. Worldly beings are beings whose minds are confused and therefore have no independence. They are completely under the power of their karma and experience a vast array of different kinds of suffering as a result. Beings who have gone beyond the world are defined as those whose minds are not confused and are therefore completely open and spacious and relaxed, and do not have the same kinds of difficulties. In short, if a person is confused and mistaken with regard to the way they perceive things, then they are a worldly person. On the other hand, if someone is not confused, is not mistaken, then they realize the nature of reality and are on the path of greater and greater realization. These latter beings are said to be beyond the world.* The unmistakable and unconfused path starts when someone gains the first bodhisattva ground. At that point, one is called a noble or an

***Editor's note:** In this regard it is important to understand that ordinary beings can have glimpses, momentary experiences (*nyam* in Tibetan) of the enlightened state, but that these always dissolve, leaving one with memories but still living in a samsaric world replete with anxiety, frustration, and various types of suffering. Beginning with the first bodhisattva ground, the bodhisattva's awareness during meditation is said to be essentially the same as a buddha's, but different at other times. When not meditating, the bodhisattva sees the world like a dream, or like the reflection of the moon in water, like an illusion, like a magical display, like a hallucination, like a rainbow, a flash of lightning, or an echo, etc. A buddha's awareness is said to be totally unobscured, the same during meditation and post-meditation.

exalted being, though there is still a lot of confusion left to be purified on the ten bodhisattva grounds. When one reaches the level of enlightenment, then all confusion is completely erased or eliminated. At that point there is no confusion left at all, which is the definition of enlightenment. Ordinary or worldly beings are like those who do not know that they are dreaming. Noble bodhisattvas are like those who know they are dreaming, and buddhas are like those who have awakened completely.

Question: What is the form body of a buddha, and what are its causes?

Rinpoche: This term body comes from the Sanskrit *kaya*, which is an honorific term for body. You could also call it a dimension of enlightenment. The ultimate or actual dimension or body of the enlightenment of the buddha is the dharmakaya, which refers to the enlightened mind itself. As sentient beings the enlightened mind is something we cannot see. So how is a buddha going to relate to us? A buddha relates to us through the form dimension of their enlightenment, through their form body, which is two-fold. There is the sambhogakaya, which is translated as the enjoyment body, and the nirmanakaya, which is the emanation body. The sambhogakaya is like the five buddha families, which only bodhisattvas on the ten bhumis can see. What are ordinary beings able to see? We see the nirmanakaya, the emanation body, of which there are three different types. The first is called the supreme emanation body, which is like Shakyamuni Buddha, like the emanation body of a buddha as it appears to ordinary beings. Then there is also the born emanation body. That is its literal translation. This refers to a buddha's body when the buddha takes birth as a fish, a bird, or some other animal or ordinary being to be of benefit to beings in that way. And then there is also what is called the skilled emanation body. At a time when a world is in a particular state of darkness and

What are ordinary beings able to see? We see the nirmanakaya, the emanation body

people in that particular place are not really ready for a buddha, then buddhas take birth there as persons skilled in crafts, or art, or literature, or something like that, and are able to make brilliant contributions and develop and invent things that no one was able to invent before. This does not refer to the people who made the atom bomb, because skilled emanations do not make things that are harmful to people; they make only things that are helpful to people. In India, for example, there was a king named Bishokarma. His name means "great variety of activity," signifying that this particular king invented lots of things that no one had ever heard of or seen before. That king was said to be an emanation of the Buddha.

Question: Sometimes getting angry seems to lead to a good result, maybe not directly because of the anger, but it seems that sometimes as an indirect result something good happens. An example might be when people are experiencing injustice. Can Rinpoche please comment on anger in the context of social movements and human rights movements?

Rinpoche: When you are talking about human rights [and movements to secure human rights], then the root motivation to benefit others—wanting people to have freedom and a decent life—is very good. In such situations there may temporarily be a bit of anger, but that is something different. It is not the same type of anger as that which is being talked about here, which is necessary to avoid and in reference to which it is necessary to practice patience, because the root motivation is to do good for others. So it can be like that, too.

Question: Thank you. Why were generosity, discipline, and patience praised to lay people in particular?

Rinpoche: The reason is that householder bodhisattvas have something to give away. They have possessions with which they can practice generosity. That is why generosity was taught to them. Along with generosity they need right conduct, discipline, and patience. On the bodhisattva path, out of loving kindness and compassion, one acts in order to be of benefit to others. Thus, it is taught that it is good to accumulate wealth so that one can give it away to benefit others. That is why there were bodhisattvas who were monarchs, ministers, business tycoons, and great land owners who accumulated wealth and then gave it away for the benefit of others. That is the path of the householder bodhisattva, and that is how it was taught. When bodhisattvas are in such positions of power and wealth, they need to practice generosity, right conduct and discipline, and patience. Similarly bodhisattvas can assume the roles of doctors, nurses, and a wide variety of other professions and occupations, and in all cases they need generosity, discipline, and patience. So, for example, if you are a doctor or a nurse, then you need generosity in the sense of wanting to give medicines and medical attention to people. You need good conduct, and you also need to be patient with those who might do you harm. So those three are important for lay people.

Question: I have a lot of difficulty with the mahayana in general. Before an ordinary being has direct experience of emptiness of self and phenomena then it seems that trying to follow the paramitas up to that point does not diminish suffering but in fact increases suffering. On the one hand, you have the actual fact, "I am angry, I am jealous, I have all of these faults that I am not supposed to have," and on the other hand, there is an ideal presented to us about the way things should be, and there is a tremendous gap between the two of them, which creates terrible suffering. It seems like the same kind of gap that

It is taught that it is good to accumulate wealth so that one can give it away to benefit others

is taught in all the other religions that I usually do not associate with Buddhism. Is this the profound requirement of patience you are referring to, to be able to endure, to be able to persevere through these experiences of inadequacy and all of the other things that we feel?

Rinpoche: There are stages in the presentation of the teachings that we need to be aware of. First, things are explained to us from the perspective of our faults, the faults of being in samsara, and what is wrong with our status as a samsaric being. And then we do get frustrated; we do feel inadequate and inferior and think, "I am a lousy person and I have all sorts of faults." Then when we are totally convinced of all the faults we have, it is explained to us that faults do not really exist: First it is explained that there is no one to have any faults, because there is no self in the individual; and then it is explained that the faults themselves do not really exist, because phenomena do not really exist. So we learn about the two types of selflessness just when we are feeling really bad about ourselves as a result of the original explanation of ourselves as defective samsaric beings, and so everything turns out very well.

Another way to explain things is that first we have great attachment to our own existence and to what we perceive as the good things about it. Then it is explained to us that samsara is of the nature of suffering and that nirvana, the state of liberation, is something wonderful. Finally, when we gain certainty in that, that it is really true, then it is explained to us that samsara does not really exist and that nirvana does not really exist either. They are explained as being of the nature of equality.

To explain how the stages of the path work from the perspective of the middle way, the madhyamaka, first, in order to get people to give up negative activity, the cause and result of karma are explained. The causes and results of

different karmic acts are explained in detail so that you know that engaging in virtuous activity leads to happiness and engaging in unvirtuous activity leads to suffering. This is all explained as if it were real. Then, when you have gained confidence in the law of karma and have given up negative activity, then it is explained that none of it is real, that there is no self, no action, [no cause and affect,] no phenomena. And then finally, when you are certain nothing is real, that in fact there is no real or true existence in anything, including cause and affect, then it is explained that the nature of reality transcends all conceptual fabrications about what it might or might not be. All experience and all phenomena are of the nature of simplicity in the sense that they are free of any conceptual fabrication about their nature, that they are of the nature of equality. This is how the noble Aryadeva, the student and heart son of the protector Nagarjuna, explained things. First you reverse your tendency towards having no merit, which is the explanation of karma. Having started accumulating merit, you then reverse the belief in the self. Finally, you reverse all views altogether through training in freedom from conceptual fabrications. Those who understand and have accomplished all of these are wise. This is how Aryadeva explained it.

This is an age when people are very smart; they study a lot and have a lot of analytical ability. At such a time it is permissible to put the second stage first. First you learn about selflessness, then you learn about virtuous activity, and finally you learn about the freedom from all conceptual fabrications.* First you use reason—for example the logic which proves that things do not exist because they are neither one nor many—to prove that there is no self and no phenomena,** that they are not real. Then you can ask, “Well then, what about all of these relative superficial appearances of happiness

First you learn about selflessness, then you learn about virtuous activity, and finally you learn about the freedom from all conceptual fabrications

and suffering? Where do they come from?” They come from karma, they come from good deeds and bad deeds, which is the explanation that reverses the tendency towards not having any merit. Finally, you explain that the nature of reality lies beyond all conceptual fabrications.

It is possible that if you explain the first stage first—that if you explain that engaging in negative actions leads to suffering not only in the human realm but also to birth in the hell realms and hungry ghost realms—people might get too frightened.*** So it is better to explain things that reasoning can accept, things that have logical proofs. For example, you can prove that there is no self. You can prove that things do not really exist. So you start there and then go on from there. That is a good way proceed.

Question: I am having a hard time with the notion of a succession of lifetimes and reincarnation, which seems to be central to

***Editor’s note:** Traditionally it was held in the Buddhist tradition to be very dangerous to teach emptiness to beginners, because they might as a consequence conclude nihilistically that since nothing exists, then nothing matters and one may do whatever one wants. Such a conclusion could lead them to engage in negative actions which would lead them into hellish states, which would certainly be empty of inherent existence, but would be experienced by the equally non-existent beings as being very real and immensely painful. Since a great many people in this day and age already hold a nihilistic point of view, it turns out to be very skillful to teach emptiness first, but then to explain to them that emptiness is simply the true nature of karmic interdependence and cause and effect, which all seem very real and potentially very painful if one misbehaves, until one actually attains stable “realization” of emptiness in a direct, non-conceptual, valid way.

****Editor’s note:** See *Shenpen Ösel, Vol. 2, No. 2*, page 20 (footnote) and page 28.

*****Editor’s note:** It is also possible that the student might have the rather common modern-day notion that dimensions of experience like the hells and the realms of disembodied spirits do not actually exist, but are simply the paranoid fantasies of unsophisticated superstitious minds, in which case they may cease to take any further explanation of Buddhist thought seriously.

the Buddhist way of thinking, as far as improving your karma is concerned. Would Rinpoche comment on this question?

Rinpoche: From the perspective of the great vehicle, past and future lives are not real. If you posit them as being real, then you cannot prove that they happen with reasoning. But on the other hand, if you posit them as just being like dream appearances, illusions like the movement of the moon in a pool of water, then you can prove with reasoning that they exist. You can prove that they have that quality. If you try to prove that they are real, you run into a logical contradiction. To be a sentient being you have to have five aggregates, both in the last life and in this life. Well if the five aggregates of this life are the same five aggregates as in the previous life, then the five aggregates of the last life must be permanent. But if, on the other hand, the aggregates of this life are different from those of the last life, then the five aggregates from the last life must have been cut; they must have ceased. If so, then where did these five aggregates of this life come from? From space? Did they come without any cause? You cannot posit any relationship between the five aggregates of this life and those of the last that makes any sense. Therefore, what else could it be, other than just a mere appearance, like the movement of the moon in a pool of water? It is just a mere appearance of a succession of lives that is not really happening but appears to be happening.

On the other hand, if you posit past and future lives as being like a moon moving in a pool of water, then there is no logical flaw in that, and it can be proven to be like that with reasoning. The protector Nagarjuna said, “Know that everything is just like the moon’s appearance in a pool of water; it is neither real nor false. If you know that, your mind will not be stolen by extreme views.” For example, our body that appears in a dream is not the same as our body during the day. And our body during the day is not the same as the body that appears in a dream. Nevertheless, they both appear. They are just mere dependently arisen appearances. As

the protector Nagarjuna said in his text *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*,

*Like a dream, like an illusion,
Like a city of gandharvas,
That’s how birth and that’s how living,
That’s how dying are taught to be.*

[Students sing.]

That is how the protector Nagarjuna expressed it. If you then ask, “How did the Buddha teach it,” look at the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma. In the *Sutra of the Noble Collection*, the Buddha said,

*Know the five skandhas are like an illusion.
Don’t separate the illusion from the skandhas.
Free of thinking that anything is real—
This is perfect wisdom’s conduct at its best!*


[Students sing.]

When we recall again and again our certainty in this way, then this is called, in the mahayana, the practice of post-meditation samadhi of illusion. In the state of meditative equipoise we remember again and again the nature of appearances, and then we meditate in emptiness. Now, relax and let go within your own basic nature. [pause for meditation]

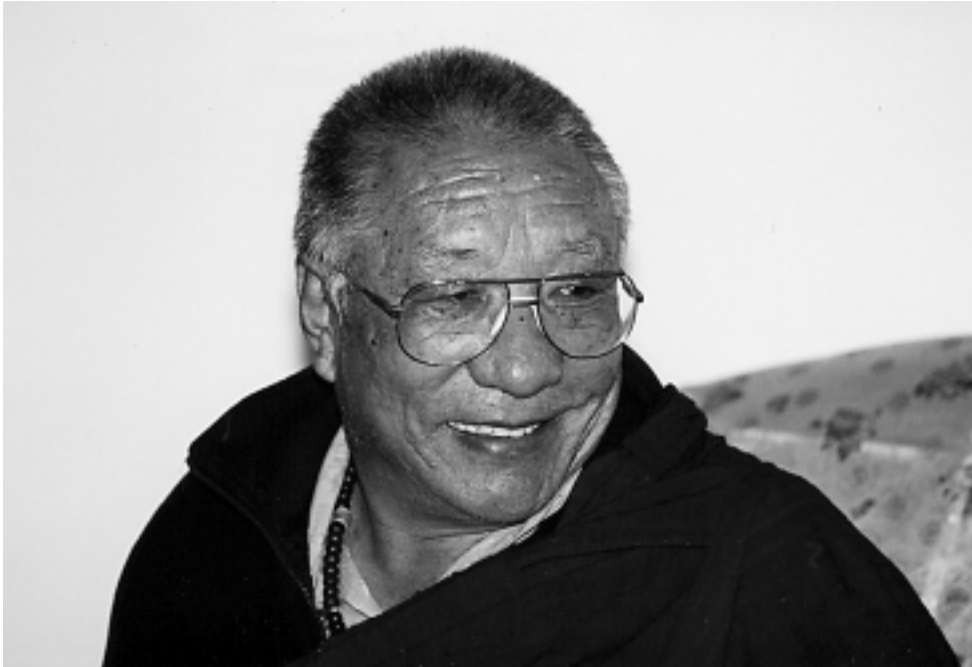
[Dedication prayers]

We should sing the aspiration prayer for all beings with whom we have a good or bad connection.

*All you sentient beings I have a good or bad
connection with,
As soon as you have left this confused dimension,
May you be born in the west in Sukhavati,
And once you’re born there, complete the bhumis
and the paths.*

Good night. Sarva Mangalam. 

Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way
**The Fourth Mind Generation:
The Radiant**



Let's sing *The Song of Meaningful Connections*. [Students sing. See page 12.] Before listening to the teachings please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, which means that for the benefit of all sentient beings who are as limitless in number as the sky is vast in extent, please aspire to attain the state of complete and perfect enlightenment. In order to do that, we must listen to, reflect upon, and meditate on the teachings of the genuine dharma with great diligence. This is the precious attitude of bodhicitta; please give rise to it and listen.

From among all the topics which comprise the genuine dharma, Rinpoche will explain to us the fourth chapter from the text by the glorious Chandrakirti, called *Entrance to The Middle Way*. This chapter discusses the fourth bodhisattva bhumi, called *The Radiant*. In this explanation of the fourth bodhisattva ground, the fourth mind generation in the generation of the ultimate mind of bodhicitta, there are three parts. The first explains how the practice of diligence becomes especially prominent here. The second explains the reason behind this specific name of this particular bodhisattva ground. And the third explains the extraordinary abandonment that occurs on this bhumi.

The first verse reads:

**All good qualities follow after diligence—
It is the cause of both the accumulations of merit
and wisdom.**

**The ground where diligence blazes
Is the fourth, *The Radiant*. (1)**

All good qualities basically fall into two categories. The first, called the category of the higher states, consists of the good qualities of the happy states in samsara, principally the good qualities of gods and of human beings. In order to be born in one of those realms and acquire the good things that come with such a rebirth, one needs to practice virtuous activities that benefits others. The second category, called the category of true excellence, referring to the three types of enlightenment—the enlightenment of shravakas, of pratyekabuddhas, and of buddhas—consists of the good qualities, whether they be samsaric or transcend samsara, that follow upon diligence, which means that if you have diligence you can produce these qualities and if you do not, you cannot.

Without diligence it is impossible.

Any good qualities we experience arise because of our diligence. Diligence is the cause of both the accumulations of merit, which has a focus, and the accumulation of wisdom, which is without any focal reference. The ground on which diligence blazes, meaning where laziness has been completely eradicated, is the fourth bodhisattva ground or bhumi called *The Radiant*.

The definition of diligence is to delight in virtuous activity. When someone enjoys and is enthusiastic about doing good things, then that is diligence. Four characteristics of diligence are enumerated in the text called the *Mahayana Sutra Lankara* or the *Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras*: Diligence is defined by the disappearance of its opposite; it is embraced by non-conceptual primordial wisdom; it fulfills all the needs of sentient beings; and it makes them happy and causes them to be ripened along one

of the three paths. For it to be considered a transcendent perfection, a paramita, it has to have these four characteristics.

First, it is able to dispel its opposite. The opposite of diligence is laziness. The paramita, the transcendent perfection, of diligence dispels laziness. It can be so strong that there is no opportunity for laziness to remain anywhere. It can take such firm root in the mind that there is no place in the mind for laziness; the mind becomes completely *inoculated* with diligence. And so that is the first defining characteristic.

The definition of laziness is to be faint-hearted, to think, “I cannot really do it; I cannot attain the state of liberation; I cannot become enlightened; I am not good enough. I cannot begin by listening a little and reflecting a little and meditating a little and moving on the path from there. It is just not going to work.” If we have this feeling of being inferior and being discouraged, then we cannot accomplish the goal of the path, and that is laziness. We need to realize that all of the buddhas who

have come before us started in exactly the same place we are now. They all started as ordinary beings. They all had to listen, reflect, meditate, and progress in stages on the path. They all had to go through the bodhisattvas’ stages before they became buddhas. So, if we think, “I can do it; they did it, I can do it,” then that is the type of mental fortitude, courage, and confidence we need.

We can, in fact, accomplish the ultimate fruition of enlightenment because every single sentient being has buddha nature. The basic nature of every sentient being is fundamentally awake and enlightened. Therefore, all we need do is uncover this enlightened potential through the process of listening, reflecting, and meditating on the path, and then we will realize our basic nature, which has been there all along. It is not the case that only good sentient beings have

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ground

buddha nature and bad ones do not. Every sentient being, no matter who they are—whether an animal or any other type of sentient being—has buddha nature in exactly the same way. No sentient being has less of it or more of it; no sentient being is lacking it while others have it.

The enlightened potential pervades every sentient being equally.

Buddha nature is undifferentiated. It is not differentiated among people according to cast, blood line, gender, wealth, religious tradition, philosophy, profundity of view, the absence or presence or degree of faith, or intelligence. It pervades every single sentient being equally and in the exact same way. It is all pervasive in the same way that butter pervades milk, as sesame oil pervades sesame seeds, as pure gold and pure silver pervade gold and silver ore. Buddha nature is completely and fully present in every sentient being; the basic nature of every being's mind is enlightenment. Is that not wonderful? It does not matter what degree of faith in the dharma a person has. If you have faith, you have buddha nature; if you do not have faith, you have buddha nature. You cannot get rid of it; no matter what you do, you always have it.

There are two classifications of buddha nature. One is the buddha nature which is the basic essence of sentient beings, and the other is the buddha nature that is developed on the path, during which the qualities seem to appear greater and greater as one progresses on the path. With regard to the first, which is the buddha nature that is the basic essence of sentient beings, there is absolutely no difference among sentient beings, no matter who they are or what they are doing.

You can be somebody who hates the dharma, who calls it all different kinds of names. You can completely denigrate it. It does not matter; you still have buddha nature. You cannot do anything to your buddha nature. You can cause the ap-

pearance of qualities to diminish, referring to the second classification of buddha nature. But you cannot alter your basic buddha nature, the basic buddha essence, no matter what you do. Even if a person is in a state of intense degeneration, when the appropriate time comes, they

will again give rise to faith in the mahayana and follow the path. There is no ultimate danger [of any being ever being eternally lost], no matter what they do.

What about beings in the lower realms, who are experiencing immense suffering? Is there any hope for them? Do they have any way out of their horrible state? Definitely they do. Because of his bad deeds, the Buddha, when he was still an ordinary sentient being, once took rebirth in a hell realm. He found himself with a rope tied around his waist pulling a wagon. There was another hell being next to

him who was pulling the same wagon, which was very difficult to pull because it was made out of fire and kept burning them. At that time the Buddha thought, "Why do we both have to go through this? It makes no sense; I could do it by myself."

So he asked the next guard he saw, "Excuse me, Sir, would it be all right if I pulled my friend's load so that he could have a rest?"

The guard looked down at him and got really angry. He raised his hammer and exclaimed, "You idiot! Do you not know that every sentient being has to experience the result of their own karma?"

So saying, he struck this sentient being who was later to become the Buddha on the head and killed him. But because his last thought was a virtuous thought, he was reborn in the god realms. When the Buddha was telling the story of his life, he said, "This was the first altruistic thought I ever had." So even beings in the hell realms will eventually give rise to altruism, be reborn in a higher state, and begin to progress

Buddha nature is completely and fully present in every sentient being; the basic nature of every being's mind is enlightenment. Is that not wonderful?

gradually on the path of dharma.

Since every sentient being has as their fundamental nature this buddha essence, then when the potential for them to practice dharma awakens, they will begin to practice and can then begin to progress on the way to attaining the state of complete enlightenment. Buddha nature contains the seeds of both compassion and wisdom, and therefore, there is no limit to the potential growth of our compassion. It can become completely immeasurable like the compassion of the Buddha. In the same way our intelligence, our prajna or wisdom, can grow until it too becomes completely limitless, the omniscience of a buddha. When we have taken our loving kindness and compassion to its complete perfection and our wisdom to its complete perfection, then that is the definition of buddhahood. When these two qualities have grown to their ultimate extent, one manifests complete awakening.

Then, because of one's great compassion one is able to manifest limitless numbers of emanations and perform the benefit of others in a limitless number of ways, and because one's wisdom is infinite and unlimited, one becomes unimaginably, even incredibly, skilled, knowing precisely how to benefit all sentient beings in precise and complete detail.

This explanation is of the first quality of diligence, which is that it defeats laziness. How do we defeat laziness? By thinking about this and allowing it to fill us with fortitude and courage and self-confidence that we can, in fact, do it. Then, when there is no doubt that we can do it, there is no room for laziness, and we become very diligent.

The second quality of diligence is that, when it is a transcendent perfection, it possesses non-conceptual primordial wisdom. How do we develop non-conceptual primordial wisdom? By continuing to develop a deeper and deeper understanding of the two types of selflessness, the selflessness of individuals and the selflessness of phenomena.

How do we come to understand the selflessness of individuals? First we look, one by one, at

our five aggregates, the five skandhas. Individually these five aggregates are not the self. If you isolate and examine each one at them, you cannot find the self anywhere. If you consider the aggregates all together as a group, you cannot find the self anywhere.*

So there is no self in the aggregates taken either individually or together. Furthermore, the mind which believes in a self is not a self. The thought which thinks there is an I, is not the I. So if we can understand these two things, then we can understand that there is no self in the individual. This is an inferential beginning of an understanding of selflessness, an understanding inferred on the basis of valid reasoning with logical conclusions.

Then how do we understand the selflessness of phenomena? First we look at all of the forms or objects that appear to the eyes, at all of the

***Editor's note:** It is important to remember that the *appearance* of a self is not being referred to here. All sentient beings experience the appearance of a self, which gives them the mistaken impression that there is, in fact, a true self in reality. But for a self to be truly existent it must be unitary, independent of causes and conditions, and permanent. For beginners, the aggregate of form appears as matter, material things—our body and the external objects we encounter, which appear to be made up of matter. But all of these material things are made up of smaller units, so they cannot be regarded as unitary. They all come into "existence" by virtue of the coming together of causes and conditions, so they cannot be considered as independent of causes and conditions. And they all are subject to decay, so they cannot be considered permanent. Even the smallest particle of matter, since logically matter is infinitely divisible, cannot be considered unitary, and so disappears under analysis. Modern science, after 2,500 years, is now just catching up with this fundamental teaching of the Buddha.

Each of the remaining four aggregates—the aggregates of feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness—consists of a continuum of mental experiences experienced in time. As groups, the aggregates cannot be considered unitary, and each moment of mental experience arises dependent upon causes and conditions, and so cannot be considered independent of causes and conditions. Since each aggregate is an ever-changing continuum of different mental experiences, none of them can be considered permanent. And finally, even the smallest or shortest moment of experience has a beginning, middle, and end, so none of them can be said to be either unitary or permanent. Therefore, while sentient beings experience the mistaken impression of an individual self and of material objects and other selves, in reality, there is no truly existent self anywhere.

For further discussions of selflessness and emptiness, see *Shenpen Ösel*, Vol. 2, No. 2; Vol. 3, No. 1; Vol. 3, No. 2; and Vol. 4, No. 2.

great variety of sounds that appear to our ears, at all of the odors that appear to our noses, at all of the tastes that appear to our tongues, at all of the physical sensations which appear to our bodies, and at all of the things we think about. Looking at every single thing we experience—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, things to touch, and the phenomena we think about—we can see that they are all just mere appearances. They are mere dependently arisen appearances, dependent upon causes and conditions just like things in dreams, just like illusions. Understanding this, we understand that they are all of the nature of emptiness, which is the understanding of the selflessness of phenomena.

Understanding conceptually that there is no self in the individual and no self entity or inherent existence in phenomena is the beginning approach to gaining non-conceptual primordial awareness, which is the second quality of the transcendent perfection of diligence. But how can we begin to bring this wisdom into our practice of diligence? We begin by thinking at the time that we are being diligent that it is just like being diligent in a dream. The person who appears to be diligent is not real; the activity in which we are diligent is not real; and the object upon which this activity is focused is not real. In this way, developmentally we cut through clinging to the belief in the reality of the three spheres. When we are diligent in a dream and do not know we are dreaming, then we believe in the reality of the three spheres and focus on the three spheres. But if we know we are dreaming and are diligent in our dream, then there is no focus on things as being real. Because we know that everything is just a dream appearance, it is impossible to have any type of focus on things as being real, as being truly existent. That is the model of the practice of diligence.

The third quality of the transcendent perfection of diligence is that it makes people happy. It

If we practice diligence, we will be of benefit to others and they will be pleased and made happy by our practice

makes beings happy because it fulfills their wishes. The basis of mahayana practice is to help others, to do things that benefit others. That requires diligence. If we practice diligence, we will be of benefit to others and they will be pleased and made happy by our practice. One just follows naturally from the other. The commentary further instructs that in being diligent, we should not at the same time be very harsh and critical towards others.

While striving to accomplish their benefit, we should not cut them down or speak harshly to them. Instead we should treat them gently and be nice to them. If we do treat them gently and nicely at the same time we are working hard to benefit them, they will actually be made happy by what we do.*

So for example, if we are a teacher, a doctor, a nurse, or anyone else involved in a profession beneficial to others, and at the time we are working with people, we are harsh with them and display a displeasing demeanor unpleasant to be around, then our work will be self-contradictory. On the one hand, we are trying to help people, while on the other, when we come into contact with them, we only make them miserable. So, we need to conduct ourselves in a manner opposite to that. We need to act and appear in ways pleasing to others and make

***Editor's note:** In this regard, when commenting on the practice of the bodhisattva path through the various bhumis, the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche taught that on the first seven grounds of the bodhisattva path, the bodhisattva's conduct was characterized by great gentleness, but that beginning with the eighth ground of *actual bodhisattva attainment*, the bodhisattva discovers that it is not necessary always to be so polite to samsara. Beginning with this ground, the bodhisattva no longer gives rise to kleshas, to any form of emotional affliction or conflict. Therefore, in all circumstances, the bodhisattva's motivation will be totally pure and not self-interested, and as a consequence, their conduct can afford to be much more direct. Under certain particular circumstances then, such a bodhisattva might display anger, or speak and act harshly, if it would be of benefit in that particular situation. This being said, however, it should be noted that in general the bodhisattva continues to behave gently and nicely.

them happy.

The fourth and final characteristic of the transcendent perfection of diligence discussed in this commentary is that it ripens beings in one of the three different ways. If somebody displays the [comparatively limited] potential to follow the shravaka path [— the path of the “listener-hearers” leading to individual liberation—] then the bodhisattva’s diligence is able to lead them to that fruition. If someone is more suited to following the pratyekabuddha path, the path of the solitary sages, [leading also to individual liberation], then the bodhisattva’s diligence leads them in that direction. And if somebody is more suited to follow the mahayana [path, leading to the liberation of all sentient beings], then the bodhisattva’s diligence leads them in that direction. The bodhisattva’s diligence is able to ripen beings appropriately according to their particular potential and interest.

Whatever virtue one is practicing, if it has these four characteristics, then it is the practice of a transcendent perfection or paramita in the practice of the mahayana. In particular, we have been looking at the fourth bodhisattva ground, on which, among the ten paramitas, the practice of diligence becomes predominant, and so we have explained these four characteristics, which pertain to all the paramitas, from the perspective of diligence.

The second section (contained in the first three lines of the second verse) discusses the etymology behind or the reason that the fourth ground is given the name *The Radiant*:

**Here for the heirs of the Sugatas there dawns an appearance
Even better than the copper light —
It arises from an even greater cultivation of the
branches of perfect enlightenment. (2abc)**

The commentary reads, “On this ground, for the heirs of the sugatas—the heart sons and daughters of the buddhas—because they have

cultivated to an even greater degree what are known as the thirty-seven branches of perfect enlightenment, the appearance of their wisdom is even better than the copper light that was the metaphor that described its appearance on the third ground. On the third ground the appearance of wisdom experienced by the bodhisattva is like the copper light that appears before the sun comes up. On the fourth ground it is superior to that, and so this ground is called *The Radiant*. The third ground is called *The Luminous*, but this ground is called *The Radiant*, like shooting-out light.

And finally, in the third section, contained in the last line of the chapter, is a description of the extraordinary way in which the bodhisattva here is able to abandon self and self-entity:

Everything connected with the views of self and self-entity is completely exhausted. (2d)

In describing what it means to say that everything connected with the views of self and self-entity is exhausted, the commentary literally states, “On this ground, ‘the view of self is thoroughly exhausted.’ This means that the coarse views of the self of the individual and the self of phenomena—that are related to the more subtle views of these two, including the beliefs that the self is independent and so forth—are abandoned. In short, what is to be abandoned on this ground, the seeds of believing in the two kinds of self, is vanquished.”

So let us recite these verses together three times. [Students recite verses.] 51

Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way **The Fifth Mind Generation: The Difficult to Overcome**

Next we move on to the fifth bodhisattva ground and the fifth mind generation, called *The Difficult To Overcome*:

The great beings on the ground that is *Difficult to Overcome* Cannot be defeated even by all the maras. Their meditative stability becomes superior and their excellent minds Become incredibly skilled in subtle realization of the nature of the truths.

This ground gets its name because “The great beings on the ground that is *Difficult to Overcome*”—referring to bodhisattvas on the fifth ground—“cannot be defeated even by all the maras.”*



Even if all of the maras gang up on them at once, they are not strong enough at that point [to overcome the bodhisattva's wisdom]; the bodhisattva is stronger.

Commenting on the last two lines of the verse describing the qualities of this ground, the commentary reads, “On this ground the transcendent perfection of meditative stability, the fifth paramita, becomes superior and wonderfully great, and, as a result, with the excellent prajna of their excellent minds, these noble and exalted beings become incredibly

skilled in subtle realization of the nature of the truths. The truths here refers either to the four noble truths—the truth of suffering, the truth of

***Editor's note:** According to the story of the Buddha Shakyamuni's enlightenment, Mara was a great demon that appeared to the Buddha just before he attained enlightenment, and in various seductive and fearsome manifestations tried first to seduce and then to frighten the Buddha out of his attainment. In less anthropomorphic terms, the maras are seen as any negative influences that obstruct spiritual development. Traditionally they are enumerated as *skandhamara*, the misperception of that which is not a self, the aggregates, to be a self; *kleshamara*, being overpowered by, putting up with, or “buying into” the emotional afflictions, rather than seeing them and relating to them as vehicles for attaining enlightenment;

mrtumara, death or the fear of death, which interrupts one's practice unless the practitioner knows how to make death part of his or her path; and *devaputramara*, literally the “child of the gods,” which refers to the tendency to be seduced by, absorbed dualistically in, and attached to the pleasures and bliss of the gods' realms, specifically the subtle pleasures or bliss of meditation.

In the chöd tradition, the four maras are enumerated in a way very useful for meditation as the substantial mara, the insubstantial mara, the mara of elation, and the mara of fixation.

See Shenpen Ösel, Vol. 3, No. 1, pages 36-38; Vol. 3, No. 1, page 26.

the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering—or, as explained in the mahayana tradition, to the two truths, the relative superficial truth and the truth of the nature of genuine reality. Bodhisattvas on this ground become incredibly skilled in the subtle realization of these truths.

Let's recite this verse three times. [Students recite.]

When we realize the emptiness that is the nature of genuine reality, all relative superficial appearances are realized as appearance-emptiness, like things in dreams, like illusions. So it would be good to sing a verse about this from the *Sutra of the Noble Collection*. [Students sing three times. See page 59.]

And we should sing from the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. [Students sing three times. See page 59.]

These two verses contain the speech of the Buddha Shakyamuni. Since we also need to know what the commentaries on the Buddha's teachings said, we should first look at the verse by the protector Nagarjuna from the *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*. [Students sing three times. See page 59.]

And next, the verses by the glorious Chandrakirti from the *Entrance to the Middle Way*. [Students sing three times. See page 59.]

And now a verse by the bodhisattva Shantideva from the wisdom chapter of the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Conduct*. [Students sing three times. See page 59.]

To understand what it means to say that beings are like banana trees, we need to think of the bodies of sentient beings. When we analyze the body, it breaks down into parts. Those parts break down into their component parts and finally into particles. And if we look at the particles, we cannot find anything substantial there at all. So, there is really nothing there—no pith, no substance. That is what is intended here. Shantideva is talking about the bodies of beings'

being like banana trees. The minds of beings are not like banana trees. According to the second turning of the wheel of dharma, the mind's nature transcends all conceptual fabrications; it is not an object of conceptual mind. According to the third turning of the wheel of dharma the basic nature of mind is luminosity, clear light. So it is like that. Are there a few questions?

Bodhisattvas on this ground become incredibly skilled in the subtle realization of the four noble truths

Question: Rinpoche stated that there is no distinction in buddha nature between male and female, that they equally have buddha nature. If that is the case, then why is there a hierarchy between nuns and monks, which is sexist?

Translator: So the question is, "If it is true that buddha nature pervades everyone equally, why is there a sexist discrimination in the hierarchy between monks and nuns in Buddhism?"

Rinpoche: That hierarchy exists only in the shravaka tradition; it is not a mahayana tradition, and it is certainly not a vajrayana tradition. In both of the latter two, men and women are regarded as equal. There is no difference. This is particularly so in the vajrayana, where in several tantras women are praised as being of the nature of wisdom. They are not denigrated; on the contrary, they are praised for being of the nature of wisdom. In the shravaka tradition, in which the tradition of the Buddhist monastic sangha originates, there is no talk about buddha nature. If you ask, "What defines a noble being," the shravaka traditions answer is that they have less attachment, less passion, less desire, more contentment. In the mahayana it is explained differently, that the nature of every single sentient being is buddha nature.

Question: I am confused about how to answer people who look to you for knowledge or leadership, and you can give them answers from the point of view of relative truth, but at the same

Five Songs

From the *Sutra of the Noble Collection*:

Know the five skandhas are like an illusion.
Don't separate the illusion from the skandhas.
Free of thinking that anything is real—
This is perfect wisdom's conduct at its best!

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso
Rinpoche, translated by Ari Goldfield, August 15, 1999.

From the *King of Samadhi Sutra*:

All the images conjured up by a magician,
The horses, elephants, and chariots in his
illusions,
Whatever may appear there, know that none
of it is real,
And it is just like that with everything there is.

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso
Rinpoche, translated by Ari Goldfield, August 15, 1999.

From Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*:

Like a dream, like an illusion,
Like a city of gandharvas,
That's how birth, and that's how living,
That's how dying are taught to be.

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso
Rinpoche, translated by Jim Scott and Ari Goldfield,
August, 1999.

From Candrakirti's *Entrance to the Middle Way*:

There are two ways of seeing every thing,
The perfect way and the false way.
So each and every thing that can ever be
found
Holds two natures within.

And what does perfect seeing see?
It sees the suchness of all things.
And false seeing sees the relative truth—
This is what the perfect Buddha said

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso
Rinpoche, translated by Jim Scott and Ari Goldfield,
August, 1999.

From Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Conduct*:

Then wanderers, these dream-like beings,
what are they?
If analyzed, they are like a banana tree.
One cannot make definitive distinctions
Between transcending misery and not.

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso
Rinpoche, translated by Jim Scott and Ari Goldfield,
August, 1999.

time, while recognizing that people learn in stages, you know that ultimately they will need to understand these same things from the point of view of ultimate truth. So I am wondering how to bridge the gap between these two levels of truth in such practical situations. An example would be in the provision of health care.

Translator: So, can I ask the question in this way: “When we are in a position where people come to us for help in our work and we are not in a position where we can explain to them the nature of genuine reality and we have to stay in the relative, then how do we benefit people given that those are the parameters of the situation?”

Question: Yes, how do you go over that bridge knowing that it might cross your values, because I suspect that if I speak the truth, they are not going to understand it, but not to talk about it seems wrong, because they are asking.

Rinpoche: If somebody comes to you for advice and they have the ability to understand the teachings on the nature of genuine reality, then you can explain those teachings to them. If they have the prajna to be able to understand the teachings about ultimate truth, then explain it to them, and if they do not, then do not worry about it. It would not benefit them to hear about the nature of ultimate reality if they would not be able to understand it. So that is okay.

These days at the end of the twentieth century, most people have very advanced educations and have used their reasoning abilities their whole lives. Therefore, it is actually better to reverse the order in which the teachings are given. It is good first to explain the nature of genuine reality, then to explain the nature of relative reality, and finally to talk about cause and effect and karma at the end. If you talk

about karma at the beginning, people will not be interested. So it is better to start with the most profound teachings, and gradually work back to the more basic ones. This is how I think about things, my opinion. Buddha nature is the nature of all beings, the nature of genuine reality. The nature of everything is that it is all fundamentally the same, which is a teaching about the nature of genuine reality, a teaching about equal-

ity. If people can come to understand that, if they hear such very profound teachings and like them, then they will develop confidence in the dharma. Then they can be given teachings on the cause and result of karmic acts, on past and future lives, etc, all following the profounder teachings on the nature of genuine reality. In my opinion, that is a better way to present the teachings these days.

If first people are able to develop confidence in the profound teachings, then they will also want to hear more about the way that relative truth is explained. Otherwise, if the teachings are presented in the more traditional way, first explaining

that if you do this and that you will be reborn in the hell realms and if you engage in such and such activities you can avoid birth in the lower realms, then people will think, “Oh, this is just another one of those religions that try to scare you into doing things, as was the case with certain brands of Christianity in the old days.” In that case, then, people will just think of Buddhism as another tradition of blind faith that tries to accomplish its ends with scare tactics, and so it is better not to proceed that way. That is why it is perfectly permissible to tell people about the nature of genuine reality, but we all have to make the judgment to do so based on the person’s intelligence and their ability and capacity to understand those types of things. So it is okay to begin with teachings on the nature of ultimate truth and then teach about relative truth.

If you talk about karma at the beginning, people will not be interested. So it is better to start with the most profound teachings, and gradually work back to the more basic ones

Question: Regarding the two types of egolessness or selflessness—the egolessness of the individual self and the egolessness or emptiness of phenomena—is one realized before the other? Or are both realized at the same time, or does it depend and vary from individual to individual?

Rinpoche: The different vehicles give different answers to that question. The mahayana says that in order to gain the most subtle understanding of the selflessness of the individual you have to have a coarse understanding of the emptiness of phenomena. You have to have that first, actually, to have the most subtle understanding of the emptiness of the individual. But the shravaka tradition does not say that; they say you can realize the selflessness of the individual 100 percent [without realizing the complete emptiness of phenomena]. In the shravakayana, you realize that there is no self; you give up your kleshas, and you attain nirvana. That is it. You do not ever have to deal with phenomena. The way that selflessness is presented in this text, *Entrance to the Middle Way*, is that first the emptiness of phenomena is explained and then the emptiness of the individual. In other texts, though, it is different; the emptiness of the self is explained first and then the emptiness of phenomena. In short, in order to gain a subtle understanding or realization of the emptiness of individuals, we need to have a coarse understanding of the emptiness of phenomena, because, in order to understand why it is that the aggregates are not the self, you have to examine the aggregates and see that they do not really exist, that when you examine them their existence breaks down, and that is the emptiness of phenomena. You see that the aggregates have many internal subdivisions and that they can be broken down into their component parts, and so you can conclude that there is really nothing there. Since there is nothing real there, there

The way to know whether the expression of anger is appropriate is to check our initial motivation

cannot be a self.

From these different realizations [or ways of realizing] come different results that we can understand more clearly by looking at the example of a dream. If we dream that we are being burned by fire and know that we are dreaming, then one way to look at it is to say, “Well, I am not really here. This is just a dream; there is no real body here, so there is no reason to suffer.” That reasoning reflects the realization of the emptiness of the self. Another way to look at it is to say, “This fire is not real; it is just a dream fire.” That is a metaphor of the emptiness of phenomena. And sometimes you can think about both at the same time: “This is just a dream. There is no one here to burn. There is nothing here to burn anyone. And there is no burning.” This reasoning reflects both the realization of the emptiness of the self and the realization of the emptiness of phenomena at the same time. So it is like that.

Question: My question is about the earlier question about anger that is motivated by some kind of pure motivation that is beneficial. This prompted me to consider how, with my limited wisdom, to judge when anger is appropriate and when it is not, and how to judge whether my motivation is appropriate or not. I would like Rinpoche to speak a little bit about how to tell when anger is appropriate. For instance, is there a difference in the way anger is experienced in the two different cases?

Rinpoche: The way to know whether the expression of anger is appropriate is to check our initial motivation. For example, if a mother who really loves her child gets angry in order to teach the child something, then that is okay, because the anger is motivated by this love. But on the other hand, if we feel malicious and angry towards somebody and do not like them and are motivated to harm them, then that is a different story. It all depends upon our motivation. In fact,

in the mahayana it is even permissible to kill somebody out of compassion. For example, if a person is going to kill lots of other people, and one realizes that if they do, it will not be good for them, then if you have to kill that person to prevent them from killing others, it actually benefits. In such a case you would kill them, not out of hatred for them, but out of compassion for them, and also to protect the intended victims who would thus be saved from being killed. Killing would be the appropriate conduct in that situation.

It is written in the sutras that our teacher, the perfect Buddha Shakyamuni, in one of his previous lives as a bodhisattva, was a ship captain, piloting a ship carrying five hundred bodhisattva business tycoons. They were beset by a pirate who was going to kill all of them, so the Buddha, out of great compassion for the bodhisattvas and great compassion for the pirate, killed the pirate to prevent that from happening. Normally five hundred people would not have a problem if there were only one person attacking them, but these were five hundred bodhisattvas and they were not going to defend themselves.

Question: What are the maras that are referred to here in the fifth chapter.

Rinpoche: There are four different kinds of maras or you could say demons. The first one is the demon of the aggregates, the five skandhas. This is a demon, in the sense that they create obstacles, when we think that these five aggregates are real. So when we take the five skandhas to be real, that is the first demon. The second is the demon of our kleshas, which are obstacles when we do not apply the antidote. The kleshas themselves become demons if we do not deal with them appropriately. The third is called the demon of the child of the gods. When we have attachment to the happiness of this life, when we want something good to happen in this

In the mahayana
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lifetime, then that is a demon. And the fourth is the demon that is the lord of death. When we have a concept that death exists, then that is a demon. This last one is a very subtle demon, but if we are able to dispel from ourselves the thought that death is something real, then we have defeated the demon of death and there will no longer be any fear of death. These appearances of demons or maras, according to the words that are used to describe them, seem as though they are something outside of ourselves, but this is why the lord of yogins, Milarepa, sang:

*What appears as, is perceived as, and is thought
of as a ghost,
Whenever these appear, from the yogi they
appear,
And when they dissolve, into the yogi they
dissolve.*

Milarepa, in fact, sang this to a demoness, but even while he was singing to her, he was singing, “You are just a confused appearance of my own mind.” Sing a song. [Students sing verse three times.]

Question: In our tradition we have a lot of concern for the benefit of sentient beings. Does that imply that there are non-sentient beings? If so, what would be an example of such a being, and who is looking out for the non-sentient beings?

Translator: I don’t know if I have any way to ask that questions, because there is no separation in Tibetan between sentient and being. It is all one word. Translated into English it sounds as though there were two words, sentient and being, but in Tibetan the word being translated just means “having mind.” That is the whole term. Does that make it clear? There is no such thing as a non-sentient being.

Question: I have a question from last night as

well. If the bodhisattva has no focus or fixation on the three spheres, but instead understands their emptiness, how can it be said that they experience harm as something good because it eliminates their bad karma? Does that not imply some fixation on the karmic act?

Rinpoche: Actually, the ones who have no focus on the three spheres are noble bodhisattvas,* not ordinary beings. The meditation or contemplation of something harmful being seen as something good, is intended to be done by ordinary beings. For example, in the teachings on the *Seven Points of Mind Training*, we are taught to think that when we experience harm, we should think of it as something good and pray that all other sentient beings be freed from the harm they experience and that it instead come down on us individually. May all the harm and all the suffering that everyone else experiences come down on us and be all contained within this one harm we are now experiencing. Thinking and meditating in this way, we use adverse situations as a chance to develop compassion.

In the *Seven Points of Mind Training*, there are also instructions on how to use suffering as a chance to fight ego-clinging. When you experience suffering of any kind, you address your ego, saying, “You, ego-clinging! This is what you deserve. You need this suffering, because we have been meditating on the dharma and on selflessness for a long time and it hasn’t done you any good at all. You are still there and you are still spoiled, so you need this suffering. It is the best thing that could ever have happened to you. Look at you, you miserable ego-clinging! If things go well for you, you just get bigger and bigger; you do not go away, you just get prouder and more arrogant. You need suffering. This is the best thing that can ever happen to you, so I am glad this is happening to you. You deserve it.” This is a teaching on how to use all dharma [and

If we want to live long, we also have to be unafraid of being old

all adverse circumstances] to smack ego-clinging on the head. You smack it, and just keep smacking it. If you do that, it is very beneficial.

Question: Would Rinpoche explain the tradition of long life prayers in Tibet. They don’t seem to exist in any of the other traditions. Who writes a prayer for whom? How does it come about that they get written? And how did this tradition get started?

Rinpoche: Long life prayers come about as an outgrowth of the students’ devotion, because the students want to have them. From the lama’s perspective, it is summed up by Patrul Rinpoche, “If I die now, who cares? It is just samsaric phenomena disintegrating. If I live to be a hundred, what’s the big deal? I will be an old man. What’s so good about that? So let whatever is going to happen, happen. If I die now, it is no problem, I do not really feel like living to be an old man anyway. I do not want to be an old man. There is nothing great in old age.” That is how lamas think about it. Lamas’ students might think differently.

If we want to live long, we also have to be unafraid of being old. If you wish to live a long time, but do not want to be old, you have an internal contradiction in your thinking that will cause you suffering. On the other hand, if you do not want to be old, then you have to give up attachment to living a long life. The great Tibetan scholar Sakya Pandita said, “When people are afraid to be old and yet want to live long, they have a foolish inconsistency in their thinking.”

Question: I have a question about the idea of expressing anger with a good motivation and I am having a hard time reconciling that idea with what Rinpoche said earlier. If one of the characteristics of the paramitas is that you make people happy, then how could it be beneficial to demonstrate anger in a way that makes people

***Editor’s note:** i.e. enlightened bodhisattvas.

unhappy? I can understand the example of a mother in a situation dangerous to her children, when they might not pay attention otherwise. But under what other circumstances would anger be beneficial?

Rinpoche: Some beings are not benefited by being treated nicely. If you are nice to them it does not help. They are more benefited by manifesting a wrathful appearance, and knowing when that is the case is what skillful means is all about. Skillful means, or the perfection of skill in means, is actually the seventh transcendent perfection—knowing when something is appropriate and something else might not be. Bodhisattvas do not have any selfishness, so whatever they do, it is not out of their own concern; it is out of the concern for others. If that is the case, then what is normally the non-virtue of speaking harshly is permissible under certain circumstances. A bodhisattva may encounter someone under certain circumstances in which speaking kindly to them would not help them, whereas speaking in a harsher, more critical manner would. In such a case, speaking harshly and critically would be acceptable conduct. What actually happens in such cases is that the person hears a great deal of criticism of their bad qualities, and then they become pacified, and then they become happy. So in those circumstances it is permissible to speak harshly to others. Having pure motivation, bodhisattvas will sometimes manifest the conduct of the seven non-virtuous actions,* and there are good reasons for their

***Editor's note:** Here Rinpoche is referring to the three misdeeds of body—killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct—and the three misdeeds of speech—lying, speaking slanderously or divisively, speaking harshly, and speaking idly and meaninglessly. Rinpoche does not mention the remaining three unvirtuous deeds because they are negative motivational factors of mind—maliciousness, covetousness, and erroneous views—and it has already been established that the bodhisattva's motivation is pure.

Then there is the story of the mahasiddha Lavapa. He attained realization by sleeping on the side of the road for twelve years while meditating on clear light

doing so. It is like that on the bodhisattva path.

In the vajrayana, mahamudra yogins or yoginis sometimes try to make anger come up by speaking harshly. They cause the anger to manifest and then meditate on its essential nature. So that is something different. In the province of Kham in Tibet, there once lived a very famous couple, a yogini and a yogin, who lived together but always fought. Whenever people went to see them, they would be fighting bitterly with each other. Sometimes the woman would go up to the top of a nearby cliff and shout back to her man, "I hate you so much I am going to jump off this cliff." And the man would sit below and shout back, "Jump, jump, I can't wait." They would fight in this way all the time, and in the end they both attained the rainbow body, because all along they had been meditating on the essential nature of their anger. That was their practice. Nobody knew they were practicing in that way, but that is what they were doing, and they attained great accomplishment as a result. That is how it happened.

Then there is the story of the mahasiddha Lavapa. He attained realization by sleeping on the side of the road for twelve years while meditating on clear light. When people saw him, they would say, "Look at this lazy bum. He is just sitting here sleeping." But in fact, he was being incredibly diligent. It is not easy to sleep for twelve years continuously, but he did it, and in the process he attained great realization because he was meditating on the essential nature of sleep, which is luminosity. There is no one else in history who has been able to sleep for twelve years; it is incredibly difficult to do and requires great diligence to sleep that long. So it is like that. Now we will meditate.

If you look nakedly at the essential nature of the thought that thinks, "I am going to meditate now," and you let go and relax within that, then

that is mahamudra. If you practice with a focus in mind, then that is shamatha meditation as practiced in all the vehicles. If you just rest relaxed within your own basic nature, that is called essential shamatha, and that is the supreme form of calm-abiding meditation. In the vajrayana, the best way to practice shamatha meditation is to visualize your yidam. You can do this in two different ways. You can visualize the different aspects of the yidam and its ornaments individually and focus on one at a time, or you can focus on the entire body of the deity all at once. This is the best form of shamatha in the vajrayana. You can also focus on your breath, on feelings that you are experiencing, on bodily sensations, on different parts of the body, on the body's being of the nature of clear light. You can meditate in any one of these ways.

[Rinpoche and students recite dedication prayers and long life prayers.]

Tomorrow we will explain the sixth mind generation. This is a teaching on emptiness, and we will explain a few reasons why the nature of reality is emptiness.

Let's sing the song that is a prayer for all

If you look
nakedly at the
essential nature
of the thought
that thinks I
am going to
meditate now,
and you let go
and relax within
that, then that is
mahamudra

sentient beings with whom we have a good or bad connection. [Students sing. See page 50.]

This prayer is something that is in harmony with most of the religious traditions of the world, because most religious traditions pray that people will go to a pure realm after death. But there is a difference in the Buddhist conception of this aspiration. According to the Buddhist tradition, after you are born in a pure realm and have rested, you come back to an impure realm when it is time again to practice the difficult practices of developing patience, giving generously to people who are in need, and so forth. When the time is right to help people in the impure realms, then you come back. In Sukhavati, in the pure realm of Dewachen or Great Bliss, no one hurts you, and so you have no opportunity to practice patience. There are no poor people in Sukhavati, so there is no opportunity to practice generosity. So in order to perfect these

two practices of patience and generosity, you have to come back to the impure realms. After you are born in Dewachen, then it is okay to come back here. Is that not good?

Goodnight. Sarva Mangalam. ㊦



Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way
**The Sixth Mind Generation:
The Approach**

[Students sing songs beginning *Know the five skandas are like an illusion; All the images conjured up by a magician; Like a dream, like an illusion; There are two ways of seeing everything . . .* See page 59.]

To Lama Tashi and to everyone, a very warm *tashi delek* this morning. May you all manifest the great radiance of the true nature of mind, which is buddha nature, clear light.

The true nature of mind, buddha nature, contains within it the seeds of both compassion and wisdom. By first receiving the instructions on how to cultivate compassion, we can cultivate it and cause it to grow and grow, and by receiving teachings of wisdom to which we listen and on which we reflect, we can cause our wisdom also to increase and increase. Therefore, it is Rinpoche's aspiration that we do so, so that we will be able to perform the benefit of others and at the same time cause the confusion of dualistic appearances that exists in our minds to disappear, thereby accomplishing the two forms of benefit, benefit for self and others, in a spontaneous and natural way. This is Rinpoche's aspiration for us.

The twentieth century has been a century of great material prosperity and of great scientific advancement. Therefore, it is very important for all of us who are dharma practitioners to accumulate the wealth of the wisdom of listening to, reflecting on, and meditating on the teachings of the genuine dharma.

The dharma jewels of the wisdom of listening, reflecting, and meditating cannot be stolen by any thief, and therefore they are the greatest wealth of all. Since they benefit both self and other, they are the greatest wealth of all. Since they are able to wipe away confusion, they are the greatest wealth of all. Since they help us to realize that suffering is not real, they are the greatest wealth of all. Since they enable us to gain inner peace, they are the greatest wealth of all. Since they help us to realize the equality of friends and enemies, they are the best friends we have. Therefore, amass the wealth of the wisdom of listening, reflecting, and meditating.

Today's topic of explanation is a chapter from a text composed by the glorious Chandrakirti. This author Chandrakirti had an incredible life and performed many miracles, such as the one described in the following verse:

*The glorious Chandrakirti milked the painting of
a cow,
Thereby sustaining the sangha,
And reversing everyone's clinging
To things as being real. How miraculous!*

And another of Chandrakirti's miracles is described in this way:

*The glorious Chandrakirti
Exhorted two mighty stone lions to roar,
Causing Duruka's army to flee
Without killing or wounding a single person—
how miraculous!*

We are examining *Entrance to the Middle Way*, a text written by this being who lived such an incredible, miraculous, and wonderful life. Chandrakirti taught this text in the form of ten different chapters, each corresponding to a different one of the ten transcendent perfections

and a different bodhisattva ground. On each ground a different transcendent perfection is predominant in the activity of the bodhisattva. We have now reached the sixth.

The outline for this sixth chapter has three main parts. The first is a brief explanation of the one who is realizing emptiness, also called an explanation of the essential nature of this particular bodhisattva ground. The second is an extensive explanation of emptiness as perceived by the bodhisattva on this ground. And the third is a conclusion and summary by means of expressing the qualities of this ground.

The first verse reads:

**The perfect bodhisattvas whose minds rest in the
equipoise of the approach
Approach the qualities of buddhahood.
They see the suchness of dependent arising
And from abiding in wisdom, they will attain
cessation. (1)**

There are two names given this ground. The one first given in this commentary is "The Approach," which indicates that at this point the bodhisattva is getting very close to attaining the qualities of enlightenment. In other texts it is called "The Manifest," because in the bodhisattva's meditative equipoise, they are able to manifest incredible realization of the nature of reality, transcending all conceptual fabrications. The root verse here follows the name, "The Approach," and the commentary states that the bodhisattvas at this point in their development rest their minds in the incredibly wonderful equipoise of the approach of the sixth ground. At this time their minds have completely and directly understood, have completely become expert in the direct meditative realization of the truth—the truth of the way things appear, which is relative or superficial reality, and the truth of how things actually are, which is genuine or ultimate reality. Through the power of having realized these two truths so well, they understand fully, in their hearts or in their mind-streams, the dharmata, the true reality of the world, which is that whatever appears is a merely dependent arising, just as whatever reflections arise in a mirror or in water, arise in depen-

dence on other factors. And since everything [that appears in our minds, in the world, and in our experience of the world] is just dependently arisen, then everything is of the nature of emptiness. This is what sixth-bhumi bodhisattvas perfectly see.

The first five bodhisattva grounds are focused on the truth of the path.* Here on the sixth ground, bodhisattvas approach the attainment or the manifestation of the Buddha's qualities. So here in the commentary we get these two names back to back. In the root text it says "approach," and then in the commentary it also says alternatively you can say "manifestation." Why? Because they approach the attainment of the manifestation of the Buddha's qualities and they see the suchness of everything that appears in this life. They see the suchness of all the phenomena that are comprised of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and phenomena that appear to the mind. They see the suchness of these phenomena, that they are mere appearances that arise due to the coming

together of causes and conditions. The suchness of these dependent arisings is that they are empty of any inherent existence. Having realized that, seeing that, they abide in the supreme transcendent perfection, the supreme paramita of prajna, the paramita of wisdom. And because of that abiding in prajnaparamita, they will attain cessation. This is the cause of their attaining the truth of cessation. Now what is this cessation? The commentary explains. It is not the cessation that the arhats of the shravakayana and the solitary sages, the pratyekabuddhas, realize. That type of cessation is a mere stopping of the activity of the seven consciousnesses, the seven excluding the alaya consciousness. It is not that type of cessation. Rather it is the realization of perfect freedom from all conceptual fabrications, the realization of the simplicity which is free of any extremes, be they the extremes of existence and non-existence, appearance and emptiness, truth and falsity, and so forth. That is what cessation refers to here.**

To explain how important it is to realize

***Editor's note:** Here Rinpoche is referring to the fourth of the Four Noble Truths, the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. The first three of the Four Noble Truths are the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, and the truth of the cessation of suffering.

****Editor's note:** From the standpoint of wisdom, the bodhisattva path to buddhahood is entirely concerned with realizing the wisdom of emptiness, suchness, dharmata, the true nature—all of which are synonyms, more or less, of the same experience, discussed from different perspectives of relative truth. As beginners, we start out practicing ordinary virtues, abandoning the ten unvirtuous actions and adopting the ten virtuous actions, while practicing meditation and mindfulness, and listening to and studying the Buddha's teachings. This is all very path-oriented, consisting of practices understandable and practicable by beginners whose minds are still locked in dualistic perception. However, if the student practices sincerely, diligently, and energetically, then gradually, based on the blessings of the lama, they will begin to have momentary experiences of suchness or emptiness or dharmata, what the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche called "glimpses." At this point, these experiences come unexpectedly, are momentary, and cannot be reproduced at will by the student. If the student becomes attached to such experiences, grows proud of them, afraid of them, or becomes fixated on them in any way whatsoever, then these experiences can even become an obstacle to the student's further development. But if the practitioner continues to practice sincerely with one-pointed diligence and exertion, sooner or later, whether in this lifetime or in a future lifetime, they will definitely experience a decisive understanding of emptiness, which is called the "Path of Seeing," and is the experience that establishes one in and

marks the beginning of the first bodhisattva ground as described in this text. At this point the bodhisattva can enter into the meditation on emptiness at will; in fact, according to Khenpo Rinpoche, the bodhisattva's realization of emptiness during meditation is the same as the buddhas', though not as vast or extensive. Apart from the inconceivable vastness and extensiveness of a buddha's realization, the principal difference between a buddha and a bodhisattva lies in the fact that the buddha's realization or awareness remains the same during post-meditation as it is during samadhi, while the bodhisattva experiences the world like a dream or like an illusion or like one of the other analogies of emptiness.

The bodhisattva then continues to practice the same path of abandoning unvirtuous actions and adopting virtuous ones as described in the noble eight-fold path, the ten unvirtuous actions, the ten virtuous actions, and the six or ten paramitas, that we as ordinary practitioners practice, except with increasing freedom from fixation on the three spheres of the one performing the virtue or act, the virtue or act itself, and the one in reference to whom the virtue or act is being performed. By the time the bodhisattva reaches the sixth ground, based on following the path of the first five grounds, the maintenance of this awareness of emptiness in all activities, this awareness of suchness or dharmata, has become the bodhisattva's main practice. Although the wisdom mind realizing emptiness is the profoundest understanding of the path leading to the cessation of suffering and to buddhahood, it can be seen to be much more cessation-oriented than the path as it has been practiced at earlier stages of development. It is also out of this wisdom mind realizing emptiness or the true nature that all the qualities of the subsequent four bodhisattva grounds—skillful means, aspiration, power, and jnana—and all the qualities of buddhahood grow. Thus prajna paramita is called the mother of all the buddhas.

emptiness if one wishes to attain the state of buddhahood, the next verse is taught:

**Just as a person with eyes
Can easily lead a whole group of blind people
wherever they wish to go,
So here, the mind endowed with wisdom
Guides the blind qualities to the Victor's ground.
(2)**

Given the individual who wishes to attain the state of enlightenment so that they can lead all other beings to the same state, training in the wisdom realizing emptiness is very important, because it is this wisdom realizing emptiness that is able to lead the other transcendent perfections like generosity to the ground of enlightenment, to the ground of the Buddha's realization, just as someone with eyes is able quite easily and without difficulty to lead an entire group of blind people to the place where they really want to go. So if we put this in the form of this kind of reasoning, then the meaning becomes clear and easy to understand.

Next comes in three sections the actual explanation of this emptiness that is so very important to realize. First is a description of the way emptiness is explained, then a description of the vessel to whom emptiness is explained, and finally the dharma itself that is explained. The description of the way emptiness is explained is in the third verse:

**The way the bodhisattvas realize the incredibly
profound dharma
Was explained [by Nagarjuna] with scripture and
reasoning.
Therefore, just as the noble Nagarjuna did in his
texts,
So will I explain things here. (3)**

So emptiness will be explained here by taking the very profound intention of the Bud-

dha as expressed in the sutras of the second turning of the wheel of dharma and proving their validity with reasoning. And just as the ten bhumis or the ten bodhisattvas grounds are joined with the ten transcendent perfections in the *Dasabhumikasutra*, the *Sutra of the Tenth Bhumi*, so that will be the mode of explanation here.

In the precious sutras of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha taught that the basic nature of everything is that everything transcends all of our conceptual fabrications about what it might be. In this way he taught the simplicity or the freedom from all conceptual fabrications that is the essential nature of reality. And furthermore, he taught that the nature of appearances is that all appearances are equally like dreams and illusions. They are just mere appearances. The protector Nagarjuna then took these teachings and established them as flawless and valid through logical reasoning, through proofs. Chandrakirti in his turn follows the protector Nagarjuna's example in this regard. And he also explains the ten transcendent perfections as being successively connected to each of the ten bodhisattva grounds.

Next, in the explanation of the vessel or the student to whom these teachings are explained, there is a section on identifying a student capable of receiving these teachings and a section on the way in which good qualities arise in such a student upon hearing these teachings.

Verse four and the first three lines of verse five describe students capable of receiving these teachings:

**Those who even as ordinary beings, upon hearing
of emptiness
Again and again experience great happiness
within,
Have their eyes fill with the tears of joy,
And the hairs on their body stand on end, (4)**

**Those are people with the seed of the perfect Buddha's mind.
They are vessels for the teachings on suchness.
They should be taught the truth of genuine reality. . .(5abc)**

When there is a person who, even though an ordinary individual, upon hearing the teachings about emptiness feels so happy inside that their eyes well up with tears of joy, that their hair stands on end, that they get goose bumps, then this is a person to whom the teachings on suchness should be given, because this is a person in whom the habitual tendencies of the seed of the perfect Buddha's mind are waking up. Is that not wonderful!

At first one is an ordinary individual who has never before heard about emptiness, but then we are introduced to it by means of the analogies that teach that everything is just like an illusion or a dream and is just empty form and nothing more. After hearing about emptiness in this way, we hear more teachings and we think about these teachings with our intelligence and we begin to appreciate them. So we want to learn more. And as we learn more, our confidence in emptiness grows and our certainty in and our appreciation of these teachings gets greater and greater, and we find that we are increasingly happy to hear them.

In fact, we are incredibly fortunate if we are interested in these teachings, because it is so easy not to be interested. It is so easy to believe that this world exists as it appears to exist, just as it is very easy not to recognize a dream when we dream. It is very easy to think that the happiness and the suffering that we experience in this lifetime are in fact real, as they appear to be. And so if somebody is interested in hearing about how these things do not really exist, then they are incredibly fortunate.

When we dream and do not recognize that we are dreaming, then we do not want to hear that things are not real. We do not like that idea,

because we have such strong attachment to things as existing as they appear to exist. We want to believe that they exist. And even if we should know that we are dreaming, still we do not want to think that things are not real. We still want to think that they exist as they appear to exist. So the teachings on emptiness, which teach that things are not real, that they are empty of any reality or any validity, are not popular. People generally do not want to hear them.

As we live our lives, we want things to be good. We like to be happy. We like to be surrounded by friends and good circumstances. So we are happy to think that those things exist. We do not like to suffer. We do not like to come into

In fact, we are incredibly fortunate if we are interested in these teachings, because it is not so easy to be interested

contact with people that we do not like. Therefore, it is an expression of skillful means to present the teachings on emptiness first by teaching that suffering does not really exist, that our enemies are not truly real. In that way, we can teach emptiness in a way that accords with our likes and dislikes. Our enemies and our suffering do not really exist because they are neither one nor many, because they are mere imputed fabrications of

conceptual mind, because they are mere dependently arisen appearances. The best way to begin is by proving that the appearances of this life that we do not like, and would rather did not exist, do not in fact exist.

This is a concise explanation of emptiness. Later Rinpoche will give a more extensive explanation.

Next comes an explanation in two parts of the way in which good qualities arise as a result of hearing teachings on emptiness. First is the way in which the good qualities of the relative—the means, the method—arise. Second is the way in which the good quality of the genuine, primordial awareness, arises. The good qualities of the relative are presented in the last line of the fifth verse through the first line of the seventh verse:

And all the good qualities coming from that will arise within them. (5)

**Their discipline is always perfect,
They give generously, rely on compassion,
Cultivate patience, and the resulting virtue
They thoroughly dedicate to enlightenment in
order to liberate beings. (6)**

They respect the perfect bodhisattvas. (7a)

Their discipline is always perfect. Why is that the case? First such people hear teachings on emptiness and really like them. As a result they want to hear these teachings again and again, not only in this life, but also in future lives. How are we going to be able to listen to these teachings in future lives? If we want to hear the teachings on emptiness in future lives, we have to get a human body or a god's body. And in order to get those bodies, we need good conduct; we need discipline. Without good conduct, we will be born in the hell realms or as hungry ghosts or as animals, and then we will not be able to hear the teachings on emptiness. And so their discipline is always good, because they want to get that good support for listening to the teachings on emptiness again.

There are two main aspects to this discipline, to this right conduct that is being described here. One conducts oneself in a way that is not harmful to others, and one conducts oneself in a way that is beneficial to others. We abandon harming others and take up conduct beneficial to others. And while doing that we make aspiration prayers that the result of discipline and good conduct will be a good support for listening to the teachings on emptiness again in future lifetimes. When these three come together, then the result is very good.

They give generously. Why? Because it is possible to attain a human birth or birth as a deity but not have the ability to listen to teachings on emptiness, because one has no clothes or

no food, because one is poor. Such poverty can create obstacles to receiving teachings on emptiness. A way to make sure that that does not happen is to give to others in this life. By practicing generosity, we ensure that in the future we will have the material means to listen to the teachings on emptiness. So when we give in this life we should make aspiration prayers that the result of this will be that in the future we have sufficient means to be able to listen to teachings on emptiness and to be able to practice these teachings in future lifetimes. We can also aspire or make aspiration prayers that in the future we

will find a very peaceful, secluded place in which to meditate, a place abundantly endowed with everything we need to be able to practice shamatha in a very good way that will further our realization of emptiness. We should make these aspiration prayers too.

They rely on compassion. Why? Because merely meditating on emptiness alone is not enough to reach the ground of buddhahood. One needs compassion as well. If we just meditate

on emptiness, we will end up as intermediate buddhas, solitary sages, pratyekabuddhas, and that is not our intention. Our intention is to attain highest buddhahood, and in order to do that, we need both emptiness and compassion.

And they cultivate patience. Why? Because they think, "If I get angry, my mind will become agitated and I will forget about emptiness, which is what I really value. I do not want that to happen, so it is better for me to be patient and not get angry." And so they practice patience.

If we get angry, then this fierce anger causes us to forget the view of emptiness. If after that we hold a grudge against somebody, then holding that grudge harms the view of emptiness. It causes it to decay. And so we practice patience, which frees us from anger and resentment.

And then they dedicate all their virtue to the attainment of enlightenment so that all beings

**By practicing
generosity, we
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means to listen
to the teachings
on emptiness**

can be liberated from samsara. In order to lead all beings to this same state of enlightenment of the buddhas, they dedicate all of their activity to that end.

They respect the perfect bodhisattvas. Since they themselves love so much to mediate on emptiness, they develop great respect and devotion towards those who have realized it directly and are able to teach them to do the same.

If one does not really like meditating on emptiness, there is no reason to have respect for the noble beings who have realized it. But if one likes to meditate on emptiness and likes to get teachings on how to do so, then one naturally feels great respect and devotion towards those who have mastered this kind of meditation and are able to teach one how to do the same.

An example of this praise and respect is found in the story of the son of Machig Labdrön, whose name was Gyalwa Döndrup. He sang many songs in praise of his mother, one of which was called “The Song in Praise of Machig Because She Has Perfected the Six Paramitas.” In one verse of this song he sang, “I praise you, my mother; you have realized emptiness. In emptiness there is no anger. You have perfected the practice of patience.” Because she had realized emptiness, she could never get angry, and this is the perfection of the practice of patience. And because her son also really liked to mediate on emptiness and wanted to achieve the same state that she had, he offered her this praise. If he had not wanted to do that, he would have had no reason to praise her for these qualities.

Similarly, when Machig Labdrön passed into nirvana, Gyalwa Döndrup sang a different song in praise of her at each of the four doors of her cremation shrine—first at the western door, then at the southern door, then at the eastern door, and then at northern door. At each door, he sang a different song in praise of his noble and

exalted mother, who was noble and exalted because she had realized emptiness.

At one of those gates he sang a verse in which he praised Machig Labdrön in the following way: “Mother, you are the woman who is the prajnaparamita siddha. You are extremely kind to all of the disciples of your lineage. Please bless me and all of your other students, so that

we may realize what you have.”

And so he praises Machig Labdrön as the prajnaparamita siddha. Most all other realized siddhas, men and women alike, attain their realization through vajrayana practices, but Machig Labdrön was different. She realized emptiness by reading the twelve volumes of the one hundred thousand-verse *Prajnaparamita Sutra* every day for a month. She read all twelve volumes every day for a month, and through doing that she realized emptiness. And so Gyalwa Döndrup praises her as the prajna paramita siddha. It was because he also wanted to realize empti-

ness that he praised her in this way. If he had not, then he would not have cared what his mother had done. It would not have made any difference to him. And so we see that it was because she had realized emptiness and because Gyalwa Döndrup had such respect for her having done so, that he made these praises.

How did she realize emptiness? Over and over again, she read verses from the sutra which say things like, “Form is not white; it is not green; it is not red; it is not rectangular; it is not triangular. There is no form.” Why is there no form? Because, what is form? Can you say it is white? No, because that would exclude everything that is red. Can you say it is red? No, for the same reason. You cannot define form as anything.* And therefore there is no such thing as form. It is just a mere appearance.

***Editor’s note:** Because every attempt to do so will exclude something else we think of as having form.

Machig Labdrön realized emptiness by reading the twelve volumes of the one hundred thousand-verse Prajnaparamita Sutra every day for a month

And so this has been an explanation of how the relative qualities of method or skillful means arise as a result of the practitioner's liking to hear about emptiness, having great faith in the teachings on emptiness.

Next, in the last three lines of verse seven, comes the description of how the ultimate qualities of wisdom arise from liking to hear about emptiness:

**The individual who is skilled in the profound and vast natures
Will gradually progress to the ground of *Perfect Joy*.
Therefore, those who wish to do the same should listen [to the teachings about] this path. (7bcd)**

Here “profound” refers to wisdom and “vast” refers to method. The individual who is skilled in the profound and vast natures which have been described in this way does not separate them out and consider them to be different from each other, existing as independent things, because they are not independent things. The one who is skilled in that will progress along the paths—the first being the path of accumulation, the second the path of juncture, and the third the path of seeing, which is the first bodhisattva ground, the ground of perfect joy. Bodhisattvas and other beings who are appropriate vessels for the teachings on emptiness progress along the paths in that way, and those who want to do the same should listen to the profound teachings, which are about to be described.

The individual who wishes to reach the first noble bodhisattva ground, the ground of *Perfect Joy*, should listen to, reflect upon, and meditate upon teachings about emptiness, because if they do not listen to teachings about emptiness, they will not even know that emptiness exists. They will not even know there is such a thing as

emptiness. If they do not reflect on those teachings, they will never eliminate their doubts. They will never come to certainty. And if they do not come to certainty through reflection, then they will not be able to meditate [properly or skillfully] on anything. Therefore the individual should listen to, reflect on, and meditate on teachings about emptiness.

The only thing that most people in the world know about emptiness is an empty house, an empty cup, or something like that. They would never dream that these superficial appearances have no inherent nature. Most people have never heard about that, and they will not think of it on their own either. That is why these teachings are so rare, precious, and important.

It is the same in dreams. As ordinary beings, when we dream, we only think that the forms

and sounds and smells and things we taste and touch that appear in our dreams are real. We never stop to think that they might not be real. The idea never crosses our minds. The only things we think are empty are cups and houses and space and cars and things like that.

Even though it is the case that all the sights and sounds and smells and things we taste and touch in dreams have no inherent existence, we have no power to give rise to the thought that realizes that. The realization has no strength within us, and so the thought that these things might not be real does not enter our minds. This explains how the thoughts which think things are real obscure our realization of the

nature of genuine reality. If you want to know how this works, we need only think of the example of the dream.

In the *Sutra of the Tenth Bhumi* the Buddha says that bodhisattvas move from the fifth ground to the sixth through the ten types of equality, the ten ways in which everything is

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basically the same. What are these ten types of equality?

The first is that everything is basically the same because nothing has any identifiable signs. The second is that everything is basically the same because nothing has any distinguishing characteristics. The third is that everything in the future is the same because none of it will ever happen. The fourth is that everything in the past is the same because none of it ever happened. The fifth is that everything is the same because it is all completely free of happening in the present. The sixth is that everything is fundamentally the same because everything is, from the beginning, completely pure. The seventh is that everything is basically the same because everything is free from all of our ideas about what they are. They are all of the nature of simplicity, of the nature of the freedom from conceptual fabrications. The eighth is that everything is basically the same because none of it need be adopted and none of it need be rejected. There is nothing to adopt and nothing to reject. The ninth is that everything is basically the same because everything is equally just like an illusion, a dream, an echo, a water moon, a reflection, and an emanation. There is nothing that is not like that, and everything is like that in an equal way. And finally, everything is equal or the same because there is absolutely no difference between something's existing and something's not existing. There is no difference between things that exist and things that do not.

The first of these ten types of equality is the equality of everything *because there are no identifiable signs of anything*. This refers to when we think, "Oh, this is something clean, this is something dirty, this is my friend, this is my enemy." We have a vast variety of different

We cannot really conceive of what the meditative equipoise of noble beings is like. But we can have some understanding of dreams and of how it is that the signs of things that appear to us in dreams, in fact, do not really exist

kinds of thoughts in relation to outer signs, which identify these things as being one or the other for us. Things seem to have on the outside certain qualities of being one way or the other. But none of these really exists, and bodhisattvas in meditative equipoise do not perceive any such distinctions like those between things. How can we understand that? Well, it is helpful to think of the example of the dream. We can dream of some things being very beautiful and clean and of other things being ugly and displeasing. We can dream of friends and enemies, and all of these things appear to have different characteristics, different signs which identify them. But in fact, none of these characteristics or signs really exist. This example is helpful for us, because we cannot really conceive of what the meditative equipoise of noble beings is like. But we can have some understanding of dreams and of how it is that the signs of things, the marks of things that appear to us in dreams, in fact, do not really exist.

In a dream we have many different kinds of thoughts, which cling to the existence of signs and marks that seem to identify things, but, in fact, none of the marks in dreams, none of the identifying signs, exists. And it is the same in waking life. In the waking state we have a great variety of different kinds of thoughts which express a belief in the existence of identifiable signs which these thoughts think they perceive, but in fact none of these signs which identify things to us exists.

Next is the equality of things *because there are no distinguishing or defining characteristics*. What is this talking about? This refers to a way of analysis that understands that there are two things happening: there is an object that has its own individual characteristics, and then there is

the name that we give to that object. For example, in the case of fire, there is the thing that is actually hot and burning, and then there is the name fire, which we give to that thing. Here we are talking about the thing itself, that which is called the basis for imputing the name. In the case of fire, it is that which is actually hot and burning. Many different kinds of these distinguishing characteristics can appear to us in dreams, but none of them really exists. Therefore, all phenomena are equal because there are no distinguishing or defining characteristics. Things do not have their own individual characteristics.

The third is that everything in the future is the same *in that it never will arise*. Nothing will ever happen. Arising in the future does not happen. None of it will ever come into existence. Why? Because arising itself is just a mere appearance. There is really no such thing as arising. It is just the mere appearance of the coming together of causes and conditions.

The fourth is that everything is the same, of the nature of equality, *in that nothing in the past ever happens*. Everything is just like appearances in a dream. We could have had a dream last night, and lots of different things could have seemed to have happened. But none of it really did happen. And everything that we experience in the past in our waking state is the same way. None of it has ever really come into being.

The fifth is that everything is the same, of the nature of equality, *because everything is completely free*. Free of what? Free of happening in the present. So the third is that nothing in the future is going to happen. The fourth is that nothing in the past has happened, and the fifth is that, if there should be any arising in between those two, any process of present happening, that is not really happening or arising either.

Even though a finger snap is something very coarse,* still we can see that, if we line up all

the instants of time the length of a finger snap that have occurred in the past, and then line up all the instants of time the length of a finger snap that will occur in the future, we will find that there is no gap between the last past instant of time and the first future instant of time. That there is nothing there. And so there is no present process of birth or arising or happening.**

We can look at suffering in the same way. If we look at all of the suffering we have had in the past up until this moment, and from this moment, at all of the suffering we are going to experience in the future, then in between these two there is nothing. There is nothing in between these periods of time. And so there is no such thing as present suffering.

It is the same with death.

There is all the time before you die and then there is all the time after you die. But in between those two there is nothing. There is no process of death. If death really happens, when does death happen? It does not happen when you are alive, and it does not happen after you are already dead, and there is nothing in between those two states, because you are either alive or dead—there is no third possibility! There is no point of death. This is why people who die never know at what time they die. There is no such point. When you try to find the “process” of any activity, you can’t find the instant in which it happens, because between all the past instants and all the future ones there isn’t anything there. Thus the lord of yogis, Milarepa, sang, “I’ve gained confidence that there is no arising. This swept away my taking past and future lives as two, exposed all

***Editor’s note:** By some Buddhist calculations of time, there are 60 moments of time in the duration of one finger snap.

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Everything is the same, of the nature of equality, because everything is completely free. Free of what? Free of happening in the present

six realms' appearances as false, and cut right through believing all too much in birth and death."

It is the same with getting angry. In between all of the anger of the past and all of the anger there will be in the future, there is nothing. There is no time there for any present anger to exist in. And so anger is not real.

The sixth is that everything is the same, of the nature of equality, *because everything is completely pure, primordially pure*. The purity of phenomena was not created by any one. Nobody takes—even buddhas do not take—impure things and make them pure, because it is the very nature of things to be pure. That is how they naturally are, and that is how they have always been. The way in which they are completely pure is described in the heart sutra where it says, "There are no stains. There is no freedom from stains." This is the way things have been from beginningless time. They have always been free of any flaw. With regard to sentient beings, we have a vast variety of different kinds of thoughts. Some of them are very good, and some of them are vile and base. But whatever type of thought there might be, its essence has always been completely pure.

The seventh type of equality is that *all things transcend all conceptual fabrications about what they might be*. This means that you cannot say that things exist; you cannot say that they do not exist; you cannot say that there are things; and you cannot say there are no things. The nature of reality is beyond all of these conceptual fabrications.

In dreams there appear to be different types of characteristics and qualities of things, and we think that these characteristics and qualities exist. But, in fact, none of them do. And so the nature of the many different things we perceive in dreams also transcends all conceptual fabrications about what they might be.

The eighth type of equality is that in *every-*

thing there is equally nothing to adopt and nothing to reject or get rid of. Here this means that there is nothing we need to bring in from the outside. There is nothing outside that we somehow need to get. And similarly, there is nothing inside that we need to get rid of.

In a dream, if we do not know we are dreaming, it can appear as though there is something we need to get from the outside, and it can appear as though there is something inside that we need to get rid of. But in fact, since it is just a dream, these do not really exist. There is nothing that we need to get and there is nothing we need to get rid of. And so this is how it is in the waking state as well. Thinking about the dream example helps us to understand how this is the case.

The ninth way that everything is basically the same is that *everything is like an illusion, a dream, an optical illusion, an echo, a water moon, a reflection, or an emanation*. These seven examples illustrate through analogies how it is that things are the undifferentiability of appearance and emptiness. These analogies are taught because we need to realize that everything is

We need to realize that everything is appearance-emptiness undifferentiable

appearance-emptiness undifferentiable, and what helps us do that are the examples of these empty forms. So we should sing the verse by Nagarjuna on illusion, because in that verse there are three examples given, and the point in each is the same.

*Like a dream, like an illusion,
Like a city of gandharvas,
That's how birth, and that's how living,
That's how dying are taught to be.*

When we think about our feelings of happiness or sadness, our feelings of joy or of pain, then the dream example is very helpful, because we experience these feelings in dreams, but then we wake up and know that none of it was real. So, when we experience those types of feelings in the waking state, it is very helpful to think of

the dream example. When we are going around in the big city, then the example of a city of gandharvas is very helpful. To think of it as just being a city of these [disembodied, ghost-like, smell-eating] spirits.

And now in these times advanced machines can produce all kinds of different images. The example that is helpful here is the example of an illusion, because if the causes and conditions come together for these things to appear, then they do; and if the causes and conditions do not come together, then they simply do not appear.

The appearance of an illusion requires a great number of causes and conditions to come together. If even one of these is not present, then the illusion will not be able to be seen very clearly at all, if at all. One of these very important causes is the observer of the illusion. If there is no observer then there is no illusion. You have to have eyes to see it.

With movies and email, if all of the causes and conditions come together, then they can be seen. This includes as a necessary cause somebody to look at them. If there is nobody to look at them, then there is nothing really there. There is nothing really happening.

The tenth and last type of equality is the *equality of entity and non-entity, or of something and nothing*. In all of this we are doing a lot of refuting of existence, of there being something. Therefore, it might seem as though there were nothing. But, in fact, there is neither something nor nothing. It is just like in a dream. There appears to be something, on the one hand, and nothing, on the other hand, but in fact, neither the something nor the nothing really exists.

If, from among all of these ten types of equality, we can understand how it is that nothing really happens, that nothing really arises, then the rest is easy to understand. Gaining understanding of this key point allows all the other points to be understood very easily. Therefore,

Chandrakirti focuses in the sixth chapter of this text on proving that nothing really arises. The basis of that discussion and that proof is entirely contained in the first and second lines of the eighth verse, which therefore underlies the whole sixth chapter:

It does not arise from itself; how could it arise from something else?

It does not arise from self and other together; how could it arise without a cause? (8ab)

We should recite this statement, which is the key thesis of this chapter, three times. [Students recite.]

Now we should sing together a verse from Milarepa's song called the *Three Kinds of Confidence in Genuine Reality*:

*I've gained confidence that there is no arising.
This swept away my taking past and future lives
as two,
Exposed all six realms' appearances as false,
And cut right through believing all too much in
birth and death.
Hey hey! Hey hey!*

[Students sing.]

Chandrakirti focuses in the sixth chapter of this text on proving that nothing really arises

This is a warrior song, because, if we do not know that we are dreaming, then every little thing will make us afraid. But if, when we dream, we know that we are dreaming, then nothing will make us afraid. We know that nothing is really happening, so there is nothing of which to be scared. So it is like that.

So we can see that no arising is the intention of the teachings of both Milarepa and Chandrakirti.

Let's recite the eight verses that Rinpoche has taught this morning.

[Students recite.]

It is good to recite these root verses again and again, many many times, because this plants within us the seeds of the habitual tendencies to understanding.

This text, *Entrance to the Middle Way*, is studied by all four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism—Kagyü, Nyingma, Sakya, and Gelug. They all study it, and so it would be good if people from all four traditions could get together to recite it together. The way that they meditate upon it may be different, according to the teachings that they respectively receive. But everybody can recite this text together.

When you meditate, you can meditate according to the *rangtong* view, the *shentong* view, the mahamudra view, or the dzogchen view, whatever you like. It is up to you as an individual, and there is no need for any disharmony about these things, because it is every individual's choice.

You can also meditate on the deity arising instantly out of emptiness, dissolving instantly into emptiness.

[Rinpoche dedicates the merit with the following verse:]

*By this virtue may all beings
Perfect the accumulations of merit and wisdom,
And may they attain the two genuine dimensions
That arise from merit and wisdom.**

[Students dedicate the merit with the following verses:]

*By this merit may all obtain omniscience.
May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness,
and death,
From the ocean of samsara may I free all beings.*

*May all beings have happiness and the root of
happiness,
Be free from suffering and the root of suffering.
May they never be separate from the great happiness
devoid of suffering.
May they live in the great equanimity free from
passion, aggression, and partiality.*

[Students recite long life prayers of His Holiness Örgyen Trinley Dorje, The Seventeenth Karmapa, and of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche:]

*Unborn, eternal, self existing dharmakaya,
Arising as the miraculous rupakaya,
May these three secrets of the Karmapa remain in
the vajra nature,
And may his limitless spontaneous buddha
activity splendidly blaze!*

*By the power of the blessings of
All the buddhas and bodhisattvas without excep-
tion,
And of all lamas, yidams, and protectors abiding
in all the pure realms of the ten directions,
May the lotus feet of the genuine spiritual friend
remain firm,
And may his awakened activity pervade all
directions!*

[Rinpoche recites a prayer in Tibetan.]

Should we not say a prayer for all the beings with whom we have a good or bad connection? When you drive away today, you will kill lots of little bugs underneath the wheels of your car. In that way you make a bad connection with those bugs. But that bad connection can turn into a very positive one by making aspiration prayers for them. [Students sing the following verse:]

*All you sentient beings I have a good or bad
connection with,
As soon as you have left this confused dimension,
May you be born in the west in Sukhavati,
And once you're born there, complete the bhumis
and the paths.*

Good. Sarva Mangalam. 

***Editor's note:** The two genuine dimensions of enlightenment, alternatively translated as the two sacred bodies, are the dharmakaya, which is uncovered through the accumulation of wisdom, and the rupakaya—the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya taken together—which arise from the dharmakaya through the accumulation of merit.

Continuing the Explanation of The Sixth Mind Generation: The Approach

[Students begin by reciting the verses that Rinpoche taught in the previous session.]

The statement found in the first two lines of the eighth verse, that things do not arise from any of the four extremes, is the thesis of this chapter and so we will begin by explaining this briefly.*

Given entities, they do not arise from themselves, because if they did, arising would be both meaningless and endless.

Arising would be meaningless because if things arose from themselves they would have to be both the producer and the produced, which means they would have to exist before they arose. If they existed before they arose then their subsequent arising would be meaningless, because if something were to



exist before it arose that would be in contradiction with sound reasoning.

But if, on the other hand, it were the case that even though it existed, it would need to arise again, as is postulated by this thesis, then arising would know no end, because it would exist but still have to arise. Then it would [still] exist and so [still] have to arise. So arising would be endless.

If it needed to arise, even after existing, then what would bring an end to arising? Nothing. Normally, when things exist, that is when we know they have stopped arising, but here it

would be the case that something that existed would need to arise, so the arising would go on forever. Therefore, things do not arise from themselves.

Since things do not exist as the producer before they themselves exist as the produced,

***Editor's note:** See verse 8ab from the previous session.

then things do not arise from themselves. How then could things arise from something other than themselves? If they do not arise from themselves, how could they arise from something other than themselves? Entities do not arise from something different from themselves, because at the time the cause is present, the result is not.

When the cause exists, the result does not exist. When the result exists, the cause does not exist. So these have the relationship of thing and nothing. When one exists, the other does not, and therefore a thing does not arise from something other than itself because there is nothing other than itself there from which it could arise. There is only one at a time. For something to arise from something other than itself, there has to be something else for it to be other to, something else for it to be different from. But since only one exists at a time you cannot posit that things arise from something different from or other than themselves.

For example, if you take a finger snap, then first, all the fingers are getting ready and the thought to snap the fingers is getting ready. So all the causes are assembling. But the result does not exist. But when you snap your fingers, then you have the result present, but all the causes are gone at the time the result occurs. And so, regarding causes and results, you only have one present at a time. And since you only have one present at a time, there is nothing other there for something to arise from, or to cause something else to arise. There is only one. For there to be an "other," there have to be two present at the same time, and so things do not arise from something other than themselves.

So things that are products are not different from the things that are their causes. The result cannot be something different from that which is its cause, because only one is present at a time. And so things do not arise from things which are

other than themselves. If they did, then anything could arise from anything else. And the reason is that they are all equally different from each other, and so you could have anything coming from anything.

So causes and results are not other to each other. They do not exist in a relationship in which one is different from the other. Things which are different from each other have to exist simultaneously, as do your left and right hand, or two fingers on the same hand. So if things were to arise from things different from themselves in this way, then anything would be able to come from anything else. Any two simultaneously existent phenomena could be said to be the cause and the result. And that does not make sense.

These two refutations of arising from self and arising from other refute that kind of belief. Any belief that asserts that things arise from themselves is refuted by that. Both the Buddhist tenets (in the less advanced philosophical systems) and the non-Buddhist tenets that assert that things arise from something other than themselves are equally refuted by this reasoning.

There are slight variations in the reasonings presented in this text, depending upon what the other person is falsely ascertaining, but this one basic reasoning covers them all. And so it is the most important one, which is why we select it among many to present.

What would happen in these debates,* is that those who asserted that things arise from something other [from themselves] would come back with their own counter-reasonings, and then these too would be refuted. The whole process of debate would go on in this way. And then, of course, those who assert that things arise from themselves could and can also come up with some clever reasonings of their own, but these

***Editor's note:** And presumably in the sections of this chapter that Rinpoche did not teach.

Entities do not arise from something different from themselves, because at the time the cause is present, the result is not

also are refuted.

Then we need to look at the first two lines of verse 98:

**Arising from both self and other is also untenable
Because the faults already explained apply here as well. (98ab)**

So somebody might think, “Well, okay, so things do not arise from themselves and they do not arise from something different from themselves; maybe then they arise from some combination of these two?” But that proposition is doubly wrong, because all the faults that apply to saying that things arise from themselves, and all the faults that apply to saying that things arise from something other than themselves apply to this third reasoning. So this third reasoning has twice as many faults as the first two.

Then somebody might say, “Well, okay, then it must be that things happen without any cause whatsoever. They must just come from out of nowhere. That possibility is refuted in verse 99:

**If things arose without any cause at all,
Then everything would always exist and anything could arise from anything else.
Furthermore, no one would perform all the hundreds of tasks, like planting seeds and so forth,
That people ordinarily do to get results to arise. (99)**

The absurd consequence of the belief that things arise without cause can be stated in the following way: Given entities, they would therefore either always exist or never exist, because it would not matter if their causes were present or not. The presence or the absence of the cause would have no affect on whether a thing existed or not.

So, since things as results would have absolutely no relationship, no dependence upon, their causes, they

would then either always be there or never come into existence. Also, if things arose without cause, then no one would do anything. No one would work, because what would be the point. You would not be accumulating or creating the cause of anything, so what would be the point of planting a seed and going to all the trouble [of planting, cultivating, harvesting, and so forth], if there were no relationship between cause and result.

Then somebody might say, “Well, of course, to produce a flower you have to plant a seed. Flowers rely on causes, but other things do not. Other things just happen for no reason.” This reasoning is refuted by stating, “Then it is up to you to distinguish between why some things need causes and other things do not. What is the difference?”

Then it might be asked, “Well, what about rainbows in the sky and moons on pools of water? Those do not need any causes, do they?” And the answer is, “Yes, they do. They appear due to the coming together of causes and conditions. They are empty forms that are mere appearances appearing due to the coming together of causes and conditions.” This was how the protector Nagarjuna taught about these things.

And this is why the protector Nagarjuna said in his text, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, “There is not a single thing which is not dependently arisen; therefore, there is not a single thing that is not empty.” It is easy to understand how it is that rainbows in the sky and reflections of the moon on pools of water are mere dependently arisen appearances. Understanding that, we can apply the same reasoning and understanding to everything else and understand that everything is just a mere dependently arisen and, therefore, empty appearance.

Since it is the case that things do not arise from any one of these four possible extremes, [which are the only four possible ways

Nargarjuna said,
'There is not a single thing which is not dependently arisen; therefore, there is not a single thing that is not empty'

that things could arise,] then things really do not happen. They really never come into being. We can say that things really do not arise. We can say that in actual reality, they do not arise. We can say that there is no arising from their own side. We can say that entities in fact do not arise. We can say it in lots of different ways.

Therefore, in this great expanse of space without center or end, on this planet where there is neither top nor bottom, for all the beings there may be, self and other are equality—body and mind undifferentiable—the great transparency. Since it is all just a mere dependently arisen appearance, it never truly happens.

In accordance with the way we normally think about things, this planet arose in the middle of space, and thereafter all these beings have been and are being born one after another on this planet. But if this planet really came into existence in this space, where did it come into existence? In the middle of space? At the end of space? Where? The fact is that space is directionless. It has no center and it has no end. So, if you are going to say this planet came into existence and you cannot find out where it came into existence, then that is a logical contradiction.

What about the beings being born on this planet? [Can you not say where they are being born in reference to the planet?] Well, no. If beings are being born on this planet, are they being born on the top of the planet or on the bottom? Wherever you go on this planet, you think you are on the top of it. Nobody thinks they are on the bottom, so there is no bottom. But if there is no bottom, there cannot be any top either. So if you say someone was born and you cannot say where they were born, again you have a logical problem.

Another thing you might ask is, “All right, if

sentient beings are born, are they born as you or me?” Well, we all think we are me, but everybody else thinks that we are you. So you cannot say whether a person is you or me. So what are they? If they are born, they have to be one or the other, but they are not. And therefore, what are beings?

They are just body and mind undifferentiable—the great transparency, and since they are just mere dependently arisen appearances of that nature, then they really never arise, they are never born at all.

Therefore, the appearance of beings is just the undifferentiability of body and mind. And this is the great transparency, the nature of which is open and spacious. So there is no need to worry about the fact that beings are not real, that they are simply this great transparency, because the nature of that unreality is openness and spaciousness.

So this openness and spaciousness and relaxedness is the basic nature of reality. It is dharmadhatu, the expanse of reality. And within this dharmadhatu there are interdependent appearances of arising

which are not real appearances of arising. They are all just of the nature of the great openness and spaciousness and relaxedness.

Shenpen Ösel has printed a book of Rinpoche’s teachings, *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*,* which we all should read again and again, and see that in these teachings the convention emptiness is not used. Rather the convention dharmadhatu is used, which conveys a sense of the expanse, the openness and spaciousness and relaxedness that is the essence of reality.

From our own expanse there shine a great variety of dependently arisen appearances. From

In this great expanse of space without center or end, on this planet where there is neither top nor bottom, for all the beings there may be, self and other are equality—body and mind undifferentiable—the great transparency

***Editor’s note:** See *Shenpen Ösel*, Vol. 3, No. 2.

one's own expanse come one's own projections, one's own dependently arisen appearances. In this text, *Entrance to the Middle Way*, Chandrakirti is concerned first with refuting [the notion of an objectively existent] reality, and that is why the convention emptiness is used, the emptiness of reality, [instead of the term dharmadhatu], and it is this emptiness that is taught to be the nature of ultimate truth, the nature of actual reality.

There are, in fact, two modes of being. One is the way things appear to be, and one is the way things really are. These are differentiated in the twenty-third verse:

There are two ways of seeing everything: the perfect way and the false way. Therefore, every thing found holds two natures within. The Buddha taught that perfect seeing sees suchness And false seeing sees the relative truth. (23)

For every single thing, there are both the way that it actually is and the way that it appears to be. That which sees the way it actually is is prajna, and that which sees the way it appears to be is confused mind. Perfect seeing sees equality, which is the abiding nature of things. It also sees that which transcends all conceptual notions about what it might be. It sees the simplicity that is at the heart of reality.

In terms of the way things appear to be, there is no limit to, no end of, the variety of different ways things can appear to different beings. For example, we look at these flowers and see something very beautiful. Animals, when they perceive these flowers, may be more focused on their smell. Insects may see them as a potential home. There is no end to the different perspectives in relative reality.

The point is that no one can ever say, "This, and no other way, is the way things are. That is it." They cannot say that, because everybody has

a different perspective. If, for example, you take somebody who is very famous, like the president, then the president's father sees the president as his son; the president's son sees the president as his father; enemies see the president as enemy; friends see the president as friend; some bugs see the president as something nice to eat; other bugs see the president as their home. So what is the president? You cannot say. There is no one being whose view is the exclusively correct view. No one can say, "This is how it is, and every other view must be excluded," because every being has their own different view.

Furthermore, our own views of ourselves are constantly changing. When everything is going well, when we have no mental or bodily suffering, when we are surrounded by friends, then we get pretty pleased with and have a very high opinion of ourselves. But when things are going badly, when we have bodily and mental suffering and are encountering difficulties with others, then we have a low opinion of ourselves.

And since all of these different ways of seeing things are therefore just confused appearances, do not think that any of it is real. So what is it that we need to realize? We need to realize the true nature of reality, which is equality, the freedom from all conceptual fabrications. So let's sing a song, verse 23:

*There are two ways of seeing every thing,
The perfect way and the false way.
So each and every thing that can ever be found
Holds two natures within.*

*And what does perfect seeing see?
It sees the suchness of all things.
And false seeing sees the relative truth —
This is what the perfect Buddha said.*

Verse 28 reads:

Because bewilderment obscures their true nature, they are relative.

Whatever worldly beings fabricate appears to them to be true.

**This the Mighty One called the “relative truth.”
The noble ones know these fabricated entities to be relative. (28)**

This verse gives us the etymology behind the term *relative truth*, in Tibetan, *kunzog denpa*. Literally, *kunzog* could be translated as completely obscured or completely blocked or covered. Why? Because bewilderment obscures the nature of these appearances. Our minds are obscured by ignorance, and this ignorance is like a big screen that comes in front of us and prevents our seeing the nature of these things as they really are. These appearances really are just fabricated; they are just projections, contrivances of beings who are under the influence of this bewilderment. But the unfortunate fact is that beings think that their own projections are true. This is where *denpa*, the truth, comes in. It is not because these things are validly existent that the word *denpa* is used; it is because people think they are true. This is where the word truth comes from in this term. So you have relative, coming from the fact that they are just appearances, one’s own projections relative to one’s own self that have no validity for somebody else; they are just one’s own projections. And because we think our own projections are true, then the Mighty One called them relative truth [or relative truths]. And in fact, with regard to any one thing, there is a limitless number of ways of fabricating it, of relating to it, of thinking that it exists in one way or another.

Given the appearances of this life, they are merely relative appearances, because, first, ignorance, bewilderment, blocks us

from seeing their actual nature, and, second, because there is a limitless number of ways that one could fabricate the nature of these appearances and cling to those fabrications as being real. Given all these different fabrications, there is a reason for saying they are real; there is a reason for saying they are true; and the reason is that that is what people think. People think the fabrications are real and true, just as when they dream and do not know that they are dreaming. When bewilderment comes between us and our dream and causes us not to realize that the dream is just a dream, prevents our realizing that we are dreaming, then we fabricate all of these different kinds of things and we think they are all real. So let’s recite this verse together. [Students recite verse 28.]

The fact is though, that all of these fabrications are anything but stable; we constantly change our projections.

**If worldly beings perceptions were valid,
Since worldly beings would see suchness, what
need for the noble ones?**

**What would the noble ones’ path
accomplish?**

**The perception of fools is not
valid cognition. (30)**

If ordinary beings’ perceptions were valid, there would be no meaning to the path, because beings would already see things the way they really are. So there would be no point in having a path, there would be no noble beings actually, because there would be nothing to distinguish anybody from anybody else. But since it is the fact that our fabrications and projections gradually dissolve, we need the path of the noble ones. The fact is that the perception of fools, of ordinary beings, is not valid at all, because it is a perception that is clouded by ignorance—just like dreaming and not knowing that we are

First, ignorance blocks us from seeing their actual nature, and, second, there is a limitless number of ways that one could fabricate the nature of these appearances and cling to these fabrications as being real

dreaming. If somebody says that this is wrong, if they say that the way that ordinary beings perceive things is valid, and that the reason why it is valid is that it seems to be valid, that we experience it as valid, then these reasons are not enough, because we have these exact same experiences in dreams. Just because we experience the dream to be real does not mean that it is real; it does not prove it.

Look at how our own way of perceiving things has changed from the time we were small children up until the present. We are continuously replacing one way of viewing the world with another. This just shows that none of these modes of perception has any validity. Viewed over time, we do not even have a belief in our own way of viewing things. We do not even trust that. [The truth of this is readily apparent,] because when things are going well, we have all the confidence in the world; we can do everything. But then, when things go badly, we no longer trust that feeling at all. It is completely replaced by a feeling of impatience and incompetence. So we do not even trust our own way of perceiving things, which just shows that it has no validity.

The way that things appear to ordinary beings, the way that they see them and the way that they think about them—none of this is reliable. It is not trustworthy. It is just like the way that we perceive things in dreams.

Question: What does this aspect of relative truth, focusing on the word relative here, really mean?

Rinpoche: The word *kunzop*, that we are translating here as relative truth, in Tibetan has two meanings. One is existence only in relation to something else or in dependence on something else. And the other is this notion of obscuring, that we had in the verse. So here we focus on the first definition, which is what you are asking about. The reason why it has that nature is that

The way that things appear to ordinary beings is not trustworthy

relative or the *kunzop* exists only in dependence upon there being genuine reality, and you can only posit genuine reality, or some notion of genuine reality, because you have something else which is not genuine. Right? So these exist only in dependence upon each other, relative to one another. So neither one really exists. So there are only dependently arisen appearances; therefore they are empty; therefore both truths are appearance-emptiness undifferentiable.

This is the tradition of the middle way consequence school (prasangika madhyamaka), which explains that, whatever it is, it is just a mere dependently arisen appearance, and therefore, it is empty of any inherent reality.

Everything in samsara and nirvana is just dependently arisen, mere appearance. Therefore it is all empty. It is of the nature of emptiness. And because it is all of the nature of emptiness, there can be all of these different appearances. So everything is emptiness and appearance undifferentiable.

As the protector Nagarjuna taught, “There is not a single entity that is not dependently arisen, and, therefore, there is not a single thing that is not empty.”

Question: How does genuine truth arise from method?

Rinpoche: In conventional existence there are many methods that we use, many practices, and it is through these practices that we realize the nature of genuine reality. First, we think about the horrible suffering in the lower realms, and we get scared of that suffering, which causes us to want to gain liberation from it. As a consequence, we begin to practice the path, and gradually we start to progress towards an understanding of the nature of genuine reality.

We learn about past and future lives, that we have been born again and again and have existed since beginningless time, an infinite number of times, and will continue to do so unless we do

something about it. We can get very tired and exhausted from these thoughts. But then we can realize that, in fact, there is no self being born in all of these different lifetimes. We realize selflessness.

We think about how all samsaric appearances are confused appearances. Thinking it is all confusion is a method that makes us weary of samsara. But then we can ask ourselves who is the one that is confused, anyway? And then we find out that there is no one who is confused, and that confused appearances themselves do not inherently exist. That confused appearances themselves do not inherently exist is the ultimate truth with regard to the emptiness of phenomena.

Then we think about the suffering of sickness and the suffering of death, and that again makes us frightened and weary of samsara. But then we can look at that and ask ourselves, “Who is it that is really sick? And who is it that is really going to die?” And we cannot find anyone who is either sick or going to die.

When we think about the fact that birth and death do not really exist, that is the emptiness of phenomena. When we think about samsara and the suffering of samsara, that is a method that gets us scared. But then we think of how it is that really there is no one going around in samsara, and that is [a method for realizing] the emptiness of self. And when we think about how it is that samsara does not really exist, that is [a method for realizing] the emptiness of phenomena, and that is how we arrive at the ultimate truth.

When we think about our confused thoughts, about how all of our thoughts are just confused, and that makes us tired and weary, then we can think about how it is that really there is no one thinking. That recognition is the recognition of the emptiness of the self of the individual. And we can also think about how the thoughts them-

selves do not really exist, and that recognition is the recognition of the emptiness of phenomena.

We can go for refuge to the three precious jewels. We can prostrate to them, make offerings to them, confess our negativities to them. Those are all methods by which we can realize the nature of genuine reality. For example, in doing prostrations, which is one of these methods, after having done a lot of prostrations and gotten tired, we can sit down and relax and ask ourselves, “Who is the one that is prostrating, anyway?” There is no one prostrating. That recognition is the recognition of the emptiness of the self of the individual. Thinking about the objects to whom we are prostrating, we recognize that these do not really exist, and that is the recognition of the emptiness of phenomena.

Or we can do a lot of Varjrasattva practice, confess our negativity, imagine the amrita flowing through our body and purifying us, and then after that we can think, “Was there really any one who committed any negativity anyway?” The recognition that there was no one committing any negativity in the first place is the recognition of the emptiness of the self. That there was no negativity is the emptiness of phenomena.

And we can offer mandalas and then we can realize in fact there is no one making any offerings, there

is nothing to offer, and there is no one to whom to offer anything. This recognition is the recognition of the emptiness of the three spheres, and again a way of realizing the nature of genuine reality.

Again we can do guru yoga practice, and then we can get tired of that and take a rest and see that in fact there is no one who is giving blessing, there is no one receiving blessing, and there is no blessing to give or receive. Again, this is the realization of the nature of genuine reality.

Or we can do yidam practice, and when we

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and there is no
one to whom to
offer anything

get tired of focusing on the yidam, then we think, “Who really is practicing this [and what is his or her nature]? What is the nature of the yidam we are practicing? What is the nature of the practice? And again we arrive at an understanding of the actual nature of reality. So it is like that.

Question: If things really do not arise because they do not arise from any of the four extremes, then what is dependent arising? What does that mean? How can anything arise, how can anything even appear to arise, if it does not really arise? So how can it say in Verse 37 that “Empty entities, like reflections and so forth, are known to arise due to the coming together of causes and conditions”?

Rinpoche: It is just like a dream and a water moon. Dream appearances and the reflection of the moon in a pool of water do not arise from any of the four possibilities. They are just mere appearances—mere appearances of the coming together of causes and conditions producing the mere appearance of arising.

Milarepa sang,

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

In this verse, Milarepa is singing of his complete confidence that things which are dependently arisen are empty, and that things which are empty are only dependently arisen, and that these two pervade each other completely.

Think about dreaming: When you know you are dreaming, you know that whatever appears to you did not really arise; it did not come from

any of these four possible ways of arising. It is just a mere appearance of arising. This is what dependent arising means.

So let's sing this verse. [Students sing.]

Question: I could use advice on how to keep from falling into the extreme of nihilism, thinking that nothing exists. Personally, when I feel compassion, it is when I see someone really there and hurting and feel that. When compassion comes from seeing somebody and thinking that they are there and that they are suffering, how is it that the understanding of emptiness and that things do not really exist does not cause our compassion to decrease? And how do we avoid falling into the view of nihilism in general? How, when one states that a nihilistic view is also just like a dream appearance, [is that different from the Buddhist view that everything is just like a dream appearance?]

Sentient beings
do not really
exist, but
because of their
confused
appearances
they suffer, and
so we have
compassion
for them

Rinpoche: By the very fact that there are relative, mere dependently arisen appearances, then there is no extreme of nihilism. And because these mere appearances do not exist as what they appear to be, there is no extreme of realism. It is for these two reasons that we do not fall into either of the two extremes.

Specifically with regard to compassion, sentient beings do not really exist, but because of their confused appearances they suffer, and so we have compassion for them. In this way, combining

these two,* we are free from both the extreme of realism and the extreme of nihilism. And so it is explained that sentient beings really do not exist, but at the same time it is asserted that there are these appearances of confused sentient

***Editor's note:** The recognition of the emptiness of the confused appearances of suffering and of suffering sentient beings, on the one hand; and compassion for the merely apparent sentient beings who, because of their confusion, are suffering, on the other hand.

beings for whom we have compassion.

The nihilist would say that there is no such thing as a sentient being, nor is there even an appearance of a sentient being that is suffering. If you make both of these assertions, then you have a nihilistic view.

Milarepa described the proper view by saying, “I see this life to be like an illusion and a dream, and I have compassion for those who do not.” That was his practice of emptiness and compassion together. Since he sees this life to be like an illusion and a dream, he does not fall into the extreme of realism. Since he has compassion for sentient beings who do not realize that life is like an illusion and a dream, he does not fall into the extreme of nihilism.

In fact, both realism and nihilism are just projections of thoughts. We can say that everything is real, or we can take a nihilistic view that there is nothing, but both views are just thoughts, projections of confused mind. Neither of them exists in genuine reality. This is what Nagarjuna taught in his chapter called *The Examination of Mistakes*. There is really no mistake; because there is no one to make a mistake, there cannot be a mistake. To have a view either of nihilism or of realism without having a self to have such a view is a contradiction.

If in a dream you have a jewel box, and you open it and find a diamond, and then you think, “Wow, I have a diamond, a real diamond,” then that is the view of realism. But then you go somewhere else in your dream and you open the box again and there is no diamond, then you have a very strong view of non-existence. There is nothing. But both the view of something and the view of nothing are just part of the confused dream. Since it is the case that there was never any diamond in the first place, there cannot be any non-existence of the diamond either. So both

of these are just confused notions.

And that is why the existence of the diamond and later its non-existence are of the nature of equality. So it is like that.

Question: So if it is the case that there is not a single thing which is not dependently arisen, does that include suchness and enlightenment and the inconceivable nature of reality, clear light? Would Rinpoche like to add that?

Rinpoche: Yes, all of these [formulations of] ultimate truth—clear light, suchness, etc.—from the perspective of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, are merely dependently arisen. Because if you say clear light, then that exists only in dependence upon a notion of darkness. If you say truth, that exists only in dependence upon a notion of falsity. If you say genuine or ultimate reality, then that can

exist only because you have some notion of what is not real, which is relative. For example, long can exist only in dependence upon short. Short can exist only in dependence upon long. Big can exist only in dependence upon small. Small can exist only in dependence upon big. So, since there is not a single thing which does not exist in dependence upon something else for its existence, then everything is empty. First, truth is refuted; reality is refuted. Then emptiness is proven. But in fact emptiness and reality exist only in dependence upon each other. Therefore, neither one of these really exists; they are of the nature of equality. This is what the teaching on the ten types of equality is talking about.

Self exists only in dependence on other. Other exists only in dependence of upon self. And so self and other are of the nature of equality. Happiness exists only in dependence upon unhappiness. Unhappiness exists only in dependence upon happiness. So neither one of these

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exists only in
dependence on
unhappiness.
Unhappiness
exists only in
dependence
upon happiness.
So neither one
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of equality

really exists; they are of the nature of equality.

The nature of everything is fundamentally the same ultimately, because everything is ultimately of the nature of simplicity—beyond all conceptual fabrications—and it is all fundamentally the same relatively because every single appearance is only just like a dream, an illusion, a water moon.

Appearance and emptiness are also of the nature of equality. In his song called *The Eight Kinds of Mastery*, Milarepa sang

*Not separating appearance and emptiness—
This is view as mastered as it can be.
Not seeing dreams and day as differing—
This is as meditation as it can be.*

In a dream, the appearance of a car and the inner emptiness of the car* are the same; there is no difference between them. This is why realizing the equality of appearance and emptiness is very important. When you say emptiness to ordinary people they get the thought that there is nothing, sheer nothingness. But it is not that. Because nothingness does not exist either.

So, in fact, everything is not empty, because if everything were empty, there would be no non-emptiness, and there would be no place or thing in dependence upon which things could be said to be emptiness. So we can only have a notion of emptiness because we have some notion of non-emptiness. If everything were empty, then there would be no non-emptiness; and since there is no non-emptiness, there cannot be any emptiness either. It is like that.

Question: So in the third turning, did the Bud-

***Editor's note:** Referring presumably to the space inside the car.

dha teach about suchness which is not dependently arisen?

Rinpoche: In the third turning the Buddha did, in fact, give a slightly different explanation, teaching about a suchness which transcends dependent arising, but that is not what we are talking about here.

When you say emptiness to ordinary people, they get the thought that there is nothing, sheer nothingness. But it is not that. Because nothingness does not exist either

Question: Rinpoche said that you have to listen to teachings on emptiness in order to know about it, and that then you have to reflect on those teachings in order to gain certainty, because, if you have not gained certainty, then you cannot meditate. But what is the purpose of meditation, if the purpose of listening is to find out about emptiness and the purpose of reflecting is to gain certainty? And my second question is, what is the difference between the equality of things having no identifiable signs and the equality of their not having their own individual characteristics?

Rinpoche: The function of meditation is to lead us to an experience or a manifestation of emptiness.

The way we meditate is to rest within the certainty we have gained through reflecting on the teachings on emptiness. In the *Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra* the Third Karmapa summarized it like this: Through listening you free yourself from the obscuration of not knowing. Through reflecting you defeat the darkness of doubt. And through meditation you reveal the nature of reality just as it is.

With respect to the second question, when we refer to identifiable signs, we are not splitting out the name from the basis to which the name is given. For example, we think this object is clean, this object is dirty. But we are still mixing the two—the object and its dirtiness—together. When we refer to characteristics [of

objects], we are not. We are just talking about the basis to which we give a name, devoid of any names or descriptions.

The first deals with the way we as worldly beings perceive things. When we say this is clean, this is dirty, we do not think the name is something different from the object. We mix it all together. The second is more from the perspective of analyzing and seeing that in fact there is an object to which we give a name and that these two, the name and the object, are not the same thing.

The individual characteristics of a thing we can see. For example, we can see the fire burning. We do not see the name. When we look at a person, we only see the person; we do not see the name [of the person]. If we saw the name, we would know each other's names just by looking at each other. When we refer to the individual characteristics of an object, we are not referring to any name associated with that object.

Question: So, is the experience of meditating the same as the experience of gaining certainty, only longer in duration?

Rinpoche: At first they are the same, but resting in the certainty leads to a direct realization of the nature of reality, which transcends conceptuality, and at that time all confused thoughts are self-liberated. So it is like that.

Question: The eleventh verse of the *Third Mind Generation* states that desire and aggression are completely exhausted on the third ground. But does it not say elsewhere in the teachings that the kleshas are not completely exhausted until the seventh or eighth ground?

Rinpoche: On the third ground what is exhausted are the passion and aggression that come from not recognizing, for example, that you are dreaming. But it does not refer to the pas-

sion and aggression that arise when you know that you are dreaming. So it is that difference.

In the mahayana we have to give up anger, because anger is a motivation to harm others. But we do not give up desire; we do not give up passion, because included in passion is compassion, and we do not want to give that up, because compassion is what causes us to be of benefit to others. What we do want to give up is the passion and the attachment that is like passion and attachment that we experience when we do not know that we are dreaming. What we do not need to give up is the passion and attachment that arise when we know that it is just a dream.

That is different.

So for example, when we feel compassion for everybody then everybody appears to be very pleasant and makes us happy to be around them. We like them. That liking of them is included in attachment. It is part of passion, but we do not need to give that up.

On the other hand, anger makes people appear unpleasant to us, and causes us to speak to them harshly, want to do them harm, and maybe even want to kill them. That is what we need

to abandon.

But in mahamudra, we do not even try to give up anger. Instead, we meditate on the essential nature of anger, and then it dissolves in and of itself, like ice dissolving into water.

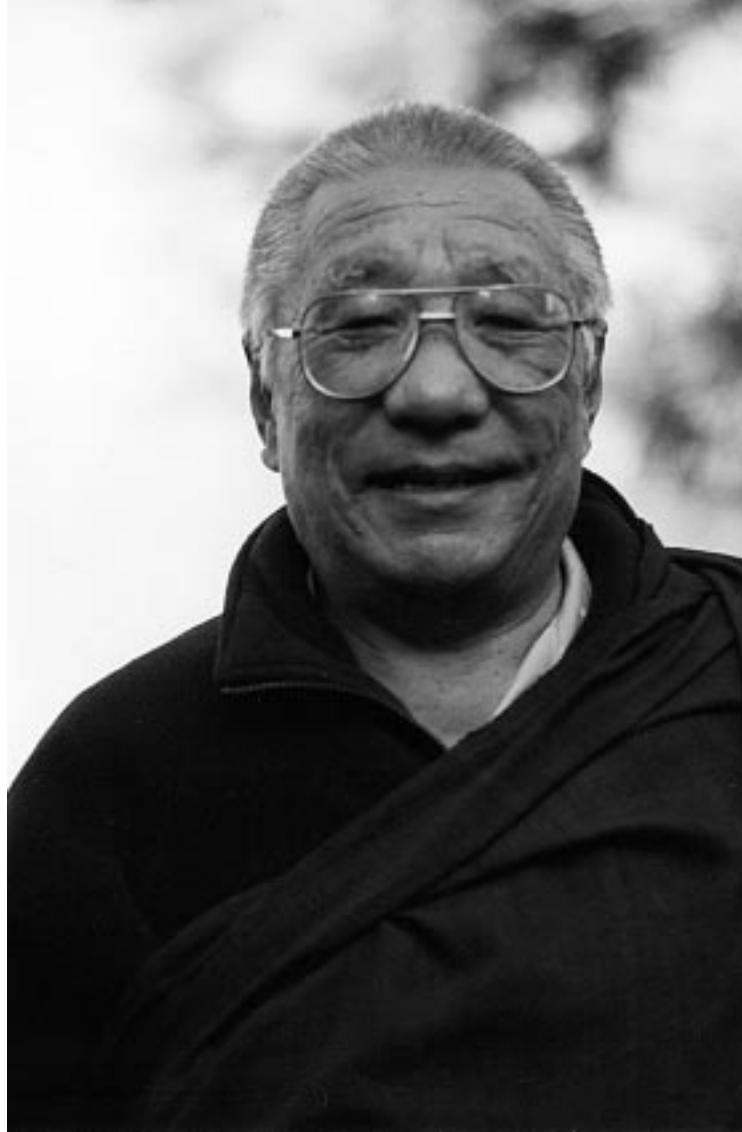
To sum up the teachings of the sixth chapter, the last verse reads:

**With his broad white wings of the relative and suchness,
The king of swans soars ahead to lead the flock.
By the power of virtue's wind
He crosses to the far shore of the ocean of the
Victor's supreme qualities. (226)**

So the two truths in union are like the two great white wings of the swan that allow the swan to fly to enlightenment. If you only have one of the two truths, then you cannot go very far. Just as when a swan has two wings that

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then it dissolves
in and of itself

Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way
**The Seventh Mind Generation:
Gone Far Beyond**



We will begin by reciting the verses from the *Sixth Mind Generation* from yesterday's teaching. [Students recite.] As before, please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta as is instructed in the mahayana, and listen.

The third main section in the commentary looks at the last four bodhisattva grounds, the seventh through the tenth, called *Gone Far Beyond*, *Unshakable*, *Excellent Mind*, and *Cloud of Dharma*.

The three lines of verse that comprise the seventh chapter are:

**Here on the ground *Gone Far Beyond*,
Instant by instant, they can enter cessation,
And the transcendent perfection of method
excellently blazes.**

The bodhisattva on the seventh ground, called *Gone Far Beyond*, can, instant by instant, enter into and arise out of the meditative equipoise of cessation. This cessation is not a mere cessation, because here also the transcendent perfection of method excellently blazes.

From among the ten transcendent perfections, here what the bodhisattva masters, or what comes to the fore in terms of the bodhisattva's main practice, is the transcendent perfection of method, of skillful means.

It is important to understand that the last four transcendent perfections—method, aspiration prayers, power, and primordial awareness—are all divisions or aspects of the sixth, the transcendent perfection of wisdom. There is nothing separate from that. After prajnaparamita has been mastered, there is nothing you could say that exists apart from that. Everything then is just a manifestation or a different aspect of wisdom's display.

Bodhisattvas on the seventh ground master the great variety of methods through which they can be of benefit to others. They become incredibly skillful in the different means and ways of benefiting others.

At the time of the ground, [at the onset of their interest in and practice of a spiritual path,] sentient beings have a wide variety of personalities. Some of them are very passionate; some of them are more angry; some of them are principally stuck in bewilderment and ignorance. Their kleshas differ. At the time of engaging in the path, they have a wide variety of interests in different religious and philosophical traditions and paths that they can follow. And at the time of the result, therefore, they achieve many different levels of fruition. Since there is this


great variety of sentient beings with a great variety of mental dispositions and interests, one needs to be incredibly skillful in means or methods if one wishes to be of benefit to them.

When following a path, some beings will be interested in Buddhism, and following the Buddhist path; there will also be people with differing interests. Some will feel very strong renunciation of samsara and want to follow either the shravaka path or the path of the solitary sages. Some will want to follow the bodhisattva path, the mahayana, and some will want to follow the vajrayana. People will have differing interests and want to do different things.

For some people, compassion will be their strongest quality.

They will be very interested in helping others and not so interested in what happens to themselves. For others, intelligence, prajna, will be the strongest quality, and they will like to study. Still others will be very diligent and will prefer to meditate. Because there are so many different kinds of beings who have so many different kinds of interests and abilities, bodhisattvas need to develop great skillfulness in a great variety of methods or means to lead sentient beings in accordance with their abilities and interests. On the seventh ground they do just that.

Because some people will prefer non-Buddhist traditions and will want to follow other religious paths, bodhisattvas will emanate not only as teachers in the buddhadharma, but also as teachers in other religious traditions that appear to be contradictory to Buddhism. They will appear as teachers, as masters, as people with great learning in those traditions, in order to lead beings whose interests draw them to those traditions. Sometimes it is possible to perform great benefit as a teacher in another tradition. When that is the case, bodhisattvas will send an emanation or emanations to teach in that tradition. They will perform that benefit.

There is only one verse in this chapter, *The Seventh Mind Generation: Gone Far Beyond*. 

Here what the
bodhisattva
masters is the
transcendent
perfection of
method

Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way
**The Eighth Mind Generation:
Unshakable**



The eighth chapter teaches the eighth mind generation. This bodhisattva ground is named *Unshakable*. The first three lines of the first verse describe the way in which bodhisattvas gain this ground:

**In order again and again to attain virtue even greater than before
Here the bodhisattvas become irreversible.
The great beings enter the *Unshakable* ground . . .(1abc)**

The commentary reads, “In order again and again to attain virtue even greater than before, even greater than that which has been achieved up to and including the seventh bhumi or ground, by virtue of having patience with the unborn nature of reality, meaning emptiness, bodhisattvas become irreversible

in that they are definitely on the path to enlightenment. There is no turning back.* This is also known as the *unshakable*. The great beings, the bodhisattvas, engage here in the *unshakable* ground.

Unshakable here means that not only are the bodhisattvas on this ground not moved or shaken by clinging to the characteristics of things, they are also not shaken or moved by thoughts which cling to an absence of characteristics. They do not believe there is any need for characteristics, but they also do not believe there is any need for an absence of characteristics. And is that not something really great?*

Next, in the last line of the first verse, comes the description of how the practice of the transcendent perfection of aspiration prayers comes

to the fore here:

And their aspiration prayers become incredibly pure. (1d)

The commentary reads that on this ground everything that was somehow contrary to the aspiration prayers that these bodhisattvas have been making from the first ground on up has now been completely purified, so there is nothing left that could contradict these aspiration prayers or stand in their way. Everything that could obstruct these prayers has been purified. The aspiration prayers that they make on this ground, which number 100,000 times 10 to the 60th power, are all completely pure. Therefore their practice of aspiration prayers is incredible.

***Editor's note:** According to Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, the bodhicitta of the aspiring bodhisattva on the first two paths, the paths of preparation and juncture, is characterized by *devoted interest*. The aspirant has taken the bodhisattva vow and has great interest in and devotion to the path leading to buddhahood but has not yet reached the first bhumi, the beginning of the path of seeing. The beginning of the path of seeing commences with a definitive experience of emptiness, after which the bodhisattva—now called “exalted,” “enlightened,” or “noble”—can enter the samadhi of emptiness at will. Some commentaries suggest that that first moment of seeing is the path of seeing and the remainder of the ten bhumis of the bodhisattva path are included in the path of cultivation, so called because the bodhisattva is principally concerned with cultivating what has been seen. The Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche states that the path of seeing roughly includes the first five bhumis and the path of cultivation the second five, while Khenpo Konchog Gyaltzen Rinpoche states that the path of seeing includes the first seven bhumis while the path of cultivation includes the last three bhumis. In any event, reaching the path of seeing or the first bodhisattva bhumi is a kind of watershed event, inasmuch as the bodhisattva now will never have to be reborn unwillingly in the lower realms. At this point, the bodhisattva begins to understand all the various approaches to traveling the path presented in the buddha's teachings, and develops great confidence that he or she will be able to complete the path successfully. Trungpa Rinpoche taught that this is not birth, but similar to the onset of labor pains; one knows that one is going to have a baby, and fueled by this new confidence and inspiration, the bodhisattva becomes very hard-working and his or her bodhicitta can be said to be characterized by *strong intention*. This stage continues until the bodhisattva reaches the eighth bhumi, which is another major watershed on the bodhisattva path.

From this point until buddhahood, the bodhisattva's bodhicitta is characterized by *maturation*. Just as one does not have to make any effort to grow, from the eighth bhumi until buddhahood, the bodhisattva does not have to make any effort to develop bodhicitta or progress along the path to

buddhahood. When buddhahood is finally reached, bodhicitta is characterized by the total *elimination of all veils* that obscure the mind, obstruct the full realization of the true nature of everything, and block omniscience. Buddhahood is known as the path of complete perfection, of fulfillment, or of complete accomplishment.

****Editor's note:** Clinging to any notion or experience of the characteristics of any perceptual situation is fixation, and disrupts the “clear light river flow” of the meditative state. The moment there is “that person,” for example, as distinct from “this person,” or that as distinct from this, the veil of dualistic clinging—the habitual tendency to perceive dualistically—is present, and the moment there is any fixation on the intelligent nature, the beauty, the humorosity or obnoxiousness of “that” person or “this” person, even in a non-discursive way that does not apply a name or label, then there is clinging to characteristics. When meditators experience emptiness or, in this language, experience the absence of characteristics, there is also a tendency to cling to these experiences or the memory of these experiences, which also disrupts the “clear light river flow” of the meditative state and solidifies and blocks one's experience. Once one has truly experienced the emptiness of self and phenomena and the absence of characteristics, one recognizes that there is no need to remind oneself of emptiness or even to cling in the subtlest way to the experience of emptiness. Things are just as empty whether or not one is thinking that they are empty, or whether or not one is fixated on or fascinated by any particular experience of emptiness. What the text and Rinpoche are teaching here is that both the inveterate tendency to fixate on characteristics and the tendency to fixate on the absence of characteristics, both during meditation and during post-meditation, have been completely removed by the eighth bhumi, and thus an eighth-bhumi bodhisattva's awareness becomes *unshakable*. It is this unshakable awareness that intercepts the arising of kleshas, thereby causing them to arise as wisdom and putting an end once and for all to the creation of new karma, and it is out of this unshakable awareness that all the miraculous powers of the eighth bodhisattva bhumi arise.

They make aspiration prayers to go to the buddha realms, the pure realms, to make offerings to the buddhas, but mostly they make aspiration prayers to be of benefit to others. They aspire to be able to benefit others both in a temporary way, meaning to make people happy in whatever way they can in terms of samsaric existence, and also to lead them to the ultimate fruition of buddhahood. Since beings need help in so many different ways, the number of ways in which bodhisattvas aspire to help them is inconceivable. They aspire to be able to send out emanations in all different forms—as animals like rabbits, turtles, deer, wild asses, and as all the different kinds of animals that live in the mountains, as all the different kinds of animals too many to name; as teachers and as students in other traditions; as people with lots of wealth who can provide others with food, clothing, and things to drink if they are thirsty, and so forth. They make an inconceivable number of aspiration prayers to be able to emanate and be of benefit to others in an inconceivable number of ways.

There are a number of very good aspiration prayers, extensive ones, that have been translated into English, like Samantabhadra's *Aspiration Prayer for Excellent Conduct*, the bodhisattva's aspiration prayer from the tenth chapter of Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Conduct*,* and also the aspiration prayer of Maitreya. We should recite these aspiration prayers because the best and most efficacious way to prepare for the future is to make aspiration prayers. If we make good aspiration prayers, then in all future lifetimes we will be born in situations with the appropriate capabilities that will enable us to benefit others, and we will in fact perform the benefit of others.

The bodhisattva on the eighth ground is

Since beings
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number of ways
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sattvas
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inconceivable

called the Youth or the Youthful one. On the ninth, they are called the Victor's Regent, and on the tenth they are called the Chakravartin, the Universal Monarch.

Next the commentary teaches the extraordinary qualities of this ground. It has two main parts. The first good quality is the cessation of cyclic existence for bodhisattvas on this ground on which all stains have been completely abandoned. And the second is the ability of these bodhisattvas to display emanations in cyclic existence for the benefit of others, even though cyclic existence has stopped for themselves. Because the necessity to remain in cyclic existence has ended for eighth-bhumi bodhisattvas, the tathagatas, the buddhas, urge them here not to remain simply in the cessation or complete abandonment of cyclic existence, but to rise up and display their creative power for the benefit of others. With respect to the first good quality, the first line of the second verse reads,

The victors cause them to rise from cessation.
(2a)

The commentary reads that bodhisattvas on this ground abide in cessation, but since they have previously made aspiration prayers, and since they are abiding in the continuum of the gateway to the dharma, all the victors cause them to arise from their cessation. How do they do that? Well, these buddhas say something like this: "Noble child, you have done well. Excellent. You are approaching the attainment of the qualities of the perfect buddha, and you have achieved patience with the nature of genuine reality. You have achieved the actual genuine patience. But, noble child, what you do not have are my ten powers, my four types of fearlessness, everything that makes me different from you, everything that comprises the glorious and

*Editor's note: Published under the titles *The Way of the Bodhisattva* and *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

unique qualities of a buddha. You do not have these qualities. So, in order to strive to gain these most glorious qualities of the buddha, apply yourself. Put some diligence into it. Do not abandon the door or the gateway of your patience with suchness. Noble child, you have gained this complete liberation of peace and you are resting there, but think of all of the beings who are still afflicted, who are still under the power of their kleshas. Remember all the aspiration prayers you have made in the past to benefit them; remember how important it is to accomplish their benefit. Remember the inconceivable nature of the gateway of primordial awareness. And know that what you have realized so far, the dharmata, the nature of reality, the arhats and arhatis have also. You are still there.”

The dharmata, or the nature of reality that the Buddha is urging the bodhisattvas to strive for here, is consonant with their aspiration prayers. What the bodhisattvas are going to attain on this ground is primordial awareness, which they can get without any effort, and which is inherently effortless. It is of the same taste as [the] cessation [which arhats and arhatis experience], but it is not simply the mere cessation of the appearances of outer and inner entities.

The text continues,

The various flaws do not remain in the mind free of attachment;

Therefore, on the eighth ground, those stains together with their roots are completely pacified.

Their kleshas are exhausted and in the three realms they become superior, and yet (2bcd)

They cannot attain all the buddhas’ endowments, which are limitless as the sky. (3a)

From the very fact that they have risen from this cessation, [we can know that] they have the

mind of original wisdom or primordial awareness, which is free of attachment. And, since this primordial awareness can not coexist with the faults of the kleshas, then, when on the eighth ground the sun of non-conceptual primordial awareness shines, all of the stains of the afflicted conduct of the three realms are uprooted and completely pacified. This means that all the kleshas are exhausted. Since thereby the bodhisattvas have transcended the three realms of

existence, they are superior to anyone who is still bound in those three realms. They are superior in the three realms, but still, with regard to the qualities of the buddhas, which are as limitless as the sky, they have not yet gained them all. This is very good, because it shows how unbelievable the qualities of enlightenment really are.

The last two lines of the chapter and the next section of the commentary describe how even though bodhisattvas on this ground have put an end to existence for themselves, they still demonstrate many emanations for the benefit of those stuck in

existence:

Although samsara has stopped, they gain the ten powers, And demonstrate many emanations to the beings in cyclic existence. (3bc)

The commentary reads, “Well, if they have stopped taking birth in samsara, then how do they continue to perfect their realization of the qualities of the enlightenment of a buddha?” The answer to that is that even though for them samsara has stopped, they gain the ten powers. As is explained in the *Sutra of the Glorious Garland*, the bodhisattva on this ground has a body that is of the nature of mind, and they can send this [“mental body”] out in a great variety of displays of different kinds of bodies to benefit

What the bodhisattvas attain on this ground is primordial awareness, which they get without any effort, and which is inherently effortless

beings still bound in samsaric existence.

The first of these ten powers is *power over life*, which means that, from gaining the blessing of their realization, they can live for an inconceivable number of kalpas. They have gained the blessing which allows them never to die if they do not want to. They can live for as long as they like.

The next is the *power of mind*, which means that they can engage in the primordial wisdom of an inconceivable number of states of meditative absorption. They do not find some meditations easy and other ones difficult. They can engage in a great variety of meditations with ease.*(1)

The third is *power over material possessions*, which means that they are able to give to all the realms of existence [whatever is needed in these realms]. They are able, for instance, to cover them with precious gems. They have limitless power over material objects.*(2)

The fourth is *power over karma*, which means that they can cause karma to transform

and ripen whenever they want it to.*(3)

They have the *power of birth*, meaning that they can take birth at any time anywhere in any realm they want without any hindrance for the purpose of benefiting others.*(4)

The sixth is the *power over aspiration*, which means they are able to demonstrate enlightenment in whatever buddha realm they may desire at whatever time.*(5)

The seventh is the *power over aspiration prayers*, which means that they are able to display, should they desire, the entire universe filled with buddhas.*(6)

The eighth is *power over miracles*, which means that they can display creatively their miraculous powers throughout all the realms of the universe.*(7)

The ninth is *power over primordial wisdom*, which means they are able to completely display the perfect enlightenment of the buddhas, which are the ten powers and the fearlessnesses, the unshared or unique qualities of the buddhas, along with the signs and marks.*(8)

***Editor's note:** These ten powers of an eighth-bhumi bodhisattva are described in the third chapter of Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.

[1] Khenpo Konchok Gyaltzen Rinpoche's translation of this text (KKGR) describes the power of mind as "the ability to maintain meditative concentration as long as one wishes." Ken and Katia Holmes' translation, based on the commentaries of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Tai Situ Rinpoche, and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche (KKH) describes the power of mind as "the ability to enter stably into profound absorption, just as is wished." Herbert Guenther's translation (HG) describes it as the ability "to enter a state of meditative absorption at will."

[2] KKGR: "Power over provision of necessities' means one can shower down a rain of limitless necessities on sentient beings."

[3] KKGR: "Power over birth' means one can shift the effects of karma from one particular life to another sphere, world, realm, or birth." KKH: "The power over action is the ability to re-program (results of) of action (karma)—in terms of dimension, state, type of existence and mode of birth—so that they are experienced in other more useful ways."

[4] KKH: "Power over birth is the ability to take birth in the sense dimension yet always to maintain profound meditative absorption and not experience any form of degeneration, remaining completely unsullied by the evils of that state." The sense dimension is the same as the desire realm.

[5] KKH: "Power to fulfill aspiration is the ability to transform the elements—earth, water, etc.—into one another as wished." KKGR: "Power over intentions' means that one can

change whatever one wishes into earth, water, fire, and so forth." HG describes the power "over creative imagination" as "to be able to turn water into earth and to accomplish similar phenomena."

[6] KKH: "Power of prayer is the ability to pray and make prayers in a way that will most properly accomplish the well-being of oneself and others; also the power to make prayers come true." KKGR: "Power over aspiration prayers' means that if one aspires to perfectly benefit oneself and others, it will be accomplished." HG: "Power over resolution' means to be able to determine to fulfill one's own and others' interests perfectly and also to accomplish this resolution."

[7] KKH: "Power over miracles is the ability to demonstrate countless miracles and supernatural feats in order to kindle aspiration in beings." KKGR: "Power over miracles' means one can exhibit innumerable manifestations in order to cause sentient beings to be interested in the spiritual path."

[8] KKGR: "Power over wisdom awareness' means one has perfected the understanding of phenomena, their meaning, the definition of words, and confidence." KKH: "Power of primordial awareness is knowledge that encompasses the ultimate meaning, in the very best possible way, of dharma, of meanings, of terminology, of the true sense of words and of bodhisattva prowess." To this latter, the authors add the following note: "A few pages would be needed to explain this sentence. Through primordial wisdom, one understands the very nature of things (dharma), the significance of each thing (meanings), how the significance is expressed through language (terminology), how that language is best expressed to individuals (words) and how to persist skillfully until it is understood (prowess)."

And finally, the tenth is *power over dharma*, which means that they are able to fully display all of the different portals into the dharma, which has no center and no end.*

To speak of them as having a body that is of the nature of mind means that, wherever they desire in their minds to go, then they just show up there. And they can pass through things without any obstruction. It is like that.

This has been a brief explanation of the seventh and eighth mind generations.

Let's recite these together. [Students recite verses.]

Are there any questions?

Question: Portals to the dharma, is that ways of getting into the dharma?

Translator: Literally, door.

Question: Please explain the sixth power a little bit more?

Translator: So Rinpoche asked me to explain it. Well, with all of these there is not an extensive description given. And they are not easy to understand because they are talking about describing abilities which are completely inconceivable to us. But what it literally says in the commentary is that the power of aspiration prayer means that you are able to demonstrate enlightenment in whatever buddha realm you want to. So, for instance, the Buddha Shakyamuni, according to one explanation, became enlightened first in the pure realm of Akanishtha, *Ogmin* in Tibetan, and then he came

down to the earth and demonstrated the twelve deeds of the Buddha for everybody's benefit. But he had already become enlightened in the buddha realm. In whatever realm you like, you can attain enlightenment.

Question: [Unintelligible.]

Translator: There are different fruitions, like the fruition of the shravakas, the fruition of the pratekyabuddhas, the fruition of the bodhisattvas.

Question: The question is about cessation, and about how it is that the arhat's cessation is described as kind of a nothingness—like a lamp's going out, or water's drying up—and then the bodhisattvas' cessation is described as being different from that, and yet, they still have to arise from this cessation. How does that all come together?

Translator: Throughout the whole presentation of these bhumis or grounds, there is language saying something to the effect that at this point everything is completely finished. But then you get to the next stage, and there is still something left to accomplish, right? So we have to understand these statements in that way, that they are always made from a certain perspective. Compared to what came before, it seems that the bodhisattva is completely finished, but then you arrive at the next stage and you find out that you still have more to accomplish. All of this is incredibly subtle. When bodhisattvas get to the eighth ground, it is said that there are no longer

***Editor's note:** KKGR: " 'Power over dharma' means that, in an instant, bodhisattvas can fully satisfy all the sentient beings according to their dispositions and in their different languages through words and groupings of letters based on many different types of sutras and so forth." KKH: "Power over dharma is the ability to teach beings that which is suited to them, in just the right amount. This is achieved by presenting all the different nouns, terms and characters of dharma, in the various sutra and other teachings, in such a way that their sole speech is understood by each individual in his or her own language and in a totally satisfying way that makes sense to his or her own mentality." HG: " 'Power over presentation' means to be able fully to satisfy the minds of all sentient

beings by a single discourse on the dharma in their respective languages, expounding it as in the sutras and other works in various words, inflections and grouping of letters, just giving them what and how much is necessary."

The citations in the above footnotes are from *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation: The Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings* by Gampopa, translated by Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 1998; *Gems of Dharma, Jewels of Freedom* by Jé Gampopa, translated by Ken and Katia Holmes, Altea Publishing, Forres, Scotland, 1995; and *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by sGam.po.pa, Translated and Annotated by Herbert V. Guenther, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts, 1986.

any appearances of signs, of characteristics of things. But they still have dualistic appearances. To understand that is very difficult for us. How you could have one without the other is something we are probably not going to know until we get there. Again, based on the cessation reached on the eighth ground, bodhisattvas are said no longer to need to make effort. Their path to buddhahood is said to be automatic and irreversible; they are definitely going to attain enlightenment. But then, when they enter this samadhi, the buddhas tell them to put more effort into it. So it is all depends upon perspective. The eighth-bhumi bodhisattva's cessation is different from the arhat's or arhati's, because the bodhisattva's cessation is combined with the powers of bodhisattvic aspiration and is based upon the full realization of the nature of mind. Their cessation is not just like a light's going out; it is a very radiant type of samadhi, from one perspective. But from the Buddha's perspective, there is still a danger that they could stay in that state and not completely perfect their compassion, because it is said that, however great the bodhisattva's qualities are, even on the tenth bhumi, they are like a puddle compared to the ocean of the Buddha's qualities. So when a text is describing the eighth-bhumi bodhisattva's having to arise from their cessation or any fault in their cessation, you can know that the text is viewing the situation from the Buddha's perspective. But from our perspective, their realization is inconceivable cessation that is endowed with fantastic qualities. So the different descriptions just depend on whether you are looking up at this particular cessation or down at it. Does that make sense?

Question: Do we ever mean to describe the cessation of the arhats as being something that is like, you know, if you kick an arhat they won't feel it?

Translator: There are two types of arhats—the arhats with remainder and arhats without remainder, right? The ones with remainder still have their body. As described, they regard their

skandhas as like carrying a pot of boiling oil, because the skandhas are so dangerous. But then once they die, arhats and arhatis are thought by practitioners of the hinayana path to go into a state of nothingness, and for them, existence is finished. The way they describe this state, which is the state of an arhat without remainder is that there is nothing left. But there is something left, actually, because, as is said in this commentary, the seven consciousnesses stop, but the eighth consciousness, the alaya, is still there. [Then, when they have been sufficiently rested in their state of “partial” cessation,] the buddhas come along and say, “wake up, wake up,” so there is still some subtle mind-stream left. According to their vehicle there is no mind-stream left, but from the mahayana perspective there is. They still have to arise from their samadhi and keep practicing.*

Question: How do you meet the dharma if you have never met it before? And, when all sentient beings become enlightened, what happens after that?

Rinpoche: In my opinion, since samsara has no beginning, since it has been going on for an infinite period of time, and therefore, since we have had an infinite number of lives, then it is impossible not to have had some previous contact with the dharma and impossible not to have some habitual tendencies towards the dharma. You will meet something that will connect with these habitual tendencies.

In the Buddhist tradition it is said that it is enough just to see an image of a temple or a teacher to plant the seeds of an interest in

***Editor's note:** The realization of arhats or arhatis, which is the highest level of fruition in the shravakayana and the pratyekabuddhayana (together known as the hinayana), is limited by their limited aspiration and commensurate lack of merit. Since their goal is individual liberation, their realization consists principally of the emptiness of self and of only a partial understanding of the emptiness of phenomena. Since the bodhisattva's aspiration is the liberation of all suffering sentient beings, and since their vow includes not rejecting, even mentally, even one sentient being from that aspiration, and since they work tirelessly for the liberation of others, their meditation develops great force, which enables them to realize completely the emptiness of phenomena and the emptiness of consciousness.

dharma. So that is going to happen to everyone.

In Tibet, the tradition was to build stupas and to put mani stones, stones with mantras written on them, close to the side of the road so that people could see them. People who had faith already would circumambulate them and make aspiration prayers, and those who did not would at least see them with their eyes, and thus the seeds of virtue would be planted. We plant the seeds in that way, and then, when an extraordinary set of conditions come together, then these positive tendencies or habits wake up, and one begins to practice.

With regard to the second question about what happens after all sentient beings attain enlightenment, we need to know that there is no increase and there is no decrease; there is no getting any better, and there is no getting any worse. As it says in the *Heart Sutra*, things do not get bigger and they do not get smaller; there is no increase and there is no decrease; there are no stains and no freedom from stains. There is no difference between buddhas and sentient beings. There are just mere dependently arisen appearances.

If everything were truly existent, then sentient beings would become enlightened and become buddhas, and the buddhas would go to the buddha realms, and the buddha realms would be filled up. There would be no vacancy. But it is not like that, because they are not real.

And then, if all the sentient beings became enlightened, everybody would be a buddha and there would be no way for the buddhas to perform the benefit of others. But it does not happen like that. So what we have to know is that the nature of reality is the fundamental sameness of everything, fundamental equality. There is no increasing and no decreasing, no gain, no loss.

We can see this absence of increase or decrease if we look at our own planet. There are mighty rivers which dump millions of gallons of

water into the oceans every instant, but the oceans do not overflow. And, similarly, even though so much water has passed and continues to pass through these rivers, they do not dry up. This is an example of mere dependently arisen appearance.

Since we have had an infinite number of lives, then it is impossible not to have had some previous contact with the dharma

The water in these great rivers flowing into the ocean did not just appear from out of nowhere. It does not need to come from anywhere else. This just shows us that in fact there is really no increase and no decrease.

Think about the sentient beings in a dream. They do not come from anywhere to the dream, and when the dream is over they do not go anywhere.

They never get any greater in number, and they never get any fewer in number. It is all just a mere appearance. The dream example helps us to understand that.

In the opening praise of Nagarjuna's text the *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, he teaches how reality is free from eight types of extremes. He says that whatever is dependently arisen does not arise, does not cease, is not permanent, nor is it completely nonexistent. It does not come, and it does not go. And it is not one thing, nor a lot of different things.

So think about the appearances in a dream. They never really arise, and they never really cease. They are not real, and they are not completely nothing. They do not come from anywhere, and they do not go anywhere. And they are not one thing, nor are they lots of different things.

So we should sing from time to time. Let's sing this verse by Nagarjuna. [Students sing.]

Ultimately, samsara and nirvana are fundamentally the same. As the protector Nagarjuna said in his text, "Samsara is not the slightest bit different from nirvana. Nirvana is not the slightest bit different from samsara."*

If it were the case that sentient beings could all become enlightened and leave samsara empty,

and that then all the buddha realms would be filled, then samsara and nirvana would be different things. They would not be of the nature of equality. But this is not the case, because samsara is just a concept. It does not really exist. Thus, the *Ornament of the Mahayana Sutras*, the *Mahayana Sutralankara* says, "Liberation is just the elimination of this mistake."

Samsara and nirvana are just like a dream. The only difference between them is the difference between not knowing you are dreaming and knowing you are dreaming. Samsara is like a dream, and a buddha's attaining enlightenment is like when one wakes up from a dream.

Question: Are the ten powers linked with the ten transcendent perfections? And my second question is about the seventh in particular, the power of interest, and how that fits in with the description of what it is.

Rinpoche: The answer to the first question is that they are not taught to be so linked. The ten grounds are linked with the ten transcendent perfections, but it is not the case that the ten transcendent perfections or paramitas are linked with the ten powers one by one.

Question: But they are both linked to the ten bhumis, right?

Translator: You perfect the ten powers on the eighth bhumi.

***Editor's note:** From time to time one might wonder what the point of all these Buddhist metaphysics is. The answer lies in Buddhism's very practical intent. If one can truly experience that samsara and nirvana are not different, then one will no longer be totally upset by the misperception that the world's samsara or one's own personal samsara falls short of nirvana. If nothing is real and permanent, if everything is merely dependently arisen appearances, "such stuff as dreams are made on," then there is no reason to get so totally worked up and exercised by every little thing that seems to go wrong, or even over the big things. On the other hand, since everything is not unreal and non-existent, and since sentient beings are deeply involved in the misperception of things as real and therefore suffer, there still exists the basis for generating compassion for them and trying to alleviate their condition. But this compassion then is based in the correct apprehension of the nature of reality, and is inseparable from the equanimity that arises from that correct apprehension. Therefore the actions that arise out of such compassion are accurate and unmistakable.

Question: They are all connected with the eighth bhumi?

Translator: That's right.

Rinpoche: It is certainly not the case that you perfect all ten one by one. As a group they are described as being important in relation to the eighth ground, but they are still present as qualities on the previous grounds, just to a lesser extent. And they grow more extensive on the subsequent grounds.

Question: What if you looked from the top down? Would you have all those qualities?

Translator: Yes.

Question: When you do it that way, would you link the powers with the ten bhumis?

Translator: As Rinpoche is saying, they are a group of ten that go together. They are especially connected with the eighth bhumi, but they grow stronger and more extensive on the ninth and the tenth bhumis and also upon enlightenment. And they are present all the way along the bodhisattva bhumis, but not as extensively as on the eighth.

Rinpoche: With respect to your second question concerning the seventh power, which has been translated here as *the power of aspiration prayers*, the Tibetan word, *möpa*, being translated here as aspiration prayers, is somewhat difficult to translate into English, because it means different things in different cases. Here it means something like "wish," in the sense that if you want to see the whole universe filled with buddhas, you can. For example, through perfecting generation stage practice, you can see all of the deities and buddha realms directly just by wanting to. You do not really even have to want to; they just naturally appear in your perception or vision. And so here it reads that if you want to see the whole universe filled with buddhas, you can.

In the next sentence the word, *möpa*, has a

slightly different meaning. It is not that these buddhas' forms actually exist. They do not. They are just projections of the interest or the wish, of the *mōpa*, of the person who wants to see them. Bodhisattvas on the eighth ground have very pure vision connected with their wish or their longing or their interest, and so they can see all these different buddhas, just as, if you want to see somebody, all you have to do is turn on the TV, and it looks as if their form were really there. Millions of people can see their form at the same time—just by wanting to. But it does not mean that these forms are something real; they are just a reflection, a projection of that person's interest. That is the analogy. On millions of television sets the image of the President of the United States can appear, and everybody thinks that the image is the President. But it is just an image.

So here *mōpa* or interest means that it is just the projection of the bodhisattva's interest that they see this form of the buddha. The buddha does not exist from its own perspective. And this is because the real buddha is the dharmakaya, which nobody can see. And the form kayas are just things which appear due to the projections of the disciples' pure vision and their interest.

The same thing can be said of sentient beings. Sentient here means "having mind;" the mind is what sentient beings are really all about. But ordinary beings cannot see their minds. What they see is the body and how the body appears. So it is like that.

Question: When you listen to the teachings on emptiness and you contemplate emptiness, what are the signs that you have gained certainty in the view?

Rinpoche: The sign of certainty is that you do not have its opposite, which is doubt. So if you still have any doubt about whether or not things are empty, then you have not yet developed

certainty. On the other hand, if you are sure that everything is empty—"this is really empty; it is just like a dream; I know that for sure"—then you have certainty.

None of us has any doubt that we are human beings. We all know that for sure. That is certainty. On the other hand, if we said we were deities, then we would have doubts about that, because we seem to be human beings. That is how it is.

The four kayas are just things that appear due to the projections of the disciples' pure vision and their interest

Question: If bodhisattvas have the ability to transform karma and to cause it to change and ripen differently, and they have the wish to help others, then why have they allowed things to happen as they have, in this century, for example? And do the second turning and the third turning of the wheel of dharma answer this question differently?

Rinpoche: The answer is that it is possible that the beings who died in all the atrocities in this century were reborn in the pure realms. We have no idea what the final consequence of these events was. And there is not really much difference between the ways in which the second and the third turning would answer this question.

The changes that can be brought about in karma are not so great. For example, it is said that when the buddhas rest in samadhi, then all of the hell realms and the hungry ghost realms are free of suffering. But just temporarily. So, for instance, when Chandrakirti milked the painting of the cow to stave off famine, then he only did that once. It did not happen over and over again. If it had, that would have been great, but it did not and does not.

It all depends upon interdependence. It is said, for example, that through the power of the blessing of the buddha, when a buddha teaches, it causes all six realms to rumble, and the hell realms and the hungry ghost realms are free of suffering temporarily, and they gain temporary happiness, but then for them confused appear-

ances appear again.

It is similar to when people in the world have a party. It is fun if it does not last too long. But if it lasts too long, if the party just drags on and on, then it is not very much fun anymore. When it is just a dependently arisen appearance, it is better if it lasts just for a short period of time.

It is also similar to when the lama gives you an empowerment. When they put the vase on top of your head, you get some feeling; but if they left it there for a long time, it would hurt. So for some people it is better for them just to get a taste of something for a short period of time.

But in the true nature of reality, the three times are equality. There is no difference between long time and short time. This we have to know; it is very important. Sometimes we need to think of the three times, and other times we need to know that they do not really exist. We need to know that they are equality. There are a lot of different ways of thinking about it.

In the middle turning of the wheel, everything is explained to be mere appearance that is dependently arisen, and therefore it is all just illusory. There is not a single phenomenon that is not dependently arisen, and therefore there is not a single phenomenon that is not empty. That needs to be said again and again.

The great siddha Götsangpa, in his song *The Eight Flashing Lances*, says,

*The murkiness of clinging clarified,
Causes and conditions, like reflections,
Knowing what to do and not, that subtle art—
These are three which make relations fully free,
Like a lance that flashes free in the open sky.*

So we should sing this and know that all appearances are just like reflections in a mirror, like reflections in the water. They have no more reality than that. [Students sing.]

When we want to understand what it means

to say that something is just a dependently arisen appearance, what its quality is, then we should think about reflections shining in very clear water, or in a mirror. All things are just like that. And, even though these appearances have no substantial nature, we can still use them to eliminate faults and bring about good qualities, just as we can use the face that appears in a mirror to clean off all the dirt from our face, to comb our hair, and to make ourselves look nice, even though that face has no essence. So it is like that.

If you want to meditate on selflessness, you can do that by seeing how it is that none of the five aggregates is the self; that their coming together, the whole accumulation of them, is not

the self; that ego-clinging mind is not the self. Since there is no self, we can just rest in selflessness.

If you like meditating according to the mind only school—that reality is empty of the duality of perceiver and perceived—then you first look at outer appearances and know that they are just confused appearances that are projections of habitual tendencies, just like appearances in dreams. Since there is nothing real on the outside, there can be no inner mind to perceive anything either.

And so there is no duality of perceiver and perceived. What is left is the ground of mind itself, which is mere consciousness, mere luminous clarity. Rest in that, which is empty of duality.

If you like to meditate according to the middle way autonomy school, the svatantrika madhyamika, then you analyze everything in samsara and nirvana and see that nothing is just one indivisible thing, because whatever it is, it is divisible into its constituent parts. It is divisible into hundreds of thousands of millions of parts. So nothing is just one thing. Nor are there many things; because each one of those parts is divisible into its parts, you cannot find anything to begin counting in order to find many. This ap-

When the
buddhas rest in
samadhi, then all
of the hell realms
and hungry
ghost realms are
free of suffering.
But just
temporarily

plies as well to the self-aware, luminous mind which was posited by the mind only school as being the nature of genuine reality. We can see that that does not exist either. And having cut through everything that needs to be refuted, we rest in the emptiness that is like the sky, that is like space. That is the way to meditate according to the middle way autonomy school.

The way to meditate according to the middle way consequence school, the prasangika madhyamika, is to realize that the nature of reality cannot be described by any conceptual fabrication. It cannot be said to be existent or nonexistent, real or something that ceases, something or nothing. None of these apply. This is the nature of reality—freedom from all conceptual fabrications. Since that is its nature, then the mind that meditates upon it has nothing to focus upon. So reality transcends conceptual fabrications, and the mind meditating on it is free from any focus or reference point. Resting in that is the way to meditate according to the middle way consequence school.

In the *Entrance to the Middle Way*, there is a verse which says, “There is no arising, remaining, or ceasing, and the mind meditating on that does not arise either.” So the object meditated upon is free from conceptual fabrications, and the mind meditating on it transcends all conceptual fabrications too. The freedom from fabrications rests within the freedom from fabrications. The result is also free from any conceptual

fabrications. So however many layers you want to put into it, or however many aspects of it you wish to describe, it does not matter. They are all undifferentiable within the freedom from conceptual fabrications.


As the bodhisattva Shantideva says in the wisdom chapter of the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Conduct*, “At the time when there is neither thing nor non-thing to occupy a place before the mind, at that point there is no projected image. This lack of reference point is perfect peace.”

What the mind looks at in meditation is the dharmadhatu. The dharmadhatu is neither something existent nor non-existent. Neither a thing, nor nothing. It cannot be described by any conceptual fabrication. Therefore the mind meditating upon it has no reference point. And these two—the meditating mind and the dharmadhatu—are undifferentiable.

The lord of yogins, Milarepa, sang in his song called *The Profound Definitive Meaning Sung on the Snowy Range*:

*For the mind that masters view, the emptiness
dawns.*

*In the content seen, not even an atom exists.
A seer and seen, refined until they're gone,
This way of realizing view, it works quite well.*

This description of view is in harmony with that of the middle way consequence school. Let's sing this together. [Students sing. Dedication of merit.] Sarva Mangalam! 

Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way
**The Ninth Mind Generation:
Excellent Mind**



[Students begin by singing the *Song of Meaningful Connections* and by reciting the verses from the *Seventh and Eighth Mind Generations*.]

As before, please give rise to the precious attitude of bodhicitta, as is instructed in the great vehicle, and listen. We have come to the *Ninth Mind Generation*, describing the ninth bhumi or ground:

What need to mention the strengths they gain on the ninth ground. They all become perfectly pure.

Similarly, their own qualities, the dharmas of perfect awareness, become completely pure.

The commentary reads, “On the ninth ground, what need to mention the strengths of the bodhisattvas. Here the practice of the paramita or transcendent perfection of strength comes to the fore and becomes completely perfect. All the strengths of the bodhisattvas are completely pure, and furthermore, they develop the qualities of the four dharmas of perfect awareness.” These four dharmas are described as follows: The first is called the awareness of phenomena, which means that they know the individual, specific characteristics of every single phenomenon. The next is called the awareness of meaning, which means that they have perfect knowledge of all of the distinctions between different types of phenomena, and different types of dharma teachings. The third, literally called the awareness of etymology, means that they are perfectly able to teach everything in the dharma distinctly and clearly without confusing any dharma teaching with another. And finally there is the awareness that is the quality of courage. They are courageous in teaching because they never forget anything that they have learned. They have no fear of forgetting something because they remember everything. These are the four qualities of perfect awareness that are perfected on the ninth bhumi.

Of the ten strengths, the first one is the strength of will, which is the absence of any conduct influenced by the kleshas, the mental

afflictions.

The second is the strength of perfect resource or resourcefulness, which means that one is skilled in all the limitless numbers of different types of conduct which worldly beings present or display.

The third is the strength of power, literally, because it means that all of the bodhisattvas’ wishes are perfectly fulfilled.

The fourth is the strength of learning because one is skilled and expert in all of the different divisions of the dharma taught by the Buddha. In order to know so much, you have to study and learn a lot.

The fifth is the strength of aspiration prayers. Bodhisattvas on the ninth ground must apply themselves to practicing the conduct of all the buddhas, and they do not give up any aspect of that conduct.

The sixth is the strength of the paramitas, or literally, of having crossed to the far shore, which means that the qualities of the buddhas become perfectly ripened in the mind stream of the bodhisattva.

The seventh is the strength of love, which means that they do not abandon in the slightest way the conduct of protecting all sentient beings.

The eighth is the strength of compassion, which means they clear away the suffering of all sentient being.

The ninth is the power or the strength of pure being, the dharmata, which means they manifest the nature of reality, which is like an illusion.

Finally, the tenth is the strength of having received the blessing of all of the tathagatas, which means that they are approaching or on the verge of the omniscient, primordial wisdom. ⑤

Here the practice of the paramita or transcendent perfection of strength comes to the fore and becomes completely perfect

Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way
**The Tenth Mind Generation:
Cloud of Dharma**

We have arrived at the tenth ground, and there are three sections to the commentary outlined here. The first describes the extraordinary quality particular to the tenth ground. The second describes the way in which the transcendent perfection of primordial wisdom becomes pure. And the third describes the qualities that are the reason for giving this ground its particular name, which is *Cloud of Dharma*. The first is about the particular quality of this ground, which is described in the first part of the verse:

On the tenth ground they receive the genuine empowerment from all the buddhas. (1a)

The commentary reads: “The bodhisattvas abiding on the tenth ground, the *Cloud of Dharma*, receive the genuine empowerment from all the buddhas of the ten directions. It is an empowerment of great rays of light, which they receive at the end of having resided in 100,000 times 10 to the 59th samadhis, which



causes them to be undifferentiable from the omniscient primordial wisdom of the buddhas.”

This empowerment is described in the *Sutra of the Tenth Bhumi*, which says that there are one hundred-thousand billion precious lotuses—a gazillion lotuses. The sutra further explains that surrounding each of these ten gazillion main lotuses* there are additional lotuses circling the main lotuses equal in number to the combined number of atoms in all of original ten gazillion main lotuses. There are ten gazillion main lotuses, each of which is surrounded by an even vaster retinue of [subsidiary]

lotuses, and on each of the main lotuses sits a tenth-bhumi bodhisattva. So the tenth-bhumi bodhisattva does not get this empowerment alone, but in the company of a vast assembly of tenth-bhumi bodhisattvas who receive empowerment at the same time. On the subsidiary,

***Editor's note:** The translator seems to have become confused here between one gazillion and ten gazillion.

smaller lotuses sit bodhisattvas from the seventh, eighth, and ninth bhumis. Each lotus is as big as the body of the bodhisattva seated upon it, so you do not have a little bodhisattva on a big lotus, or a big bodhisattva on a little lotus. They all fit just right. At the end of this particular samadhi, what has just been described appears. Since all of these bodhisattvas and lotuses are merely empty forms, there is no reason why this cannot happen. So all these bodhisattvas are seated in the way described, and then from all of the buddha realms—from the white curled hair in the middle of each buddha’s forehead—come rays of light. And all of this light enters into the mind-streams of these bodhisattvas, and in that way they receive the empowerment.

In *Praise of the Dharmadatu* it is explained in a similar way, with the main bodhisattvas sitting on the anthers of the lotuses and an inconceivable number of bodhisattvas sitting on the outer petals.

These flowers, we have to understand, are not ordinary flowers that grow from a seed in the ground. They are flowers made out of light and they are empty forms. The bodhisattvas do not need to do anything to set up this particular arrangement. They do not make any preparations; the whole thing just appears, and they take part in it and receive this empowerment. All these bodhisattvas have the power of clairvoyance and other extraordinary mental abilities.

The next section in the commentary describes the transcendent perfection of primordial wisdom, which is described in the second line of the root verse:

**And their primordial wisdom becomes supreme.
(1b)**

One might ask, “What is the difference between wisdom, which is the sixth transcendent perfection, and primordial wisdom, which is the

Primordial
wisdom is the
wisdom that
knows all
phenomena just
as they are

tenth transcendent perfection?”* The commentary explains that in some places it is explained that wisdom (*prajna*) faces outward and primordial wisdom (*jnana*) faces inward, that for wisdom there is still dualistic appearance and for primordial wisdom there is not. But this commentary does not really like that explanation. It quotes the *Sutra of the Bodhisattva Bhumis* in saying that primordial wisdom is the wisdom that knows all phenomena just as they are. So what does that mean? Well, *prajna* or wisdom, *sherab*, only perceives the nature of genuine reality, whereas primordial wisdom perceives genuine reality and relative reality both together. So the ultimate cognition, which is this primordial wisdom, does not merely perceive the nature of genuine reality, but perceives genuine reality as being of the same taste as relative reality. And furthermore, where there is primordial wisdom, dualistic appearances have dissolved, and there is no longer any distinction at all between the two

***Editor’s note:** Here the translator is translating the Sanskrit *prajna*, which is *sherab* in Tibetan, as “wisdom.” Trungpa Rinpoche and the Nalanda Translation Committee (NTC) have translated this term as “knowledge.” The Sanskrit *jnana*, which is *yeshe* in Tibetan, the translator is translating as “primordial wisdom.” This term Trungpa Rinpoche and the NTC have translated as “wisdom” or “primordial awareness.” Again, according to the NTC, “Prajna is the natural sharpness of awareness that sees, discriminates, and also sees through conceptual discrimination.” *Sherab*, the Tibetan for *prajna*, literally means the best knowledge or the best knowing, and it is traditionally divided into lower or worldly knowledge—which would include everything from cookery or how to sweep a street properly to brain surgery, nuclear physics, etc.—and higher or spiritual knowledge, which includes two levels: one that, in accordance with the hinayana teachings of the Buddha, sees the self and external physical phenomena as impermanent, without a self, and of the nature of suffering; and at a higher level, one that, in accordance with the mahayana teachings, sees or experiences emptiness, the direct knowledge of the true nature of things. *Yeshe*, the Tibetan for *jnana*, literally means primordial knowing, and is the “wisdom-activity of enlightenment, transcending all dualistic conceptualization.” (NTC) Trungpa Rinpoche has also said that the difference between what is being translated here as wisdom and primordial wisdom is the difference between “being wise and being wisdom.”

****Editor’s note:** relative truth and absolute truth.

truths.** They are of the same taste. This primordial wisdom is the result of the practice of wisdom, the result of the practice of prajna.

And finally, in the last two lines of the verse, there is the description of the qualities that give this ground its name:

**Just as rain falls from clouds, from the bodhisattvas falls a spontaneous rain of dharma
So that the harvest of beings' virtue may flourish.
(1cd)**

The commentary reads: “For example, just as in the world gentle rain falls from clouds, so it is that, in order to produce within the mind-streams of beings the excellent harvest of virtue—the fruit which yields temporary and ultimate benefit and happiness—from the great beings, the bodhisattvas on the tenth ground, there spontaneously—which means here without any effort or contrivance—falls the rain of the genuine dharma. Thus, this ground is called the *Cloud of Dharma*.”

Next the text describes the twelve qualities shared by all bodhisattvas that increase exponentially as they progress from ground to ground.

Translator: Rinpoche has composed some verses, called summarizing verses, to make this easier for us to understand.

Rinpoche: The verses in the text of the *Entrance to the Middle Way* are more difficult to understand and to memorize. These are much easier. [See box on this page.] These verses describe what happens on the first bodhisattva

bhumi. On the first bhumi the bodhisattva has these twelve qualities a hundred fold, or twelve hundred altogether. There is a tune that goes along with these verses, which would be good for us to sing and to memorize. When we sing all together, it makes a very good connection. Then when you reach the first bodhisattva ground, you will know all the things you can do, because you will have recited this verse and you will say, “Oh yes, I remember I can do this and this and this.”

And you will not have to ask people, “What does it mean that I can meet a hundred buddhas?” You will know exactly what that means. [Students sing verses.]

Now are there any questions?

Translator: Maybe I can just say a few things about what we just heard. They can meet a hundred buddhas and receive their blessings. They stay for a hundred

eons, meaning that if they want to stay for that long on this bhumi they can. They can stay for that long. They can know everything that happened in the past hundred eons and everything that will happen in the future hundred eons. In the last line, “They can emanate a hundred bodies,” means that they can send out a hundred emanations of themselves, each surrounded by a hundred of whomever they like.

Question: And open a hundred doors? What is a door of dharma?

Translator: It means they can teach in a hundred different ways.

Question: Are you translating *dampa* when you say genuine?

*They can meet a hundred buddhas and receive their blessings.
They can stay for a hundred eons, know the past hundred, future hundred too!
They can enter a hundred samadhis and move a hundred worlds.
They can fill those hundred worlds with light and ripen a hundred beings.
They can travel to a hundred pure lands, open a hundred doors of dharma.
They can emanate a hundred bodies with a hundred in each beautiful retinue!*

—Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche
Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, translated by Ari Goldfield, October 31, 1999.

Translator: Yes, *dampa*.

Question: If they know the next hundred lives and they know the past hundred eons, but they neither happen or will happen, what is the point in knowing the next hundred eons if nothing is going to happen anyway?

Translator: Rinpoche says it would be better if I answered the question. It is very helpful to remember the examples of a dream or a water moon, because they “teach” the nature of appearance. The image of the moon appears in the water and events appear in a dream, but there is nothing real there in either case. So to say that something has no inherent existence or to say that nothing ever happens means that just as events in a dream do not really happen, nothing in any other dimension of existence really happens. They appear to happen, but they do not really happen. Both the past and the future are like that. They are just mere appearances. That is what bodhisattvas know. To say that nothing happens does not mean that they are nothingness; it means that they are just mere appearances.

Rinpoche: The many qualities ascribed to the various bodhisattva bhūmis are not real either. They too are just appearance-emptiness, like a water moon. If they were real, if things were solid, inherently existent, it would be impossible for such things as described in these verses to happen. But it is precisely because they are empty of inherent existence, because they are appearance-emptiness, that they can happen.

For example, you can have as many reflections of the moon as you have different containers filled with water. The moon will shine in all

of them effortlessly. It can do so because it is all just appearance-emptiness. Similarly, bodhisattvas can aid as many disciples. When all the causes and conditions come together, a mere appearance of emanations for the benefit of students appears.

If you ask why they emanate a retinue around them, the reason is that often times they want to go to places where the dharma has not been taught before. But if they were just to go to such a place alone, there would be nobody to listen to them; so they emanate a hundred students to listen to them. Then people say, “Oh, yes, I want to go too.” In that way more people come and listen. Bodhisattvas need somebody initially to listen to the teachings to get the whole thing rolling. They eliminate the problem of getting the whole thing off the ground by emanating their own students to come and start showing other people how to be a student

“Oh, that is how we should do it.” And so everybody else can enter into the dharma in the same way. That is a very good reason to send out emanations of students.

Question: What are the four fearlessnesses?

Rinpoche: The commentary just mentions the four fearlessnesses without explaining what they are. But, for example, there is no fear of whether or not one has gained realization as a buddha. There is no fear of being able or not able to lead

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disciples, and so forth. There are four such divisions.*

Question: I was curious about these emanations of the students. Are they real? Are they sentient beings? Or are they just simply empty emanations? And do they know that they are emanations or do they think they are sentient beings?

Rinpoche: These emanations are not ordinary sentient beings, because they are emanations of the bodhisattva. Some know that they are emanations and some do not, but it is better if they do not know. If they knew that they were emanations from the beginning, then they would not want to go through all of [what is entailed in following the path and

Some know
that they are
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***Editor's note:** Amongst the various qualities of buddhahood, the *Mahayana Uttara Tantra Sastra* enumerates "four kinds of fearlessness: 1. knowledge of their perfect enlightenment with respect to every phenomenal domain. 2. in teaching the obstacles and how to stop them. 3. in teaching the path and 4. in stating their achievement of cessation." The translators, Ken and Katia Holmes further comment on the first fearlessness that "When enlightenment is reached, everything to be purified has been purified and everything to be realised is realised."

The shastra further comments on "the function of these fearlessnesses. 1. Because they themselves know and help others know every aspect of the knowable. 2. because they themselves have relinquished and help others relinquish those things which must be relinquished. 3. because they teach and make taught what ought to be taught and 4. because they have attained and help others attain the utterly stainless highest attainment."

The translators further comment on these four last points: "These four points refer to the four sublime truths, taught by the Buddha in the first turning of the wheel of dharma. The truth of suffering is 'what is to be known'. The truth of the origination of suffering, 'what is to be given up'—karma and the defilements. The truth of the path—'what is to be relied upon', and the truth of cessation—'the goal to be achieved'. The terms [sublime truths] literally mean 'the truths' (*bDen.Pa*) 'of the realised' (*'Phags. Pa'i*). 'Sublime' means 'aloof from and raised far above the ordinary' (Oxford Dict.) since these truths are only perceived by realised beings. Sometimes called "Four Noble Truths." From *The Changeless Nature: Mahayana Uttara Tantra Sastra* by Arya Maitreya and Acarya Asanga, translated from the Tibetan under the guidance of Khenchen the IX Thrangu Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche by Ken and Katia Holmes, Karma Drubgyud Darjay Ling, Eskdalemuir, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, 1985.

being a good student, etc.]. They would look at their teacher and think, "We are both emanations of the same bodhisattva. Why should I listen to him? Why should I listen to her?" If they did know, it would just be like a movie; everybody would just be playing a role. And so it is probably not like that; they probably do not know, and they probably have the thoughts of ordinary beings.

There is a story about the siddha Götsangpa. He had among his many students an attendant called the siddha Örgenpa. He was in charge of making various arrangements, such as determining who could come to the teachings, how many people would fit, and things like that. Among the students there were many emanations, not necessarily emanations of Götsangpa, but just emanations in general. But the story recounts that the students did not necessarily know that they were emanations. That is probably how it is, and there is probably a good reason for that.

And Milarepa sang in a song called *The Eight Wonderful Forms of Happiness*, "To gather emanations as a retinue is *E Ma Ho!*" He was singing about his own experience, but he did not go around saying to his students, "Oh, you are this emanation, and you are that emanation." He did not tell them that.

Question: If I may follow up on his questions, were these emanations which are not now ordinary sentient beings ever at one time ordinary sentient beings? Or were they like a movie that is projected? I think a lot of Westerners have the notion that emanations are sort of holograms that are produced in space.

Rinpoche: It is in fact like television, or like the reflections in water of the moon in the sky, in that these emanations are not their own separate beings. They are just emanations. They are literally emanations of the basis or ground for the emanation, which is a particular bodhisattva

abiding in the pure realms. If somebody puts a television camera in front of somebody else, then that somebody else's image can show up on countless television sets. That is how emanations are. When a person is talking on television and showing up on millions of television sets, the images of this person on all these television sets are not the same as the actual person talking; but they are not different either. They are just mere dependently arisen appearances.

When we turn on our television and see a person's image there, this image is not the same as the person; it is not different from the person; it's just a mere dependently arisen appearance. But the way we think about it is that the image is the person; we think it is the same. So we look at the image of the person and say, "Oh, there he is; there she is."

Emanations are just mere dependently arisen appearances, they do not have any inherent existence.

So given the bodhisattva on the first bhumi and their hundred emanations, they are all emanations which lack inherent existence, because they are just mere dependently arisen appearances like images on television screens, like the reflections of the moon in many pools of water.

In order to tame beings, in order to benefit them, bodhisattvas take birth as rabbits, fish, turtles, deer, antelope, and all different kinds of animals. Whatever is necessary. The Buddha told very specific stories of such bodhisattvic incarnations. He said that at such and such a time I took birth as that animal and had my head cut off by that person, or I gave my flesh to that animal. He told these stories in great detail, exactly what happened in a great many lives.

Question: Incidentally, this seems a little strange, because we are all mere dependently arisen illusory beings, so somehow to try to distinguish us from emanations by saying emanations are

mere dependently arisen beings is a little confusing. If we look at it from the standpoint of their birth, they get the white tigli (bindhu) from their father, they get their red tigli from their mother, what is there in place of a *namshe*, which is also present when we are born?*

We need to use these ten types of equality in our practice and in our post-meditation experience

Rinpoche: To answer the first question, from the perspective of genuine reality, there is no difference between us and emanations. There is no difference between samsara and nirvana. There is no difference between buddhas and sentient beings. There is no difference between friends and enemies, and therefore it is explained

that all appearances are the display of the three kayas.

Since samsara and nirvana are fundamentally the same, then sentient beings and buddhas are fundamentally the same. Ordinary beings and noble bodhisattvas are fundamentally the same. Friends and enemies, clean and dirty, are fundamentally the same. So this is an expression or an example of the ten types of equality, which we discussed earlier in the course, and we need to use these ten types of equality in our practice and in our post-meditation experience.

As Gyalwa Götsangpa sang in his *Melody of the Eight Types of Non-Duality*,

*Wonderful visions of yidam deities and
Fearsome apparitions of obstructing demons,
These distinctions do not exist in the pure ex-
panse—
So how joyful! How happy! Sudden Victory!*

Sing a song! [Students sing verse.]

***Editor's note:** According to the Buddha's teachings, three constituents must be come together in the womb for the conception of an ordinary being to occur: the white element or bindu from the father, the red element or bindu from the mother, and the *namshe* or consciousness of the individual being in the intermediate state between death and rebirth who is being impelled by karma towards conception and rebirth.

If we can understand that deities, yidam deities, and demons are fundamentally the same, it is easy to understand how sentient beings and buddhas are fundamentally the same, too.

The way that demons and deities are the same is that ultimately the nature of both of them transcends all conceptual fabrications about what they might be. And relatively the appearance of the two is just like a dream, they are both equally like dream appearances, like illusions, and like water moons.

Singing about the ways in which ordinary beings and bodhisattvas and buddhas are the same, Götsangpa sang:

*Obtaining high rebirth or liberation and
Falling into the three unhappy destinations,
These distinctions don't exist in the pure expanse—
So how joyful! How happy!
Sudden Victory! **

So let's sing that verse. [Students sing. See opposite page for full song.]

You might dream of meeting the noble Tara; you might dream of meeting Manjushri; or you might dream of meeting some horrible demon, but all of these are just mere appearances. The appearances of the deities are not real; the appearances of the demons are not real. Fundamentally their nature is equality. So it is like that.

So we need to know the way in which, from the perspective of their genuine nature, things are fundamentally the same, which is that the nature of everything transcends all conceptual fabrications. It is beyond conceptuality. And we also need to know the way in which, from the perspective of their relative appearances, things are also the same, which is that they are equally

If we can understand that deities, yidam deities, and demons are fundamentally the same, it is easy to understand how sentient beings and buddhas are fundamentally the same, too

like dream appearances, like water moons and illusions. The example that helps us to understand this form of equality is the example of things and occurrences in dreams.

As to your second question—What is the substitute for the consciousness in an emanated being?—whereas ordinarily we are born with the white bindu from the father, the red bindu from the mother, and the consciousness from the previous life, for an emanation, the substitute for the consciousness is the samadhi, the aspiration prayers, and the compassion of the emanating bodhisattva. It is mainly the samadhi of the bodhisattva. Accompanying the samadhi is the power of the compassion and aspiration prayers of the bodhisattva. From those you get something like consciousness, something that serves as a substitute for what we have as consciousness. It is like that.

Question: I would appreciate hearing again the reasoning that refutes the notion that things can arise from other than themselves.

Translator: So could Rinpoche please go over again the reasoning that refutes arising from other?

Rinpoche: The root of it, which is the best way to understand it, is that, given an entity, it does not arise from something other than itself, because at the time of the result, the cause does not exist as something different from the result.** Why? Because that cause has gone out of existence. It is just not there. And at the time of the cause, the result does not exist as something

****Editor's note:** The structure of this sentence, beginning with "... given an entity," since it appears frequently in the translator's syntax, must reflect a structure of logical reasoning in Tibetan philosophy or debate. For that reason, though it seems a bit awkward in English, we have left it in this form.

***Editor's note:** See *Shenpen Ösel*, Vol. 2, No. 2, page 10.

different from the cause, because the result has not arisen yet. So since you only have one at a time, cause and then result—since cause and result do not exist at the same time—then you cannot say that something arises from something other than itself, because the other is not there. There is nothing to be other from.

For example, when you have a seed, there is no flower. By the time the flower has arisen, there is no seed. The seed and the flower do not exist at the same time. So since you only have one at a time, you cannot say that the flower arises from the seed, which is other to it, because they do not coexist. If they do not coexist, how could they be different from each other? You have to have two things existing at the same time for them to be different from each other.

Question: But then where does process come into . . . How do you account for process then?

Rinpoche: Actually there is no such thing as process. This is something very important for us to understand, that there is no such thing as the process of birth [or arising]. If you examine, you will see that in between the time when birth has not yet happened and the time after birth has happened, there is nothing. Something is either born or it is not. In between, there is nothing; in between, there is no process of birth; there is no half way. You cannot posit something as being born because it is either born or it is not. When you examine subtly, this is what you find out. Since there is no process of birth, there is no arising. It just does not happen.

In the chapter called the *Examination of Coming and Going*, the protector Nagarjuna looked at process. He looked at “ing,”—going and coming—and he proved that this “ing” state does not exist. The way he looked at it in this chapter was that, if you are walking on a path, then in between the part of the path that you have already walked on and the part you have not walked on yet, there is nothing. And so there is

no process of going; he refuted process.

You might then say, “Well, yes, there is going, because somebody’s legs are moving on this path, and that is the going.” But somebody’s leg can only be in one place at one time, not two, so there is no movement. In between the time that all past movement has finished, and all future movement has yet to happen, there is nothing there. There is actually no movement happening.

Another way to look at it is to look at the individual and see that when they are moving one leg, the other leg is staying still. And then when that leg is staying still, the first leg is moving. Therefore, if you ask whether that person is moving or staying still, you find yourself in a contradiction: one person is both moving and staying still.

So then you must ask, “Is this person a mover or a stayer?” And you cannot answer that question, because part of them is moving and part is not. So the whole notion of moving breaks down.

It is the same with death. You are either alive, or you are dead.

There is no in between. There is no point of death. There is all the time when you are alive, and then after that you are dead. So there is no point where death happens, which is why Milarepa sang,

*I've gained confidence that there is no arising.
This swept away my taking past and future lives
as two,
Exposed all six realms' appearances as false,
And cut right through believing all too much in
birth and death.*

Since Milarepa examined and saw that there is nothing in between the time before you die and the time after you die, the time before you are born and the time after you are born, and thereby saw that there is no point of birth or death, Milarepa knew that there was no such thing as birth and death. He had confidence that there was no birth and no death.

We can see that the songs of Milarepa and the reasonings of Nagarjuna are completely in

You are either
alive, or you are
dead. There is no
in between.
There is no point
of death

harmony with each other in this regard. When we join these two together, they makes our understanding very profound. So we should sing the song we sang yesterday. [Students sing *Three Kinds of Confidence in Genuine Reality*, imitating the translator's periodic yelping during the song. See page 116.]

Since this is the way that heroes sing, we need to yelp a little bit as heroes do, with a hero's confidence. If we did not have that type of confidence there would be no reason to yelp like that. Sentient beings normally are not very heroic. Why? Because we are afraid of death. That is the main reason why we are not heroic.

The logic is the same with sickness. In between the moment when all the pain you have experienced in the past has elapsed, and the moment when all the pain you are going to experience in the future begins, there is nothing, and there is no time there for you to experience any pain, so there is no experience of pain happening.

"No, you are wrong; I really am sick," you might say. "I feel it myself. I really am sick." But that does not prove that your sickness is real; you could be sick in a dream. Just to have the experience does not prove anything.

This is why Gyalwa Götsangpa sang,

The illness and its painfulness have neither base nor root.

*Relax into it, fresh and uncontrived,
Revealing dharmakaya way beyond all speech and thought.*

*Don't shun them; pain and illness are basically good.**

So let's sing that together. [Students sing.]

You should sing that song a lot. Other questions.

Question: Speaking to an infant, how would you describe Buddhism? How would you define

***Editor's note:** See *Eight Cases of Basic Goodness Not to be Shunned*, page 128.)

Buddhism to an infant?

Translator: You mean a small child at least capable of understanding your speech?

Question: Like a young child.

Rinpoche: If it is a small child with exceptional intelligence, you should explain to them the true nature of reality. Explain that things neither come nor go. If it is a child with great faith, teach them how to meditate on Chenrezig or Manjushri.

These days, in the last part of the twentieth century, children study a lot, and they are taught in school that small particles do not really exist. So if they know that small particles do not really exist, then understanding the rest about emptiness will not be so difficult.

It is also pretty easy to understand how it is that space has no center or end, how this planet has no top or bottom, and how beings are the equality of self and other. Those are easy reasonings to understand.

Children can also come to understand easily how it is that difficulty is just a creation of our own mind, when we find things difficult we can understand that it is just our own thoughts that are creating this difficulty, nothing else. They can understand this easily, because when they play and are happy, then time goes by very fast, but when they are having a tough time, then time seems to go very slowly, and the whole perspective of the world changes. And so, they can see from that that it is just an imputation of thoughts creating one situation or another.

Children can look at their minds and see how that sometimes feelings of hunger or bodily discomfort cause them to lose their patience with, and to get angry with their teacher or with their father and mother, and in that way they can see that it all just comes from thoughts.

And other times when they are feeling happy, then everything seems to go very easily. They

Sentient beings normally are not very heroic. Why? Because we are afraid of death

Three Kinds of Confidence in Genuine Reality

At the feet of Marpa the translator I bow.
From meditating here and there in natural retreats

I've gained confidence that there is no arising.
This swept away my taking past and future lives as two,
Exposed all six realms' appearances as false,
And cut right through believing all too much in birth and death.

I've gained confidence in everything as equal.
This swept away my taking happiness and grief as two,
Exposed the ups and downs of feelings as false,
And cut believing there are some to have and some to shun.

In inseparability I've gained confidence.
This swept away samsara and nirvana seen as two,
Exposed the exercise of paths and levels as false,
And cut right through believing all too much in hope and fear.

can study well. They have a lot of diligence. They have a lot of friends, and so they can see that everything just depends upon their own frame of mind.

Among the eighty-four mahasiddhas of India, there were two children. They heard only a couple of verses of dharma and gained liberation. And then they just took off and went up into the trees and played in the trees. Their names were Tonglopa and Singlopa. They could attain siddhi as young children because they were incredibly smart. These days children are also very smart.

But do not be discouraged because you think you are too old; it does not matter if you are old either. Sukha Siddhi, the wisdom dakini of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage, was sixty years old when she was kicked out of her house by her

husband and son. She developed great renunciation for samsara. She met her teacher, practiced, attained siddhi, and transformed herself into a sixteen-year-old girl. She is still sixteen, even today. Some siddhas are able to see her directly, and she is still sixteen-years-old.

So the fact is that being old or young just depends on thoughts. If there are no thoughts of being old or young, then there is no difference between old and young; it is just like being old or young in a dream.

There was a student of the translator Barotsana, whose name was Mipham Gampo. He was an eighty-year-old beggar when Barotsana met him on the side of the road. He could barely see, he had no teeth, and his hair was all white, but he requested Barotsana for

instructions. Barotsana taught him to meditate on guru yoga, which he did. He recognized the nature of mind and attained the rainbow body.

In the old days there were no false teeth, so when you lost all your teeth your mouth looked like a big cave. And when you chewed you had to chew like this. [Rinpoche imitates chewing without teeth.] Nowadays people get false teeth and go around smiling to show everybody. So it is like that.

The point is that the more hardship we have when practicing dharma, the more feeling we have that samsara really is not worth it after all, the more renunciation we develop for samsara. So that is good; the more hardship the better. All the great siddhas first experienced great suffering, which then impelled them to practice the dharma. So it is like that.

Question: Rinpoche talked a little bit about the dharma path and the presence of the human experience of sexual energy, and that seems pretty strong. We spend a lot of time either being caught up in it or trying not to be caught up in it. Could Rinpoche speak a little bit about the right effort or use of sex and sexual energy as it pertains to meditative equipoise?

Translator: The question is about sex and sexual energy in the human experience and how to take it to the path. What is the connection between sex or sexual energy and right conduct?

Rinpoche: Actually, passion is something very good. On the path of the shravakas, you try to get rid of passion. And when you do that, you can attain the state of arhatship. But you do not try to get rid of passion as a mahayana practitioner, because passion is very close to loving kindness. So these two are related to each other. In the vajrayana there are a number of different means to use passion and sexual energy on the path and one is the method of mahamudra, where you

meditate on the essential nature of the experience of passion.

In the mahamudra meditation of the vajrayana, you meditate on the essential nature of passion, the essential nature of aggression, and the essential nature of stupidity.

So if you look at anger specifically, then anger has a very brilliant and clear aspect to it. It is very sharp. So if you arouse yourself in anger [Rinpoche demonstrates the appearance of anger], and then look at the nature of that angry mind, then you will have a beautifully luminous experience.

You do not try to get rid of passion as a mahayana practitioner, because passion is very close to loving kindness

Question: Could Rinpoche explain the logic that proves past and future lives?

Rinpoche: Given past and future lives, they are not real, because they are like water moons. They are mere appearances, and so we need to know that past and future lives are not real. Given past and future lives, they exist as mere dependently arisen appearances because they are just like dreams and water moons.

Milarepa sings:

*I've gained confidence that there is no arising.
This swept away my taking past and future lives
as two.**

Milarepa here no longer believes that past and future lives really exist. To believe that they are real is confusion. To believe that they do not exist is also confusion. So it is like that.

The protector Nagarjuna said that when you know that existence is just like a mirage and a water moon, you will not fall into the views of realism or nihilism. So knowing that things are the inseparable union of appearance and emptiness, and that past and future lives are the same, is to free ourselves both from thinking that

***Editor's note:** From *Three Kinds of Confidence in Genuine Reality*.

things are real and from believing in non-existence.

There are reasonings that prove that there are past and future lives, but they cannot prove that they are real, because in the view of those reasonings there are lots of contradictions. You can prove that past and future lives are like dreams and water moons.

Nowadays most scientists do not believe in past and future lives, because they are looking at past and future lives from the perspective of thinking that things are truly existent. But were they to understand that things are just like water moons and illusions, then they would have no problem believing in past and future lives.

They should also know the consequence of their view. The consequence of understanding that even the smallest particles of matter do not exist is that it would be impossible for a being made up of coarse flesh and blood—which are in turn thought to be made up of subtle particles of matter which they now have determined do not truly exist—to truly exist as substantial matter or ever really to be born.

You cannot even say that there is this one life that we are experiencing, because when you are dreaming, the daytime life is gone, and during the daytime the dream life is gone. When you are happy the sad life is gone. When you are sad the happy life is gone. So what is this life? It is just a conceptual imputation and a superimposition that has no inherent existence. Where is it?

If this life really existed, then you would have to be able to say, “Oh, it is this,” or “It is that.” You would have to have some thing you could point to and say this is what actually exists. But you cannot.

When you are in thick or deep sleep, you do not have any appearances at all. There are no dream appearances. There are no daytime appearances. There is just nothing. So which one is it? Is thick sleep a dream appearance or a daytime experience? If you say one, you exclude

everything else. So the fact is that you cannot find anything that is “this life.”

So this life is just like an illusion and a dream. There is nothing substantial or real here. There is nothing separate or distinct about which you can say, “This is the truly existent life.” If you understand this view of things, then there is no reason why there could not be past dream-like illusory lives, and future dream-like illusory lives.

Whatever it is—whether it is a past life, this life, or a future life—it is not real, because it is neither one thing nor many.

Question: Why in the world is the reality of appearances so vivid?

Rinpoche: This vivid clarity of appearance is called the meeting of appearance and consciousness. In dependence upon there being consciousness, there can be an appearance. In dependence upon appearance, there can be a consciousness. And these are not successive. They are simultaneous.

Think about how consciousness perceives things in dreams.

If it were the case that when there were appearances, there was no consciousness, and when there was consciousness, there was no appearance, nothing would be clear. But what we constantly have is the instantaneous meeting of appearance and consciousness.

And that is why we have vivid appearances. You have the appearance

and the consciousness of one moment, and then that ceases and there is the next moment, and then that ceases, and then the next, and the next. And they are all alike. And that is why there is constant fresh clarity of appearance.

It is like the snapping of the finger with the ear consciousness. Very clear. That is called the meeting of appearance and consciousness. It is like that.

Question: When I have been dreaming and have realized that I was dreaming, “I have said to

The vivid clarity of appearance is called the meeting of appearance and consciousness

myself, “Okay, that means I can fly now.” And when that occurs, I leap in the air and punch a hole in the ceiling, and I can do whatever I want. But with regard to my waking life, though your reasonings make sense to me on a very deep level and I believe that my waking life is mere appearance, I do not have that same experience of freedom over things and events that I have in dreams. Why is it that if we are sure that we are dreaming we can fly in our dreams, but when we are sure that these waking appearances are appearance-emptiness, we still cannot fly? What is the difference?

Rinpoche: The difference is that in your waking state you have certainty that these appearances are appearance-emptiness, but you do not have realization. In a dream you have both certainty and something like realization that allows you to do that.

Question: Rinpoche made the statement that pain and illness are basically good. Could Rinpoche expand on that?

Rinpoche: The basic goodness of sickness is its nature. Because sickness is not real, in essence there is nothing wrong with it. This is called natural purity, or primordial purity. The only reason that we think there is something wrong with sickness is that we project that it exists. We think, “I am sick. I am suffering because of my sickness. I am experiencing suffering. I want to get better. I want to get rid of this sickness.” But once all those types of thoughts which think the sickness is real cease, then there is nothing there except purity, because there is no mental stain or defilement.

When we get sick in a dream our sickness exists only because we think we are sick. When we get sick during the day our sickness exists only because we think we are sick. When we are

in deep sleep there is no sickness. Why? Because there is no thought of sickness. You go to the hospital and have an operation so that you can be cured of sickness, but when you are under anesthesia, there is no sickness, because you are not thinking about it. So sickness exists only in dependence upon thoughts.

So if we examine sickness and suffering with our intelligence, we can find that these things do not really exist.

But just understanding conceptually that sickness does not exist is not enough. We also need to meditate. There are lot of different ways to meditate, so now we

will meditate a bit. [Students meditate.]

Now Ari is going to sing the song by Götsangpa called the *Seven Delights*. Please listen and meditate. [Translator sings.]*

Now let's sing the five verses on illusory body. [Students sing. See page 59.]

Rinpoche: There are four states of existence: deep sleep, dream, sexual intercourse, and the ordinary state, which is everything else. The last one is the longest. So when we are working in the city, when we are doing whatever it is that we are ordinarily doing, then that is the time to meditate on illusory body. That is the time to sing these verses. If we can gain certainty in appearance-emptiness undifferentiable, that would be quite good. When we gain certainty that this life is appearance-emptiness undifferentiable then everything becomes very easy, very open, spacious, and relaxed.

[Dedication of merit]

Rinpoche: From this text, *Entrance to the Middle Way*, which was composed by the glorious Chandrakirti, we have explained all of the verses from nine of the ten mind generations. The sixth mind generation is very long, so we

*Editor's note: See *Shenpen Ösel*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pages 80-81.

selected the most important verses to explain. It would be very good for us to recite all of these verses again and again.

The sixth chapter is quite long. There is a lot to it. If I come here again, it will be easy for me to explain more of it. The sixth chapter contains many logical reasonings which are difficult to study all the way through in one sitting, so it is better to study them piece by piece by piece.

In a previous visit, we explained the sixteen emptinesses, which have now been published in *Shenpen Ösel*, and so it would be very good to recite those verses again and again.*

The sixteen emptinesses are explained from the perspective of the sixteen things to which we are most attached. Each one of those is explained to be empty, and that helps us really to understand emptiness. Emptiness is difficult to understand if we just lump everything together and say everything is empty. It is easier to understand if we break it down into these sixteen things to which we have a lot of attachment.

We sang two verses about the twelve qualities of the bodhisattvas to heighten our interest. If we know about the bodhisattvas' good qualities, then we will be more enthusiastic about attaining those states ourselves. The protector Nagarjuna attained the first bhumi, *Perfect Joy*, so he had these 1,200 qualities.

Similarly, the eight mahayana heart disciples of the Buddha Shakyamuni are all bodhisattvas on the tenth ground, so the number of emanations they have is inconceivable.

Knowing about the qualities of buddhas and bodhisattvas is a means of heightening our interest in dharma and also of causing us to have even greater respect for and be in greater awe of the bodhisattvas on these grounds.

When the madhyamika, the middle way, is explained, the two phrases heard most often are, "It does not exist," and "It is not real." We hear these again and again because we have such great attachment to the things in this life as being real, and as existing, so we need to hear that they aren't real again and again to reverse our attachment to them.

Then there are other dharma explanations that presume the existence of things, such as the explanation that wherever there is space there

are more sentient beings, and wherever there are sentient beings there is suffering. These explanations, which teach from the perspective of existence and things existing, are made in order to inspire us to accumulate merit.

The king of swans has two wings: one—the wing of knowing that things are not real, that they do not exist—is the wing of suchness; the other—the wing that posits the existence of things existing in a certain way—is the wing of the relative. Flying on these two wings he can soar to the far side of the ocean of the Victors' qualities.** With his broad white wings of the relative and suchness, the king of swans soars ahead to lead the flock. By the power of virtue's wind, he crosses to the far shore of the

ocean of the Victor's perfect qualities.

In short, as Milarepa sang, "I see this life to be like a dream and an illusion, and I have compassion for those who do not realize that." He was singing from his own experience, and it should be our practice as well to train in the realization that all the appearances of this life are just like appearances in a dream, just like appearances in an illusion, and to develop compassion for those who suffer because they do not

It should be our practice to train in the realization that all the appearances of this life are just like the appearances in a dream and to develop compassion for those who suffer because they do not realize that

***Editor's note:** See *Shenpen Ösel*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pages 55-62.

****Editor's note:** i.e., he can attain the enlightenment of buddhahood.

realize that.

This life is not real; it is not false. Reality and falsity are fundamentally the same. It is not long, it is not short. Long and short are fundamentally the same. Thinking this, understanding this, we can see how important it is to practice the dharma.

Long exists only in dependence upon short. Short exists only in dependence upon long. Where is the thing that is only long, and not short? Where is the thing that is only short and not long? When we realize we cannot find any such thing, then we see the equality of long and short.

Suffering and happiness exist only in dependence upon each other. We can only know happiness in dependence upon suffering. We can only know suffering in dependence upon happiness. When we have a great feeling of joy, that exists only in dependence upon an idea of what great suffering is. When we have great suffering, that can exist only because we have a notion of what

great joy is. And when we try to think or conceive of what the greatest joy possible could be, or what the greatest suffering possible could be, we have no idea. And this shows that suffering and happiness are of the nature of equality.

We have explained the ten equalities from the *Sutra of the Tenth Bhumi*. Of these equalities, the most important are the way that everything is the same from the perspective of its genuine nature—freedom from all conceptual fabrications—and the way everything is the same from the perspective of its relative nature—that everything is equally just like a dream, an illusion, and a water moon. These are what we have to think about again and again and again.

To sum it all up, practice emptiness and compassion in union. Everything is complete within that. [Rinpoche, translator, and students dedicate merit.]

Sarva Mangalam! 

Selected Verses From Chandrakirti's Entrance to the Middle Way

The First Mind Generation: Perfect Joy

Shravakas and intermediate buddhas arise
from the Mighty Ones.
Buddhas are born from the bodhisattvas.
And compassionate mind, non-dual aware-
ness,
And bodhicitta are the causes of these heirs of
the Victors. (1)

Since I assert that loving kindness itself is the
seed of the Victors' abundant harvest,
Is the water which causes it to flourish,
And is its ripening that allows it to be enjoyed
for a long time,
I therefore praise compassion at the very
outset. (2)

First thinking "me," they fixate on "self,"
Then, thinking, "This is mine," attachment to
things develops.
Beings are powerless, like a rambling water
mill—
I bow to compassion for these wanderers. (3)

Beings are like the moon on the surface of
rippling water —
They move and are empty of any self nature.
The Victors' heirs see this and in order to free
beings completely
Their minds come under the power of com-
passion, (4)

And perfectly dedicating their virtue with
Samanrabhadra's prayer,
They perfectly abide in joy—this is called "the
first".
Having attained this ground
They are called by the name "bodhisattva."
(5)

They are born into the family of the
tatagathas.
They abandon all three that entangle so
thoroughly.
These bodhisattvas possess extraordinary
happiness,
And can cause a hundred worlds to quake. (6)

Advancing from ground to ground, they fully
progress upwards—
At that time, all paths to the lower realms are
sealed off.
At that time, all grounds of ordinary beings
evaporate—
They are taught to be like the eighth ground of
the noble ones. (7)

Even those abiding on the first ground of
perfect bodhicitta,
Through the power of their merit, outshine
Both those born of the Mighty One's speech
and the solitary sages.
On the ground Gone Far Beyond, their minds
also become superior. (8)

At that time, the first cause of complete en-
lightenment,
Generosity, becomes preminent.
When one is enthusiastic even about giving
away one's own flesh,
This is a sign of something that normally
cannot be seen. (9)

All beings strongly desire happiness
But human happiness does not occur without
objects of enjoyment.
Knowing that these objects arise from gener-
osity,
The Mighty One taught generosity first. (10)

Even for those without much compassion
Who are extremely hot-tempered and self-
concerned,
The objects of enjoyment they desire
And that pacify their suffering come from
generosity. (11)

Even they, through an occasion of giving,
Will meet a noble being, receive their counsel,
And soon after, completely cutting the stream
of cyclic existence,
They will progress to peace, the result of that.
(12)

Those whose minds vow to benefit beings
Quickly gain happiness from their acts of
generosity.
It is for those who are loving and those who
are not—
Therefore, generosity is foremost. (13)

The happiness of an arhat attaining peace
Cannot match the joy experienced by a
bodhisattva
Upon merely hearing the words, "Please give
to me."
So what need to mention their joy when they
give away everything? (14)

The pain one feels from cutting one's own
flesh to give it away
Brings the suffering of others in the hell
realms and so forth
Directly into one's own experience,
And awakens one's vigor in striving to cut
that suffering off. (15)

Giving empty of gift, giver, and recipient
Is a transcendent perfection beyond the
world.
When attachment to these three arises,
That is a mundane transcendent perfection.
(16)

Like that, the Victors' heirs utterly abide in the
mind of bodhicitta

And from their excellent support, joy's light
beautifully shines.
This joy, like the jewel of the water crystal,
Completely dispels the thick darkness—it is
victorious! (17)

Adapted by Ari Goldfield in October 1999 from a transla-
tion by Mark Seibold and Scott Wellenbach, ©1997.

The Second Mind Generation: The Stainless

Because the bodhisattvas' discipline has such
excellent qualities,
They abandon the stains of faulty discipline
even in their dreams.
Since their movements of body, speech and
mind are pure,
They gather the ten types of virtue on the path
of the genuine ones. (1)

These ten types of virtue have been practiced
before
But here they are superior because they have
become so pure.
Like an autumn moon, the bodhisattvas are
always pure,
Beautified by their serenity and radiance. (2)

But if they thought their pure discipline had an
inherent nature,
Their discipline would not be pure at all.
Therefore, they are at all times completely free
Of dualistic mind's movement towards the
three spheres. (3)

Generosity can result in wealth gained in the
lower realms
When an individual has lost their legs of disci-
pline.
Once the wealth's principal and interest are
completely spent,
Material enjoyments will not come again. (4)

If when independent and enjoying favorable
circumstances,
One does not protect oneself from falling into
the lower realms,
Once one has fallen into the abyss and has no
power to escape,
What will be able to lift one up and out of
that? (5)

Therefore, after giving his advice on generos-
ity,
The Victor taught about accompanying it with
discipline.
When good qualities thrive in discipline's
field,
The enjoyment of their fruits is unceasing. (6)

For ordinary individuals, those born of the
Buddha's speech,
Those set on solitary enlightenment,
And heirs of the Victor,
The cause of the higher realms and of true
excellence is nothing other than discipline.
(7)

Like the ocean with a corpse,
And auspiciousness with misfortune,
When great beings come under discipline's
power,
They do not abide together with its decay. (8)

If there be any focus on these three—
The one who abandons, the abandoned act,
and the one with regard to whom it is
abandoned—
Such discipline is explained to be a worldly
transcendent perfection.
Discipline empty of attachment to these three
has gone beyond the world. (9)

Free from stains, The Stainless, the bodhisatt-
vas arising from the moon
Are not of the world, yet are the world's glory.
Like the light of the moon in autumn
They assuage the torment in the minds of
beings. (10)

Adapted by Ari Goldfield in October 1999 from a transla-
tion by Scott Wellenbach, ©1997.

The Third Mind Generation: The Luminous

Here the kindling of all objects of knowledge
is consumed in a fire
Whose light is the reason this third ground is
called The Luminous.
At this time, an appearance like the copper
sun
Dawns for the heirs of the sugatas. (1)

Even if someone becomes enraged with a
bodhisattva, who is not an appropriate
object of anger,
And cuts the flesh and bone from their body
Ounce by ounce over a long period of time,
The bodhisattva's patience with the one who
is cutting grows even greater. (2)

For the bodhisattvas who see selflessness,
The flesh cut off of them, the one who is
cutting, the length of time cut, and the
manner in which it is done—
All these phenomena they see are like reflec-
tions,
And for this reason as well they are patient.
(3)

Once the harm is done, if one becomes angry,
Does that anger reverse what has happened?
Therefore, anger certainly brings no benefit
here,
And will be of detriment in future lives as
well. (4)

The harm one experiences is said to be the
very thing
That exhausts whatever wrong deeds one
performed in the past.
So why would the bodhisattva, through
anger and harming another,
Again plant the seeds for future suffering to
be endured? (5)

Since getting angry with bodhisattvas
Instantly destroys all the virtue
That generosity and discipline have accumu-
lated over a hundred eons,

There is no greater negativity than impatience. (6)

It makes one ugly, brings one close to those not genuine,
And robs one of the ability to discriminate right from wrong.
Impatience quickly hurls one into the lower realms—
Patience brings out the good qualities opposite to these. (7)

Patience makes one beautiful and endears one to the genuine beings.
It brings one skill in knowing what is appropriate and what is not.
Later it brings birth as a human or a god
And exhaustion of negative deeds as well. (8)

Ordinary beings and heirs of the Victor
Should realize the faults of anger and the good qualities of patience,
Abandon impatience, and always quickly rely
On the patience praised by the noble ones. (9)

Even though dedicated to the enlightenment of perfect buddhahood,
If it focuses on the three spheres, it is worldly.
When there is no focus, the Buddha taught,
This is a transcendent perfection beyond the world. (10)

On this ground the Victor's heirs gain the samadhis and clairvoyances,
Desire and aversion are completely exhausted,
And they are ever able to vanquish
The desire experienced by worldly beings. (11)

Generosity and so forth—these three dharmas
The Sugata particularly praised to lay people.
They are also the accumulation of merit
And the causes of the Buddha's form body.
(12)

The heirs of the Victor, abiding in the sun,
these luminous ones,
First perfectly dispel the darkness present in themselves,

And then fervently yearn to vanquish the darkness in others.
On this ground, though incredibly sharp, they do not become angry. (13)

Adapted by Ari Goldfield in October 1999 from a translation by Mark Seibold and Scott Wellenbach, ©1997.

The Fourth Mind Generation: The Radiant

All good qualities follow after diligence—
It is the cause of both the accumulations of merit and wisdom.
The ground where diligence blazes
Is the fourth, The Radiant. (1)

Here for the heirs of the Sugatas there dawns an appearance
Even better than the copper light —
It arises from an even greater cultivation of the branches of perfect enlightenment.
Everything connected with the views of self and self-entity is completely exhausted. (2)

Adapted by Ari Goldfield in October 1999 from a translation by Mark Seibold and Scott Wellenbach, ©1997.

The Fifth Mind Generation: The Difficult to Overcome

The great beings on the ground that is Difficult to Overcome
Cannot be defeated even by all the maras.
Their meditative stability becomes superior and their excellent minds
Become incredibly skilled in subtle realization of the nature of the truths.

Adapted by Ari Goldfield in October 1999 from a translation by Mark Seibold and Scott Wellenbach, ©1997.

The Sixth Mind Generation: The Approach

The perfect bodhisattvas whose minds rest in
the equipoise of the approach
Approach the qualities of buddhahood.
They see the suchness of dependent arising
And, from abiding in wisdom, they will attain
cessation. (1)

Just as a person with eyes
Can easily lead a whole group of blind people
wherever they wish to go,
So here, the mind endowed with wisdom
Guides the blind qualities to the Victor's
ground. (2)

The way the bodhisattvas realize the incred-
ibly profound dharma
Was explained [by Nagarjuna] with scripture
and reasoning.
Therefore, just as the noble Nagarjuna did in
his texts,
So will I explain things here. (3)

Those who even as ordinary beings, upon
hearing of emptiness
Again and again experience great happiness
within,
Have their eyes fill with the tears of joy,
And the hairs on their body stand on end. (4)

Those are people with the seed of the perfect
Buddha's mind.
They are vessels for the teachings on
suchness.
They should be taught the truth of genuine
reality.
And all the good qualities coming from that
will arise within them. (5)

Their discipline is always perfect.
They give generously, rely on compassion,
Cultivate patience, and the resulting virtue
They thoroughly dedicate to enlightenment in
order to liberate beings. (6)

They respect the perfect bodhisattvas.
The individual who is skilled in the profound
and vast natures
Will gradually progress to the ground of
Perfect Joy.
Therefore, those who wish to do the same
should listen [to the teachings about] this
path. (7)

It does not arise from itself; how could it arise
from something else?
It does not arise from self and other together;
how could it arise without a cause? (8ab)

There are two ways of seeing everything: the
perfect way and the false way.
Therefore, every thing found holds two na-
tures within.
The Buddha taught that perfect seeing sees
suchness
And false seeing sees the relative truth. (23)

Because bewilderment obscures their true
nature, they are relative.
Whatever worldly beings fabricate appears to
them to be true.
This the Mighty One called the "relative
truth."
The noble ones know these fabricated entities
to be relative. (28)

If worldly beings perceptions were valid,
Since worldly beings would see suchness,
what need for the noble ones?
What would the noble ones' path accomplish?
The perception of fools is not valid cognition.
(30)

Arising from both self and other is also unten-
able
Because the faults already explained apply
here as well. (98ab)

If things arose without any cause at all,
Then everything would always exist and
anything could arise from anything else.

Furthermore, no one would perform all the
hundreds of tasks, like planting seeds and so
forth,
That people ordinarily do to get results to
arise. (99)

With his broad white wings of the relative and
suchness,
The king of swans soars ahead to lead the
flock.
By the power of virtue's wind
He crosses to the far shore of the ocean of the
Victor's supreme qualities. (226)

Under the guidance of Acharya Sherab Gyaltzen Negi,
translated by Ari Goldfield October 29, 1999.

The Seventh Mind Generation: Gone Far Beyond

Here on the ground Gone Far Beyond,
Instant by instant, they can enter cessation,
And the transcendent perfection of method
excellently blazes.

The Eighth Mind Generation: Unshakable

In order again and again to attain virtue even
greater than before
Here the bodhisattvas become irreversible.
The great beings enter the Unshakable ground
And their aspiration prayers become incred-
ibly pure. (1)

The Victors cause them to rise from cessation.
The various flaws do not remain in the mind
free of attachment;

Therefore, on the eighth ground, those stains
together with their roots are completely
pacified.

Their kleshas are exhausted and in the three
realms they become superior, and yet (2)

They cannot attain all the buddhas' endow-
ments, which are limitless as the sky.
Although samsara has stopped, they gain the
ten powers,
And demonstrate many emanations to the

The Ninth Mind Generation: Excellent Mind

What need to mention the strengths they gain
on the ninth ground. They all become per-
fectly pure.

Similarly, their own qualities, the dharmas of
perfect awareness, become completely pure.

The Tenth Mind Generation: Cloud of Dharma

On the tenth ground they receive the genuine
empowerment from all the buddhas.

And their primordial wisdom becomes su-
preme.

Just as rain falls from clouds, from the bodhi-
sattvas falls a spontaneous rain of dharma
So that the harvest of beings' virtue may
flourish.

Gyalwa Götsangpa's
**Eight Cases of Basic Goodness
Not to Be Shunned**

Namo Ratna Guru

I bow to the lord who grants the bliss that is utterly supreme,
Which takes away the suffering of illness
For every being that is everywhere throughout the reaches of space
By administering the medicine of the three kayas.

In the pure space of the sky that's the sky of essential mind itself
The clouds of negative actions thickly gather.
But the mighty force of the powerful wind of the wisdom prana
Does not blow them away, but clears them up like this:

The illness and its painfulness have neither base nor root.
Relax into it, fresh and uncontrived,
Revealing dharmakaya way beyond all speech and thought.
Don't shun them, pain and illness are basically good.

What confusion takes to be taking place is negative forces' work.
But it is all your own mind, simple, unborn, unceasing.
Without anxiety or even worrying at all,
Don't shun them; demons and gods are basically good.

When the agony of illness strikes your four-fold elements,
Don't grasp at its stopping; don't get angry when it won't improve.
Such adversities have the flavor of bliss that's free of contagion's blight.
The kleshas are not to be shunned; they're basically good.

All of the joy and the pain we go through, all our highs and lows,
When realized, have no ground; they are our friends.
Don't try to stop pain; don't try to be happy; be free of all hope and
fear.
Samsara is not to be shunned; it is basically good.

And though this whole life is plagued by the torments of falling ill,
Don't think that's bad; don't plan to get around it.
Then it will be your badge, your proof of conduct of equal taste.
Your suffering's not to be shunned; it's basically good.

The mind that's sunk in dullness and torpor, when realized for what it is,
Is pure being, pure of every imperfection.
So, free of thinking you should be wishing to clear this all away,
Don't shun your dense state of mind; it's basically good.

Habitual patterns' imprints, printed throughout beginningless time,
Are the myriad doors illusion comes marching through.
If you do not take them as true, don't meditate on them as empty.
Don't shun your thoughts; they're basically good in themselves.

The state of coemergence has no birth and knows no death,
Knows nothing of arising or ceasing or staying somewhere.
It's infinity; it's the vast expanse of the unconditioned state.
Don't shun your death; it's basically good in itself.

All eight of these things that are not to be shunned, since they're basically
good in themselves,
Need a meditation which turns them into equal taste.
They are the thought that comes from the heart of the uncle and nephew
lord.
They are the hammer that hammers down the host of maras.

They are the practice that's put into practice by beggars like you and me.
These are the tools that keep us in natural retreat.
They are the bliss supreme that performs the two forms of benefit.
You've mastered this from the beginning, old friend, but you better put it
into practice.

Commentary on Götsangpa's
**Eight Cases of Basic Goodness
Not to Be Shunned**



On May 25, 2001, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche gave a teaching that was co-sponsored by Nalandabodhi and Kagyu Shenpen Ösel Chöling and given at the Nalandabodhi Center in Seattle. It was orally translated by Ari Goldfield. The following is an edited transcript.

Before listening to the teachings, please give rise to the supreme motivation of bodhichitta, which means that for the benefit of all sentient beings, who are as limitless in number as the sky is vast in extent, we aspire to attain the state of complete and perfect buddhahood. We know that in order to do this we must listen to, reflect upon, and meditate on the teachings of the genuine dharma with all of the enthusiasm we can muster in our hearts. This is the supreme motivation of bodhichitta;

please give rise to it and listen.

Tonight we will offer a brief explanation of the song sung by Götsangpa Gönpö Dorje called *The Eight Cases of Basic Goodness Not to be Shunned*.

Gyalwa Götsangpa was born in southern Tibet, went to central Tibet to meet his root teacher, Drogon Tsanpa Gyare, and then went to practice. At first he practiced in northern Tibet, specifically on a rock island in the middle of a lake called Jang Namtso. From there he went

and practiced in western Tibet, around Mount Kailash, and then went to India, where he practiced in many sacred places. He went to Nepal, where he practiced mainly in the Lapchi snow range, and then went back to southern Tibet to a forest called Tsari, which is one of the main sacred places of Chakrasamvara. There are twenty-four sacred places of Chakrasamvara, and this forest there where he practiced is one of them. Then finally he went back to central Tibet, where he practiced and passed away into nirvana.

Götsangpa made many extraordinary promises or commitments during his life. One of them was that he would never visit the same place twice. Once he had practiced somewhere and had left, he vowed he would never return. And he never did. So he never went to the same place more than once. He probably made this vow with the motivation to abandon attachment to any one place. Another vow he made was always to keep his dharma brothers and sisters on the crown of his head as a way of showing them the highest respect he could pay. Out of all of his extraordinary promises these two are probably the most important.

During his many years of practice, Götsangpa became severely ill on several occasions. He did not leave his retreat to try to find a doctor. He did not go to the hospital. He did not seek out medicine. Rather he used his illness as the basis for his practice of tonglen, sending and taking, and he also employed the practices that dispel the obstacle of illness, [primarily reverse meditation and embracing illness as part of the practice of equal taste.] As a result, he became completely free from illness and attained realization at the exact same time.

***Editor's note:** I bow to the precious lama or precious guru.

The first verse reads:

Namo Ratna Guru*

**I bow to the lord who grants the bliss that is
utterly supreme,
Which takes away the suffering of illness
For every being that is everywhere throughout
the reaches of space
By administering the medicine of the three
kayas.**

The three kayas are spontaneously present as the basic nature of mind, and, therefore, they are the best medicine of all. They are the supreme remedy for any difficulty. Therefore, Götsangpa offers his prostration to his teacher, the lord who grants supreme bliss, who takes away the suffering of the illness of all sentient beings by administering this medicine of the three kayas, which are spontaneously present.

The next verse gives the reason why the things that Götsangpa is going to sing about in this song do not need to be shunned or abandoned. In later verses he repeatedly states in refrain that they are basically good. Why are they basically good? Because the true nature of mind, the essential nature of mind, completely beyond all conceptual fabrications of what it

might be, is pure, just as space is pure. So the example given here for the true or basic nature of mind is the sky, the completely pure sky:

**In the pure space of the sky that's the sky of
essential mind itself
The clouds of negative actions thickly gather.
But the mighty force of the powerful wind of the
wisdom prana
Does not blow them away, but clears them up
like this:**

Negative actions are compared here to dense clouds that obscure our vision of the true nature of mind. So what should we do when that happens, when the clouds of negative actions gather in the pure space of the mind itself? We need something to clear away these clouds, which is the mighty force of the powerful wind of the wisdom prana. So wisdom, which is the essential nature of mind, is compared to wind which, [it might be thought], is going to blow away these clouds. But how does it blow them away? How does it get rid of them? Well, it does not blow them away; it clears them up like this.* The point being made here is that these clouds of negative actions do not need to be abandoned, because they do not essentially exist in the first place. There is nothing truly there. Their nature is, as is the true nature of mind, complete purity, and it is the realization of that purity that is the remedy for these clouds, not any attempt to abandon them, or to establish or obtain any qualities that are not already intrinsically present.

The first thing that we do not need to try to get rid of or to shun, because it is basically good, is illness. Götsangpa sings:

**The illness and its painfulness have neither base nor root.
Relax into it, fresh and uncontrived,
Revealing dharmakaya way beyond all speech and thought.
Don't shun them, pain and illness are basically good.**

Illness appears to bring with it suffering that can be intense, very sharp, and painful, but when we examine it, we find that we cannot see any illness that is really one thing, nor can we find any illness that is many things. The nature of illness is beyond one and many, and since it is not one and it is not many, it does not really

The key is to realize that the illness itself is of the nature of this dharmakaya of natural purity

exist. It has no base, it has no roots in true existence, it is not real. So then what should we do? Well, just relax into it fresh and uncontrived. Uncontrived means do not try to do anything. Do not try to alter anything or create any situation other than just the natural one, the nature of the illness as it is. Fresh means that the nature of this illness is nothing other than the fresh, the new experience of mind. Every moment it is completely fresh and new; that is its quality. Since that is the case, then all we need to do is to relax. Do not be tight; do not try to struggle with it, but just relax into its fresh nature without any fabrication. When we do that, then the essence of the illness shines as the dharmakaya, whose nature is inexpressible and inconceivable, way beyond all speech and thoughts.

There are two aspects of the dharmakaya. The first is the dharmakaya of natural purity, which is the true nature of mind. The second aspect of the dharmakaya is the purity of being free from all of the fleeting stains. When one attains enlightenment, all of the fleeting, temporary stains that obscure our realization of this first dharmakaya of natural purity are completely cleared away. At that point one has the two types of dharmakaya, or you could say, [one has become] the buddha that is the dharmakaya endowed with the two types of purity—both the natural purity of the nature of mind and the purity of being free from all of the fleeting stains.

The key is to realize that the illness itself is of the nature of this dharmakaya of natural purity. That is really what it is. And since that is the case, and since also the suffering and pain do not really exist, it is just like suffering illness in a dream. When you dream and do not know you are dreaming, the illness seems to be real; but if you recognize that you are dreaming, then you know that the illness has no substance at all. For these two reasons illness is not to be shunned: [From the perspective of absolute truth] its

*Editor's note: Referring to a manner yet to be explained.

nature is purity, and [from the perspective of relative truth,] as an appearance, it is just a confused appearance that has no inherent existence. So therefore, illness is not to be shunned; it is basically good. We apply the same understanding to illness in our daily lives as we would if we were sick in a dream and knew that we were dreaming while it was happening.

One might think that it is wrong to say that illness has no base or root, no origin, because illness is (can be) an affliction caused by obstructing spirits or negative forces like demons and ghosts. Götsangpa addresses that concern in the next verse:

What confusion takes to be taking place is negative forces' work.

But it is all your own mind, simple, unborn, unceasing.

**Without anxiety or even worrying at all,
Don't shun them; demons and gods are basically good.**

What confusion takes to be taking place is negative forces' work. In fact, the appearance of a harmful spirit is just a confused projection of the mind; it has no existence of its own. Whatever supernatural powers the demon may appear to have, they are just a confused projection of mind. If we examine the mind producing these confused appearances, we will find that it is unborn in the beginning, does not abide anywhere in the middle, and does not cease in the end. Its nature is free from these conceptual notions of arising, remaining, and ceasing. Knowing that, we can be free from all anxiety, from all nervousness, from all depression, from being disheartened or discouraged. There is no reason to worry at all, because demons and gods do not need to be abandoned; they are basically good. They do not need to be gotten rid of or shunned, because they do not really exist in the first place. There is nothing really there; they are just confused projections. The true nature of mind is not altered or corrupted in the slightest by the

Demons and gods are not to be shunned; they are basically good

appearance of gods and demons; its nature is purity and cannot be affected by such appearances. Therefore, demons and gods are not to be shunned; they are basically good.

Someone might still object, saying, "I still do not believe that illness has no root or basis, because the kleshas, the mental afflictions, produce illness." Götsangpa sings about that in the next verse:

When the agony of illness strikes your four-fold elements,

Don't grasp at its stopping; don't get angry when it won't improve.

Such adversities have the flavor of bliss that's free of contagion's blight.

The kleshas are not to be shunned; they're basically good.

When the agony of illness strikes your body—which is comprised of the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind—do not grasp at its stopping; do not get angry when it will not improve. Normally, when we get sick, we try to do two things: we try to make the illness stop and we try to bring back our health. We have great attachment to the thought of being healthy again, and we have great aversion to the thought of continuing to be ill. So the mental afflictions of attachment and aversion are associated with being sick and associated with the things we try to do to remove the illness and get healthy again. But Götsangpa advises, "Do not do that; be free of the mental afflictions of attachment and aversion with regard to illness and health. Why? Because the sickness itself has no essence; it is not real. There is nothing to which to be attached and nothing to which to be averse with regard to sickness and health. The true nature of mind is bliss that is free of contagion's blight. To be free of contagion's blight means to have bliss that is pure in the sense that there are no mental afflictions corrupting it. It is just pure bliss that is not poisoned by attachment or aversion. That is the basic nature of

tions of attachment and aversion are associated with being sick and associated with the things we try to do to remove the illness and get healthy again. But Götsangpa advises, "Do not do that; be free of the mental afflictions of attachment and aversion with regard to illness and health. Why? Because the sickness itself has no essence; it is not real. There is nothing to which to be attached and nothing to which to be averse with regard to sickness and health. The true nature of mind is bliss that is free of contagion's blight. To be free of contagion's blight means to have bliss that is pure in the sense that there are no mental afflictions corrupting it. It is just pure bliss that is not poisoned by attachment or aversion. That is the basic nature of

mind, and it is also the basic nature of illness and the pain that goes along with it. Recognizing that, we can then recognize that the kleshas, the mental afflictions, that go along with illness, in fact, are not to be shunned, because they are basically good. First of all, they do not really exist, so there is nothing to get rid of; and second, their nature and the true nature of mind is completely pure. So with regard to the mental afflictions that arise when we get sick, do not shun them; they are basically good.

Again someone might object, saying, “I still do not accept that illness is without any roots or any ground, because illness is caused by the negative karmic actions that we perform, that we accumulate, as we go around and around in samsara.” So the next thing that Götsangpa sings is that samsara itself does not need to be abandoned, because its essence is also purity:

**All of the joy and the pain we go through, all our highs and lows,
When realized, have no ground; they are our friends.
Don't try to stop pain; don't try to be happy; be free of all hope and fear.
Samsara is not to be shunned; it is basically good.**

Sometimes we are happy, sometimes we suffer, sometimes everything is going great, and sometimes we are down in the dumps. Our samsaric experiences are greatly varied, but when we realize their true nature—that none of these experiences has any essence—we realize that they are without any ground. When we realize the true nature of samsara, we realize that samsara itself has no ground, no basis in true existence. And when that happens, then all samsaric experiences become our friends. When we recognize their nature, then all samsaric experiences become friends of our dharma practice, nothing to be worried about, but rather

Conduct of equal taste means to practice seeing the experiences of happiness and suffering, illness and health, as being basically the same

enhancements to our realization. Therefore, there is no need to try to stop pain or to try to be happy or to bring about or create happiness. We can be free of all hope and fear, because in the true nature of reality there is nothing to stop. There is nothing to create. There is nothing to hope for or be afraid of. So samsara is not to be shunned; it is basically good for two reasons: First, it has no essence, so there is nothing to get rid of, and its nature is purity; and secondly, because the true nature of mind is originally pure, the true nature can never be adversely affected in the slightest way by any karmic act or anything that appears in samsara. So for these two reasons, samsara is not to be shunned; it is basically good.

Still, someone might ask, “If illness and sickness have no ground, no roots, then why is it that some people are afflicted by chronic illness their whole lives.” Götsangpa sings about this in the next verse:

**And though this whole life is plagued by the torments of falling ill,
Don't think that's bad; don't plan to get around it.
Then it will be your badge, your proof of conduct of equal taste.
Your suffering's not to be shunned; it's basically good.**

When someone is ill, even if the illness lasts their whole life, it is still just like an appearance in a dream. That is its quality. It is a confused appearance, appearing due to the coming together of causes and conditions but having no reality. So even if you are afflicted by chronic illness, do not think that is bad; do not plan to get around it. Do not view it as something that we have to get rid of. Recognizing its true nature, we can do that; and if we can do that, then Götsangpa sings, your illness will be your badge, your proof of conduct of equal taste. Conduct of equal taste means to practice seeing the experiences of happiness and suffering, illness and

health, as being basically the same or of the nature of equality. If we can do that, even if the illness afflicts us our whole life, then the illness itself becomes our badge, like a beautiful piece of jewelry that adorns our practice, that enhances our practice of learning to see suffering and happiness to be equal. For that reason, suffering is not to be shunned, because it is basically good. It has no essence of its own, so there is nothing to get rid of; its nature is purity, so it is basically good.*

There might still be those who cannot see that sickness and pain have no base or root, because they think that sickness comes from the mind that is dull or ignorant. In answer Götsangpa sings:

**The mind that's sunk in dullness and torpor,
when realized for what it is,
Is pure being, pure of every imperfection.
So, free of thinking you should be wishing to
clear this all away,
Don't shun your dense state of mind; it's basi-
cally good.**

***Editor's note:** It is important to point out that Tibetan Buddhism has a medical tradition, and that even very high Tibetan lamas sometimes resort to medical treatment, including medicines and sometimes even surgery. There is no rigid rejection of medicine in favor of some sort of "purer" spiritual approach to illness. Medicine is simply regarded as another kind of skillful means, based on other sets of causes and conditions, also empty of inherent existence, that enters the equation of health care. Kalu Rinpoche, for one, has suggested that medicine, including Western medicine, is another aspect of buddha activity.

Great practitioners in Tibet, engaged in the exclusive practice of meditation in isolated retreats, generally, however, chose not to leave their retreats to seek out medical solutions, relying instead on their realization of the emptiness of their pain and sickness, thereby deepening the training of their minds in recognizing the equality of the true nature of all experience. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the simile for bodhicitta on the sixth bodhisattva bhumi, where the bodhisattva's principal practice is prajna paramita, is medicine. This is due to the fact that the recognition of the emptiness or true nature of illness and pain will, at the very least, dissolve the panic, fear, anxiety, struggle, and resistance that we generally add to our illness and pain, thereby enabling the practitioner to experience the equality of sickness and health, and will oftentimes cause the illness and pain to dissolve altogether, enabling the practitioner to recover his or her health without medical assistance, or rather by applying the medical assistance of prajna.

In this regard it is further interesting to note that at least one school of Chinese medical thought divides medical treatment into three categories: *Sya Tyan*, *Shang Tyan*, and *Li*

Dullness is the state in which the mind lacks its quality of brilliance. Torpor, in this context, includes both the middle stage of a mind that cannot focus clearly, and finally the state in which the mind is falling asleep. So there are three levels. When you experience any of these three states, if you have the ability to recognize it as it is happening, then that recognition is pure being, dharmata, that is free of every imperfection. Free of anything wrong with it, it is of the nature of mind, which is luminous clarity. So even if you do not have complete realization of the nature of the dull mind right away, just the recognition of it is enough to clear it away, because the nature of this recognizing mind is the dharmata, free of any stain. Therefore, free of thinking that you should be wishing to clear this all away, the true nature of mind, which is luminous clarity, transcends all ordinary mundane mental activity in the basic nature of what it is. It is beyond the intellect; it is beyond all mundane mental operations. Therefore, do not shun your dense state of mind; it is basically

Tyan. *Sya Tyan* includes all medicines, herbal and otherwise, and surgery. *Shang Tyan* includes all medical treatment that relies on manipulating the energies (prana, chi, lung) of the body in their channels, and would include acupuncture, shiatsu, etc. And *Li Tyan* is profound meditation. These treatments are regarded hierarchically in terms of efficaciousness and speed. The slowest and least efficacious is *Sya Tyan*, the use of medicines, etc. Faster and more efficacious is *Shang Tyan*, the use of acupuncture and other systems that manipulate energies. And the fastest and most efficacious is *Li Tyan*, the use of profound meditation or prajna. It is also possible to combine these various levels of medical treatment, as witnessed by the fact that Tibetan medicines often, if not always, include herbs and other substances that have been blessed through tantric rituals and profound meditation. Of course, the efficacy of any of these systems of medicine is dependent upon the level of skill of the practitioner. But the important point that Götsangpa is making here, is applicable regardless of whether or not one employs medical treatment. When practicing meditation, and to the extent possible in one's post-meditation practice, one should be seeing the emptiness of all tendencies of the samsaric mind to label pain and illness as bad, and during meditation, at least, one should abandon any effort or plan, whether medical or meditational, to cause pain and illness to go away or to change, in favor of simply seeing their true nature. The first step in doing that is to reverse the way one thinks about one's illness. Instead of being bad because it causes one suffering, one regards it as good because it gives one the opportunity to train the mind in seeing the equality of suffering and happiness and the emptiness of all phenomena.

good. The dense state of mind, in fact, does not really exist in the first place, so there is nothing to get rid of; its nature is purity. The pure nature of mind beyond the intellect, beyond all of these ordinary mental operations and activities, is not affected in the slightest by a dense state of mind. So there is nothing to abandon; its nature is purity.

What if somebody thinks that the root or base of sickness is concepts, thoughts, that our thinking all the time makes us sick. Addressing this notion, Götsangpa sings:

**Habitual patterns' imprints, printed throughout
beginningless time,
Are the myriad doors illusion comes marching
through.
If you do not take them as true, don't meditate on
them as empty.
Don't shun your thoughts; they're basically good
in themselves.**

From beginningless time we have been accumulating habitual tendencies of confused perception. These tendencies are stored in the form of imprints in the mind, as a result of which, illusion comes marching through in the form of illusory projections. These projections are appearance-emptiness manifest in a variety of ways as a result of these habitual tendencies of confused perception in our mind-stream. But since they are just appearance-emptiness like an illusion, then we do not need to meditate on them as being empty; we do not need to impose emptiness on to them. All we have to do is free ourselves from thinking that they are real, let the clinging to them—these appearing yet empty appearances—as being real just dissolve. When we can do that, then there is no need to get rid of thoughts; they are self-liberated. Their nature is good.

Again one might ask, “If sickness has no base and no roots, then why do we have to die? Why does death happen?” Götsangpa answers that concern in the next verse:

**The state of coemergence has no birth and knows
no death,
Knows nothing of arising or ceasing or staying
somewhere.
It's infinity; it's the vast expanse of the uncondi-
tioned state.
Don't shun your death; it's basically good in
itself.**

The state of coemergence refers to the basic nature of reality, which never arises and never ceases. It is not born. It does not die. It does not arise in the beginning, abide anywhere in the middle, or cease at the end. Beyond all of these concepts, in its nature it is the unconditioned state, meaning it is not something created due to the coming together of causes and conditions. That is the basic nature of reality. It is not a composite entity; it is uncreated. It is the vast expanse. The expanse here means infinity beyond all conceptual fabrications. Therefore, we do not need to shun death, because death is basically good. Death does not really exist either; its nature is purity. There is nothing to get rid of; it is basically good.

In the next verse, Götsangpa sings:

**All eight of these things that are not to be
shunned, since they're basically good in them-
selves,
Need a meditation which turns them into equal
taste.
They are the thought that comes from the heart of
the uncle and nephew lord.
They are the hammer that ham-
mers down the host of maras.**

Reverse
meditation
means to reverse
our normal way
of seeing things

This is the song that describes these eight different things that we experience that in fact do not need to be shunned because they are basically good. What we need to be able to apply in this practice is, first, what is called reverse meditation. Reverse meditation means to reverse our normal way of seeing things. Ordinarily, we want happiness and we want to avoid suffering, and it is out of these two motivations that every single ordinary sentient being in the

universe acts. In order to reverse our confusion we need to take all the suffering of all sentient beings onto ourselves and give them our happiness. That is reverse meditation. Secondly, we need to practice equal taste, which means to see the basic equality of happiness and suffering, and not to favor one over the other. This way of practicing was taught to Götsangpa by his two main teachers, who were related to each other as uncle and nephew. His main teacher was Drogon Tsangpa Gyaray and Tsangpa Gyaray's nephew was Sangye Öñ. Both of them had as their intention this type of practice, which he calls the hammer that defeats the maras, that defeats the [psychological] demons.

Götsangpa continues:

**They are the practice that's put into practice by
beggars like you and me.**

**These are the tools that keep us in natural re-
treat.**

**They are the bliss supreme that performs the two
forms of benefit.**

**You've mastered this from the beginning, old
friend, but you better put it into practice.**

These two meditations—reverse meditation and the practice of equal taste—are put into practice, he sings, by beggars like you and me. Here Götsangpa is mainly singing about himself, calling himself a beggar. He says, “This is my practice, this is what keeps me in natural retreat.” In order to be able to stay in the mountains or in an isolated place and practice, one needs to be able to practice like this. This practice is what enables a practitioner to meditate in isolated places. They are the bliss supreme that performs the two forms of benefit. To practice with this motivation is of direct benefit to others and, as a result, will also naturally benefit oneself. When we are of benefit to others, then automatically we benefit ourselves. “You've mastered this from the beginning, old friend, but you better put it into practice.” This last line needs no commentary.

[Students sing the song together.]

Does anyone have any questions?

Question: Rinpoche seems to make a connection between the practice of tonglen and the practice of one taste. I was wondering if he could please elaborate on that connection. Does tonglen develop naturally into equal taste? Or is there already a connection between them?

Rinpoche: Equal taste means to practice viewing happiness and suffering as one would view them if one were dreaming and knew that one were dreaming. We have to recognize that the nature of happiness and the nature of suffering are equally beyond all conceptual fabrication. In both cases they are pure, and equally so, from the outset, from the very beginning. That is the practice of equal taste.

With regard to reverse meditation, there is a teaching by Patrul Rinpoche in which he states, “I do not like to be happy and healthy; I like to be sick. When I am happy and healthy, I get distracted and arrogant; when I am sick, my weariness with samsara increases and I long to practice the dharma.” If you get happy and healthy, then you can just get distracted and arrogant, but if you get sick, then you really yearn to practice the dharma, and you renounce samsara much more easily. That is why, though ordinarily all sentient beings would prefer to be happy and healthy to being sick, Patrul Rinpoche thinks about it the other way around. When you are practicing tonglen, then if you are sick, you take all sentient beings' sickness on top of your own sickness. You visualize that happening.* And when you are well and when you are happy, then you send out your well-being and

***Editor's note:** One visualizes one's sickness in the form of black light and visualizes the sickness of all other sentient beings also as black light, and then, thinking that one's own sickness embodies the sickness of all beings, one draws the sickness of others into one's own sickness, and then the two together into oneself and down to the very root of one's being, where it dissolves in emptiness. At that time one thinks that sentient beings are entirely liberated from suffering and from the lower realms. Then one sends out all of one's well-being, happiness, virtue, merit, and all of one's potential for all good qualities, in the form of white light or moonlight, which strikes sentient beings and establishes them in states of happiness and liberation. And then one meditates on joy at being able to make this exchange. For more on the practice of tonglen, see *Shenpen Ösel, Vol. 5, No. 1, pages. 62-70.*

happiness to all sentient beings [in the form of moonlight]. In order to practice tonglen, you need to practice reverse meditation and equal taste.

Question: Rinpoche, it seems that one can gradually in small ways learn to be open to the aggression of others. But what is frightening is to be open to one's own aggression.

Rinpoche: When we recognize that we are getting angry, we need to imagine taking all sentient beings' anger into ourselves, and giving all of our virtue that is free of anger to everyone else. We need to take the anger and use it as a basis for taking and sending practice. In the *Seven Points of Mind Training* there is a line which reads, "Three objects, three poisons, three roots of virtue." The three objects are objects that we find pleasing, displeasing, and neutral. The three poisons are to have attachment to the objects we find pleasing, to have aversion towards the ones we do not like, and to have a feeling of dull indifference or stupidity towards the ones towards which we are neutral or apathetic, about which we do not care. That is what happens normally, but through our practice, our interaction with these three objects, and the three poisons that arise as a result of that interaction, can become three roots of virtue. How? First we apply the practice of ultimate bodhicitta by examining the nature of these three objects, thereby ascertaining that they have no inherent existence, that they are empty. Then, in the same way, we examine the three mental afflictions that arise as a result of these three objects. If the objects themselves do not exist in the first place, then any feelings that arise within us with regard to them cannot be real either. Determining that, meditating on

When we identify these three poisons arising within us, we imagine that the kleshas of all sentient beings are arising within us as well, thereby freeing sentient beings from them

that, cultivating the certainty of that, is virtue with regard to the generation and improvement of our practice of ultimate bodhicitta.

We can also use these three objects and three poisons to practice relative bodhicitta by generating within ourselves love and compassion for others. When we identify these three poisons arising within us, we imagine that the kleshas of all sentient beings are arising within us as well, thereby freeing sentient beings from them. For example, when we feel attached to something,

we can imagine that all the attachments of all sentient beings are ripening within us, and that sentient beings are thereby being completely freed from attachment. We think, "Let it not happen to them; let it happen to me instead." We do the same visualization with respect to anger and with respect to stupidity.* In that way, the arising of these three poisons becomes the roots of virtue with regard to the cultivation of both ultimate and relative bodhicitta.

Moreover, if we actually say, for example, "I feel one of the three poisons arising towards one of these three kinds of objects; may all of the poisons that all sentient beings experience ripen on me. May

they be endowed with virtue that is completely free of these three poisons, and may they be completely free of the poisons themselves and only act in positive ways free of these three poisons." If we actually say that at the time that a klesha arises, then we also accumulate virtue and merit with our speech.

Moreover, even if we have done something negative or wrong, if we take that action as an object and think, "May all sentient beings' negativity dissolve into this negative action that I have performed, and may all sentient beings be

***Editor's note:** These three poisons or kleshas are regarded as the root of the 84,000 different emotional afflictions that the Buddha described, so the visualization is to be applied with respect to all of them.

free from negative actions once and for all,” then we have transformed our negative action into an accumulation of merit, into something positive, just by those thoughts.

The root of being able to practice sending and taking is compassion. Therefore, we have to concentrate on cultivating it. The [combined] practice of emptiness and compassion is extremely important in the mahayana. In fact, you could say that all mahayana practices are included within it.

Question: Can you tell me the exact distinction between reverse meditation and tonglen? Is reverse meditation simply reversing the way you think about something? That is to say, if illness is usually thought to be bad, then thinking therefore that illness is good, and so forth.

Rinpoche: Yes, that is right. To practice tonglen means that part of the practice that involves placing others ahead of ourselves, considering others to be more important than ourselves. The practice of reverse meditation is reversing the way we think about things: Whereas in the past we thought, “If I am healthy and happy, I like that; if I am going to be sick and suffer, I do not like that.” We have to reverse that by saying, “I like to be sick, because when I am sick, I really focus on dharma practice, whereas, when I am healthy, it is very easy for me to get distracted. Because I do not want to be distracted from dharma practice, I would prefer to be sick.” So that is the way we have to think.

Question: I have two questions. If we are to take that logic all the way, one could end up saying, “I like to be dead,” and then we could not practice dharma at all. The second question is, what is Rinpoche’s attitude towards conventional medicine, either Eastern or Western? Can

it be practiced in conjunction with dharma? Is it counter-productive to dharma? Is it sometimes applicable and other times not, depending on one’s life conditions, etc.?

Rinpoche: Even if you die, if you believe in past and future lives, then you have lots of future lifetimes in which to practice dharma and to take your dharma practice to perfection. Whether or not we do so depends upon whether or not we make aspiration prayers to do that. And so there are supplications that we can recite that are called supplications that free us from hope and fear. In these supplications we pray, “If it is better that I be sick, then may I be sick. If it is better for me to be healthy, then may I be healthy. If it is better for me to live, then may I live. If it is better for me to die, then may I die.”

For some people it is better to be sick and to go through that purification. For other people it is better to be healthy and do things that you can do when you are healthy. So we can say, “Whichever one is better for me, let it happen.” The same is true with living or dying. For some people it is better to live, because, if they remain alive, they will practice the dharma. For other people it is better to die, because, if they continued to live, they would do some negative action that would just result in more suffering. So we can say, “Whichever category I fall into, may the better thing happen.” In that way we will be free from hope and fear.

Along these lines Patrul Rinpoche wrote, “If I die right now, I will not have any regrets, because this body is just a samsaric entity; its nature is to decay. So, what is the point of regretting that? That is just the way that it is. Even if I live to be a hundred, I would not be happy; my youth would be long gone. I might live to be one hundred years old, but what is so good about that? I would just be completely old and

There are supplications that free us from hope and fear. In these supplications we pray, ‘If it is better that I be sick, then may I be sick’

decrepit at that point. My youth would be over.” That way of thinking is a way that abandons hope and fear with regard to life and death.

We also have to make sure that our way of thinking is consistent in this regard. If we want to live a long life, then we have to be free of the fear or the distaste of aging. If you live a long life but are afraid of getting old, then that is a contradictory way of thinking. Sakya Pandita composed a verse about this, saying, “To be afraid of getting old but to be very attached to living a long life is the way dummies think. This is the wrong view of dummies.” We have to be free of the fear of getting old, free of the fear of dying.

Birth and death themselves, in the true nature of reality, transcend all conceptual fabrications about what they might be, and in their appearances in relative reality they are just like appearances in a dream. In *The Heart of Wisdom Sutra*,* it says, “There is no aging or death nor any ending of aging or death.” Since aging and death do not really exist in the first place, since they are just like a dream, then there is really no getting rid of them either. There is no real ending of aging or death, because they do not really exist in the first place.

The way that we can become fearless with regards to birth and death is to examine their true nature. When we do that, we find that they cannot really exist, because one cannot exist before the other. There is no way in which one can inherently exist before the other. If birth existed before death, then you would have the fault of there being arising before there was any ceasing of anything, and that is impossible.** And if death really occurred before birth, then you would have the ceasing of something with out any prior arising. Since neither way is possible, then neither birth nor death can really [truly or inherently] exist; they can exist only in

***Editor’s note:** Also known as *The Sutra of the Heart of Transcendent Knowledge*.

In order to purify ourselves of the thought that birth and death are real, we have to remember again and again that they do not really exist

mutual dependence upon each other.

Just like birth and death in a dream, birth and death that appear to us [in “real” life] have never really existed; that is their basic nature. In order to purify ourselves of the thought that birth and death are real, we have to remember again and again that they do not really exist. Death in “real” life is just like dying in a dream; in fact, there really is no death at all. The only thing that creates our suffering is the thought that death is real.

So if we are going to understand this with logical reasoning, then we must examine in order to try to determine which one comes first, birth or death. But since neither one of them can exist without the other, neither of them truly exists. This is why the protector Nagarjuna said,

*Like a dream, like an illusion,
Like a city of gandharvas,
That’s how birth, and that’s how living,
That’s how dying are taught to be.*

It is like that.

Question: May I be sure that I have this exactly right, because I am not talking just for myself? If a group of students has a very precious teacher, considering all the teachings that you have given us just now, Rinpoche, how far should the stu-

****Editor’s note:** By conventional logic, for the birth of a human to occur, there must first be an act of sexual intercourse leading to conception, which then gives rise to an embryo that gestates within a pregnant woman, who then must experience labor. All of these causes and conditions must, in fact, cease before there can be said to be any birth. If one accepts the logic of cyclical existence, consisting of an endless succession of lifetimes, and the Buddhist notion of conception, then for birth to occur there must also be the existence of a bardo consciousness in between death and rebirth to be conceived, which bardo consciousness must cease before there can be said to be any conception. And for that bardo consciousness to have existed in the first place, by conventional Buddhist logic, there would have had to occur the death of a human being. Therefore, birth cannot be said to exist before death, nor arising before ceasing.

dents push this teacher in order to guard this teacher's health? For instance, maybe some doctors want to treat this precious teacher in a certain way and the teacher does not really believe in Western medicine, unless it is a total emergency. Given that the students want to do their very best to prolong the life and teachings of this person, how far should they push?

Rinpoche: You can insist a little bit but not too much. Look, for example, at Milarepa's life story. When he was sick, his students wanted him to take medicine and to do long life rituals. They insisted a little bit, but they let it go after awhile. They did not push it. It is possible that someone can get well naturally, and if that is the case, then there is no need to insist. It is also the case that you might take the medicine and die anyway. If that were to happen, then insisting would have been of no benefit. It is much better for the lama to pass slowly away in his or her own residence or in his or her own shrine room. It would be good for you to read about Milarepa's passing into nirvana in his life story.

Question: Going back a moment to hope and fear about dying and the fears of death, I find, both in myself and with the people that I work with, that there is a lowering of the fear of death itself, but that what comes up for dying people is an enormous sadness or grief or difficulty over the fact that death will separate them from their loved ones. And similarly, the grief and the sadness and the pain of the loved ones are that they will be separated from the dying person. Would Rinpoche please give us some way to help with that particular fear and affliction?

Rinpoche: Relatives need to have love for the one who is going to pass away, but love that is free of taking the whole situation to be real, love that knows that it is just like a dream. In order to understand that it is not real, you have to

The practice of emptiness and compassion in union is so important

understand selflessness and you have to be able to meditate on the progressive stages of emptiness. In order to give rise to greater compassion, we need to work on developing [this view of emptiness and the ability to maintain it]; we need to consciously cultivate it. For example, there is a line from Karma Chagmay's *Aspiration Prayer for the Pure Land of Dewachen*, in which he says, "Friends and relatives, wealth and

animals are all illusory, so may I have the compassion for those beings to whom I feel close that is free from attachment to them as being real." If we have this view of the practice of emptiness and compassion in union, then we will be of great benefit to our friends and loved ones. We will not take them to be real, so we will not regard them

in a confused way, and at the same time we will have [unconfused] compassion for them, which will benefit them. That is why the practice of emptiness and compassion in union is so important.

Question: Rinpoche, thank you for your teachings. This is a much more basic question. If the confused appearance and the confused perception of self and others as truly existent [are in error, and self and other do not truly exist but exist only as mere appearances in dependence upon one another], then it would seem that confused perception and confused appearances do not truly exist either. If that is the case, is awareness a mere conceptualization that is not truly existent, and if so, or if not, or if neither, would Rinpoche please comment?

Translator: By awareness do you mean the awareness that transcends mundane mental activity—primordial wisdom—or just awareness in everyday life?

Question: The awareness that transcends.

Rinpoche: It is correct to understand that appearances of perceived objects and perceiving

subjects are confused appearances, but it is also correct to understand that confusion itself does not really exist either. Therefore, our understanding of appearances has to transcend both the notion that they are real and the notion that they are confused. Their true nature goes beyond confusion or the lack of it.

With regard to awareness transcending this ordinary way in which we perceive things, there is an imputed or imagined aspect of it, a conceptually fabricated aspect of it—which is when we think awareness that transcends ordinary mental activity—that is relative, that is a phenomenon of relative or apparent reality. But the actual nature of the awareness itself—which is not the subject of our thought—is inexpressible and beyond all notion of what it might be. When we think, “awareness transcending ordinary mental activity,” that is a name; the basis to which we give this name is the genuine nature of reality, wisdom beyond conceptual fabrication. When we think that the name and the object to which we give the name are the same thing, then that is the imaginary aspect of our experience. The thought that conceives of this awareness transcending ordinary mental activity is the dependent nature (or aspect of our experience). And the essence of that thought is the perfectly existent aspect of our experience. The perfectly existent nature is the wisdom beyond conceptual fabrication itself. In order to understand the shentong presentation properly, we have to see how these three aspects of experience, these three natures, apply to every single phenomena. It is the same with the middle way consequence school’s presentation. The prasangika madhyamika, the consequence school, explains that the true nature of reality is beyond all conceptual fabrications. There is not a single fabrication or notion that exists in the true nature of reality, but when we think this thought of freedom from fabrication, then it becomes

Our understanding of appearances has to transcend both the notion that they are real and the notion that they are confused

relative; even though the true nature of reality transcends all fabrications, the thought of the freedom from fabrications is a relative phenomena. The true nature of reality is inexpressible, but as soon as we say that, what we are thinking of becomes a relative phenomenon. Right? Similarly, the true nature of reality transcends the intellect and concepts, but as soon as we conceive of it, that concept is relative. And that is why the consequence school teaches that the true nature of reality is inexpressible; it is without any reference point; it is beyond all ideas of what it might be, and so the way to

meditate on it is just to let go and relax within that inexpressibility, within that freedom from fixations and reference points. Just let go and relax.

Similarly, if we think “awareness transcending ordinary mental activity,” then that becomes the imaginary aspect. If we express it in speech it becomes imaginary. So, we do not conceive of it in meditation; we just let go and relax within it. Therefore, within awareness transcending ordinary mental fabrications, ordinary mental activity, just rest naturally; just rest in its own essence naturally without any notion of there being something to rest in or someone resting. Transcend that.

As Milarepa describes it, “When you know the true nature of everything to be known, then wisdom that is aware of the true nature is like a cloud-free sky.” That likening of wisdom to a cloud-free sky is teaching from the perspective of emptiness or the aspect of emptiness. In the next verse he sings, “When the mud settles down and mind’s river is crystal clear, self-arisen awareness is like a polished mirror’s shine.” In this verse, he teaches about the clarity, the luminosity aspect of wisdom. In fact, the true nature of this wisdom is clarity and emptiness undifferentiable from each other, inseparable from each other. That is how it is; yet as soon as we express that, it becomes relative. It is not the

genuine nature anymore; it is a relative concept.

The true nature of mind is awareness and emptiness undifferentiable, but if that is explained to us at the beginning, then we have to question what is awareness and what is emptiness. Therefore, first the rangtong [school of prasangika madhyamika] explains what emptiness is, and then the shentong [school of prasangika madhyamika] explains what awareness is. Then we can understand that, inseparable from each other, they are the nature of reality. To say that they are undifferentiable means that they are not two things; there is not awareness on the one hand, and emptiness on the other. There is no separating them out. When we do separate them, when we engage in thinking about awareness or emptiness separately, then we are just focusing on a conceptual isolate; we are just isolating one quality conceptually. But that is not the nature of reality.

Question: When we practice reverse meditation in conjunction with tonglen, we take all the suffering from all these sentient beings and are overjoyed that they are relieved of their sufferings, but at the same time we also take joy in that. We think “Oh, I have all this sickness and pain, which will be good for my meditation practice; it will inspire me to practice dharma.” Is that joy in the sickness and pain then sent back out?

Rinpoche: Yes, that is good. You can send the happiness out twice.

Question: When we make aspirations that embody freedom from hope and fear—such as, if it is better for me to be sick, may I be sick—there actually a force or some forces that cause

that to take place, such as dharma protectors? Or do our aspirations themselves cause such things to happen? Or is it just completely a way of looking at your mind?

Rinpoche: With regard to tonglen practice, in fact, there are individuals who are able actually to have it work, [who are actually able to exchange their happiness for others’ suffering.]

When they become realized beings, they can actually do it, and even some ordinary beings can actually do it just through the power of their aspiration prayers.

With regard to this prayer, “If it is better for me to be sick, may I be sick; if it is better for me to die, may I die,” and so forth, you are praying to the three rare and supreme ones (buddha, dharma, and sangha). When we ask the question, “Are they going to make it happen,” we have to remember that there are no real three rare and supreme ones to make anything happen. Right? Everything is just the coming together of causes and conditions, like in a dream. If also you say, “Well it is not the three jewels that makes it happen; it is my aspiration prayer that makes it happen,” again, we have to remember that the aspiration

prayer is not real and we are not real; they are all just the coming together of causes and conditions. There is no assertion here of any truly existent result.

Question: So is that coming together of causes and conditions actually affected in that direction by doing that?

Rinpoche: Yes. And if you get the result of your prayer—if you pray, “If it is better for me to die, may I die,” and you get that result, then be happy to get it. If we spent a great deal of time making this aspiration prayer to free ourselves

If we spent a great deal of time making this aspiration prayer to free ourselves from hope and fear of death, and then, finally, at the point when we are about to die, we get frightened, then that is the way of dummies

from hope and fear of death, saying, “If it is better for me to die, may I die,” and then, finally at the point when we are about to die, we get frightened by that, then that is the way of dummies. Since all phenomena are of the nature of emptiness and are therefore just mere dependently arisen appearances, there is no need to be afraid of a single one of them. Nevertheless, we should aspire to continue to cultivate compassion and to benefit others. If we are going to be afraid of anything, it should be that we will be free of compassion. So it is like that.

So if we sing the song, *Three Kinds of Confidence in Genuine Reality*, we will understand it. In the genuine nature of reality there is no birth; there is no death; happiness and suffering are undifferentiable; samsara and nirvana are undifferentiable. [Students sing the song, while shouting at the end of each verse, with a shout different from but having the same kind of exuberance as a cowboy yell during roundup or a mariachi yell. See page 116.]

Shouting like that is a method to enable us to rest free from concepts.

The view of the three kinds of confidence is

If we are going
to be afraid of
anything, it
should be that
we will be free of
compassion

the view that one would have if one dreamed and knew that one was dreaming. It would be good for all of us to sing this song, *The Eight Cases of Basic Goodness*, many times. Especially when we get sick, it is very important to sing it again and again. By singing it again and again, by thinking about it again and again, by cultivating the view and meditation again and again, it will become more and more powerful for us.

As a parting aspiration, by cultivating and practicing what is taught in *The Seven Delights* (See page 145.) and *The Eight Cases of Basic Goodness Not to Be Shunned*, may you perfect this practice, and through it, be of great benefit to all the limitless number of beings who are sick.

Now let’s make an aspiration prayer for all sentient beings with whom we have either a good or a bad connection.

*All you sentient beings I have a good or bad
connection with
As soon as you have left this confused dimension
May you be born in the West in Sukavati
And once you’re born there, complete the bhumis
and the paths.*

Sarva Mangalam! 

Seven Delights

Namo Ratna Guru

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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If in a dream you have a jewel box, and you open it and find a diamond, and then you think, "Wow, I have a diamond, a real diamond," then that is the view of realism. But then you go somewhere else in your dream and open the box again and there is no diamond; then you have a very strong view of non-existence. There is nothing. But both the view of something and the view of nothing are just part of the confused dream. Since it is the case that there was never any diamond in the first place, there cannot be any non-existence of the diamond either. So both of these are just confused notions.

— *Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*

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