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Nepal Mahayana Center Gompa
INTERNATIONAL MAHAYANA INSTITUTE
G.P.O Box 817, Katmandu, Nepal

NOTES TAKEN DURING THE TEACHINGS GIVEN BY LAMA THUBTEN ZOPA
RINPOCHE AT THE THIRD MEDITATION COURSE, OCTOBER - NOVEMBER, 1972,
AND THE FOURTH MEDITATION COURSE MARCH - APRIL, 1973

These notes are a somewhat paraphrased version of notes taken at Thubten Zopa Rinpoche's discourses during the Third and Fourth Meditation Courses, predominantly the latter. These discourses mainly consisted of comments and explanations made as Rinpoche read the course text, "The Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun of the Mahayana Thought Training."

Unfortunately, it is certain that what has been presented in this book and what was originally meant by Rinpoche resemble each other as closely as earth does sky. This is the result of the infantile clumsiness of those who attempted to interpret his holy speech while taking and rewriting these notes. For this the compilers sincerely apologize and humbly request that the holy guru will overlook these inadequacies and bless this work that it may somehow benefit each and every mother sentient being, bringing immediate release from suffering to all.

The page numbers referred to herein relate to the work copy of "The Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun of the Mahayana Thought Training" used at the Fifth and Sixth (March - April, 1974) Meditation Courses.

Appendix II consists of notes taken during a lecture given by Lama Thubten Yeshe at the Fourth Meditation Course.

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Third Meditation Course: Introduction
28-10-72

The mind—why does it exist?

Parents do not produce the mind.

The previous produces the present, and produces the future mind.

The mind is impermanent, created by impulses.

Enlightenment clarifies the above statement.

The ignorant forget yesterday and tomorrow, similar to those who believe there is only one life. We must recall past lives and prepare for the future—those who don't will have present and future problems. We should remove the impermanent, obscured mind by a proven method, thus becoming Buddha.

We need a perfect reason for this meditation course. Since suffering and its cause are mental, the method to cure them is also mental. This cannot be done with materials or chemicals. Smoking hash slows the brain. The pure mind helps other beings.

Meditation should be done through the process of checking and thinking. This comes from listening. Positive meditation and positive Dharma practice are inseparable. Meditation is positive if it is done for one or all of the following three reasons:

1. For better future lives
2. To destroy suffering and illusions, bringing complete understanding and release from ignorance
3. To achieve the highest, perfect peace

Positive meditation is perfect Dharma practice.

Training the mind brings compassion. We should train so that the mind is one with the path. There are many levels on the path before enlightenment. Understanding cures suffering. The most important rule for meditation, and the reason for doing this course, is to make meditation a positive thing through understanding the reasons. Nothing arises in the mind intuitively, without reasons. We must hear the right subjects, and this will bring right understanding, which will then lead to right action and to purity.

Dharma can be created in the mind by anyone.

To understand any subject, we must remove the veil of ignorance instead of trying to increase the size of the subject matter we take in.

Fourth Meditation Course: Introduction
18/3/73

With Buddhists it isn't so much a matter of how man began on this planet as much as it is a matter of how the mind began. Since the answer to such a question is beyond the conception of our ignorant mind, we say that mind is beginningless.

If we ask why, for what reason does the mind, or even existence, exist, one answer is: mind exists in order to perceive its own intrinsic nature, and in turn this intrinsic nature is able to perceive the void, or the absolute true nature of reality or existence—that is, to perceive the absolute truth devoid of any self or “I.” In visualizations we make the body one with Guru Shakyamuni's holy body and the mind one with space, like his fully enlightened mind.

Guru Shakyamuni gave three teachings to those with three different levels of intelligence. At Sarnath he gave teachings to beings of lower intelligence. Near Bodhgaya he gave teachings to those of higher intelligence—the teachings on *shunyata*, or absolute truth. At a third place he gave tantric teachings. At the same time Guru Shakyamuni appeared in different forms to different people—as a bhikshu, as a king, and so forth as was fitting to their minds.

Before meditation we must understand Dharma. The reason for it is because of suffering—our minds have been sleeping comfortably in true suffering, although perhaps not as comfortably as in American hotels. From the tiniest insects, seen only through the microscope, to the most famous person, who owns the whole earth, all living beings are conditioned by suffering, or *dukkha*. There is no choice to not experience suffering—even a king who has great power and is supposed to be perfect has no choice but to suffer through *samsara*.

Because our minds are not aware, not open, we do not see the Dharma. Yet has there ever been anyone who has avoided death, since the beginning of time? All those kings and presidents are dead, only their names remain—their minds are somewhere else. Also, there is no choice not to become older—aging begins in the mother's womb. This is the nature of impermanence—as something comes into existence it changes; it is all suffering. Taking rebirth without choice is also suffering. Exactly the same thing is true for animals and insects—they have no choice but to experience suffering. Some sicknesses can be temporarily cured by medicine, but this is never certain, and some cannot be cured. This is the logical experience of reality.

The sufferings of living beings are incredible—there are so many kinds. For instance, even people who have many material possessions are never satisfied, and dissatisfaction is suffering. In fact, one of the three main true sufferings is that of never receiving enough. This is a most cruel suffering, extremely difficult to overcome, and one of the social sufferings. The hankering after material possessions keeps us busy, never finished, always collecting things for self. But looking at these things, we see that they only get older and older—that is the nature of impermanent materials.

To dislike or like or to be attached to another being without recognizing our own nature of mind is suffering. Every problem arises from this, including the lack of control over rebirth, old age, sickness, and death. Not recognizing the true nature of mind is the true source of suffering. Keeping busy to support the body day and night is suffering that arises from the suffering mind.

Material development over countless eons has not helped to cease uncontrolled death or to stop old age and rebirth. These are the true results of suffering and material development. What can cease this suffering? We have to find a way.

The real peace that we seek is control of and freedom from rebirth, old age, sickness, and death, as well as all of our other problems. Peace from the Dharma point of view means cessation of karma, but achieving this is not easy. It depends on recognition of the cause of these problems. All of them are causative—everything has a reason for happening and for its existence.

The principal cause of our problems is the three negative minds: greed, ignorance, and hatred. These are not external things, but internal, not physical but different types of mind. Real, perfect peace depends on recognizing these three minds and the sufferings that arise from them, and realizing and ceasing all this.

The achievement of perfect peace depends on method, and the only method to bring this peace and freedom from the three negative minds is Dharma. Any external, material method or development will never be able to cut the suffering result and its cause forever. It has not done this so far, nor will it in the future. For example, when animals or humans feel hungry, they think that the principal cause is lack of food in the stomach. Then they eat food, but in a few hours the hunger recurs. This means that the solution did not apply forever, therefore it is not the best solution and there must be a reason for it. From the time of our birth until our death, the “eat-make kaka cycle” goes on, and it would do so even if we lived for a thousand years.

As lack of food is not the principal cause here since food does not solve the problem, there must be some other cause that does not depend on external things. The principal cause is greed, ignorance, and hatred, and if we apply this example to any other problem, we will see that as long as the

external solution does not cut off the three negative minds, there can be no cessation of the suffering result. If all those external things do not cut off the principal cause, they cannot stop suffering. Even being on the moon or on Venus is only a change of place, an external thing. However we try to change things externally, it cannot help to cut off the problem. We have to check up inside—by understanding the cause of problems we can open the door to the solutions.

This doesn't mean that we are rejecting external material development. It can be important, and every country should be developed both internally and externally. It can bring peace if, as they make external development, they make internal development—peace for that country, other countries, and for all beings. If politics is inseparable from inner development then real peace is definitely possible, no doubt. But the problem is this—lack of spiritual development and having material development alone can only cause problems for our own and other countries. Perfect development is, therefore, internal development together with external development, if the latter is to occur.

Dharma, which in Sanskrit means protecting from suffering and fears, is the method by which we can cease the cause of all suffering on every different level. Within the Dharma itself as shown by the Enlightened One, there are many different methods to bring this about. Why was it shown and practiced this way? Because there is ignorance. If ignorance exists even in the form of the slightest unknowing mind, there is definitely a need for Dharma practice. However, if this kind of mind does not exist, then there is no purpose or reason for Dharma practice at all, for in that case we would be out of problems.

Dharma practice is the cultivation of a positive, pure mind, and the cultivation of the actions produced by a positive, pure impulse, the impulse for truth and peace. Simply put, any action that helps us to cut off suffering results and their causes are always Dharma actions. They are inseparable from spiritual development. Material development alone cannot bring peace. It can only bring peace if it, too, is inseparable from spiritual development. But a person doesn't have to wear robes in order to engage in such actions.

Actions can be thought of a medicinal substance that can either be poisonous or beneficial, bring suffering or restoration, depending on how it is used. In the same way, actions can be Dharma or non-Dharma. In order to use the substance as medicine and apply it so that it can bring benefit, you need understanding and skill. In the same way, you need understanding and skill, or wisdom, in order for your actions to bring about positive results. If you lack this understanding and skill, then even that which appears to be a Dharma action can bring about a suffering result.

Therefore, to practice Dharma you must first of all understand the mind. If you do not understand the mind, you will be unable to meditate, and the door to enlightenment will remain closed. The understanding of the mind is the door to every realization, to past, present, and future happiness, and the door to every perfection.

THE STUDY OF DHARMA

Learning Dharma is not the same as studying in schools and universities, which are done with worldly thoughts, expecting temporal comforts. The objectives of studying Dharma are not the same. The objectives of our Dharma study should be higher, and if they are not we are simply wasting time. Our knowledge will only work in a positive way in dependence on our own minds. If we try to gain knowledge in a positive way, the effect will be positive. If not, the result will only be

suffering. The serious Dharma practitioner appreciates the great importance of generating positive action.

The subjects that we study during our Dharma education are hard to understand, taking years, so we must not become discouraged and give everything up if the results do not come immediately. Understanding comes slowly, as we continue our meditation, practice, and study. It is also important to remember that the difficulty is caused by our ignorance, and not by the subject matter. If we abandon the subject matter we waste our human life, with its potential for great realizations. The person whose life is spent in ignorance of inner subjects dies with a mental state no better than that of an animal. The very lowest state of mind that we should die with is happiness—the lowest purpose of human life is not to suffer after death.

THE WAY TO STUDY DHARMA TO REACH ENLIGHTENMENT

1. Listen carefully to the subject matter.
2. Check up to eliminate doubts; contemplate, ask, and discuss.
3. Meditate, making the mind one with the object of meditation and becoming habituated to it, or making the mind one with the subject of meditation and becoming habituated to it. Meditations vary.

If there is doubt the meditation will not be successful, but right checking and observation in the mind brings understanding. If you still have doubt after this ask someone who knows the subject matter.

Meditating on bodhicitta is done for the purpose of making the mind one with it, as is meditating on the different manifestations of enlightened beings.

Single-pointed meditation involves the single pointed concentration on one object of meditation—which may be a statue or another object either inside or outside the body—and habituating the mind to it by controlling the distractions. The more the mind gets accustomed to this, fewer and fewer disturbances will arise.

It is very easy to engage in negative actions—the impulse to do so arises in our minds effortlessly because we are so used to them, so familiar with them—we have created them from beginningless time. The picture of the objects of the negative emotions arises so easily in our minds, and our negative minds want to enjoy its objects. For these reasons, positive actions are so much more difficult to do.

THE CORRECT WAY TO LISTEN TO DHARMA

As the teacher or guru gives the teachings, we should take those words as a mirror in which to check the reflection of our own minds. As we check our faces in a glass mirror to see if we are clean or dirty, so we look at our minds in the reflection of the lama's teachings to measure our personalities, behavior, and so forth. And just as we do not use the glass mirror to check another person's face while leaving our own faces black and dirty, so also we should not use the teachings to check the faults of others. The teachings are meant to be used to clean our own minds and enlighten ourselves for the sake of sentient beings. They are not meant to be used to help us to see others in a negative way.

As you listen to teachings you should check your own mind, “Am I doing this or not?” Compare your own experiences to the realizations of the teachings. If you have no experiences you should do this nonetheless; it is still important to try. You should not become bored of listening, bored of hearing the same words repeated. Just to hear the words of a teaching is not Dharma. The actual study of Dharma is not the study of words, but rather making the mind one with the object and trying to realize the subject through practice, for you must achieve many levels of realizations leading to enlightenment. It is possible to study Dharma for samsaric reasons, with pride and an egotistic mind, only knowing the words and then telling them to other people.

So you should check up—no matter how many times you have heard the subject matter in the past, if you have not experienced the realization of that topic you should continue to practice it, and until you experience that realization you cannot hear it enough. Even if you have a realization of a particular subject matter, that realization still has to be developed until you attain enlightenment. Practitioners, even though they have realized the subject matter, are living in the practice, and even though they have heard it one hundred times before, they still keep listening in order to develop their realizations. We shouldn't be satisfied with words alone—even a parrot can be taught mantras.

So take up the mirror of the teachings and check up in your mind to see if you find any defects. The teachings are the mirror of the mind and the subject matter they address is primarily negativity and suffering. If you find that your mind is involved in such defects and problems, you should avoid them. And you should correct and clean any wrong things in the mind.

This is the way that serious practitioners listen to the teachings. This is how our gurus instruct us to practice. We shouldn't have pride, thinking, “I know this subject, why does he repeat it again and again?”

MEDITATION (Pages 40-45)

There are two types of meditation, and the attainment of enlightenment is totally dependent on both, therefore each is important.

1. Checking meditation, in which we check the subject and find the solution
2. Vipassana meditation, or one-pointedness

Checking meditation is most helpful at the beginning of our practice. This kind of meditation expands the knowledge of the mind, clarifies the nature of the object, and enables us to gain correct understanding and realization. Without this kind of analysis, the possibility of wrong understanding is great.

In single-pointed meditation, the mind is unified with the subject of meditation and thus becomes familiar with it. Once our concentration is strengthened to the point where we can maintain this for a long time, it can be very helpful for our minds, and reduces distraction and wandering. Physical discipline can aid the development of this kind of meditation. When sitting, you should take the position of Vairochana, one of the Dhyani Buddhas. This position both prepares oneself for meditation and also inspires others. Your legs should be crossed as comfortably as possible, with a straight back and level shoulders. Your mouth should be closed, your teeth as usual, and you should place the tip of your tongue against the back of your top teeth. You should place your hands in your

lap with the two thumbs touching, which is symbolic of preparation for future tantric realizations. Your eyes should gaze down the line of your nose, and your arms should be held in a round shape. Then you should concentrate on breathing through the nose as follows.

1. Visualize that the breath leaves the right nostril in the form of light, reaching every sentient being and transforming into all of the things that they need. Visualize that through their enjoyment of those things, all sentient beings receive perfect peace.
2. Then visualize that the suffering of all sentient beings is inhaled through your left nostril in the form of dark smoke and fog.
3. When the smoke and fog reach your heart, they become like the sun so that all negative minds and actions are burnt.
4. Visualize that your entire body becomes clean, like transparent white light that passes out through the right nostril to all sentient beings.
5. Repeat these steps making three times in total, and then repeat three more times beginning with the light passing through the left nostril, inhaling all the negativities of sentient beings through the right.

This breath meditation can be very powerful—like an atom bomb that destroys the delusions of our own negative minds, such as the belief in the ego. If we practice this way with strong bodhicitta, this practice becomes like a shortcut to enlightenment, a tantric mystic practice. However, this is very difficult to do in the beginning since we are so lacking in our understanding of bodhicitta, which must be pure and sincere in order to give this method of practice its greatest meaning. This practice can bring about the purification of our own delusions and negativities, and as well as not wasting our bodies, we don't even waste our breaths. We use this meditation and our breath for other sentient beings to become bodhisattvas, or to develop bodhicitta. As purification is necessary for the success of our other meditations, this practice can become a support for those as well. The degree of purification that we experience as a result of this practice depends, of course, on the depth of purpose that we apply to it, which in turn depends on our own will.

Up until this point, our mind has been mostly distracted, wandering around unsubdued and driven by superstition, as uncontrolled as dust blown through the air by the wind. In order to meditate properly, however, on any subject, our mind must be prepared—it must be clear and peaceful. The breath meditation gives us this basis.

The eight meditations of the course are in opposition to worldly superstition. To bring our minds to a positive place, to make our thoughts positive is difficult, not easy. As long as our minds are in a negative place, they cannot be in a positive place simultaneously. We need a skillful method to bring us there—a tricky method to play with the negative mind.

Why do we have negative thoughts and distractions? They have so much control over us, and we find it so very difficult to control them. Even to concentrate single-pointedly for five minutes is difficult—so many other thoughts arise. All this is because the mind is so accustomed to being distracted, so habituated to existing and functioning in that way. Our minds are greatly obscured by superstition, and have been throughout beginningless lifetimes.

Actually, in breathing meditation, the breath itself is not so important. What we are really trying to work with is the mind.

Keeping your breath natural—slow and gentle—breathe in, and think, “All sentient beings are extremely precious, they are most kind, they are the source of all my past, present, and future happiness, including the perfect happiness of the realizations that lead to enlightenment. They have cared for me up until now and will continue to do so in the future, and they are more important than my own life. Therefore, I take all of their suffering and negative minds into myself in the form of smoke through my left nostril. As it enters it becomes light, like the sun, so that all wrong beliefs in ego and all other negativities are burned and disintegrated, and my whole body is cleansed, becoming transparent and full of light. My entire body and mind are one with great, infinite, immeasurable happiness.”

Then, breathing out, visualize that this light is sent out to each sentient being, fulfilling the needs of every single one, and as a result of their enjoyment of this light, every suffering and cause of suffering that they might experience is completely purified, and they receive all the knowledge of the state of enlightenment.

MEDITATION

Meditation is not dependent on words. You cannot transplant realizations, and they are not already in the mind. In order to have realizations, you must make meditation a practice, not just close your eyes. Practice is the best meditation. In order to practice, you must receive the explanation of the words and subject matter. Once you have listened, you should check up on the words in your own mind and try to understand them. Follow the disciplines and use the methods that you have been taught to gain greater understanding. Try to see the subject matter of your meditation more and more clearly through constant repetition. Through this method your practice will deepen. Then amplify the subject matter with your own wisdom. Feel. Experience. Then realize. This is the practice of meditation.

So you can see that the practice of meditation does in fact depend on words at the beginning, but the realizations will not arise immediately. The length of time it takes you to develop realizations is dependent on your fortune, your karma, and your level of intelligence.

As you practice, it is important to remember not to rush. You are trying to gain realizations through practice—you are not trying to finish something, you are trying to discover the subject matter in a deeper way. You should do so slowly, trying to control the distractions within your mind. This depends on your skill. First you remember the outlines of the subject matter you have been taught, and then you amplify. This is the best way to develop wisdom in the subject matter.

REALIZATION OF SHUNYATA

Before we can get out of samsara, we must develop shunyata. The development of shunyata must be supported by the merit of many good actions, the practice of discipline, and the purification of the negative mind.

Following the discipline of the three vehicles leads to better rebirths and freedom from the three lower realms, and the practice of each brings increasing realizations. We must especially develop the realization of the absolute true nature. If we follow the disciplines carefully each time, we may be able to complete this process within sixteen perfect human rebirths.

THE NATURE OF MIND AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ENLIGHTENMENT (Page 1-3)

Mind is beginningless. Negative minds arise from their own mother negative minds—the negative mind of this present life arises from the negative mind of the former life. There is no first life, because if we hadn't existed before the creation of this earth, then it never would have been created, as the earth is a creation of our own minds and karma.

Mind is that which is clear and has the ability to perceive objects.

BUT HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO RECEIVE ENLIGHTENMENT? (Page 4)

Delusion is that which is keeping the door to perfect happiness, the complete cessation of suffering, closed. It is a temporary negative mind. Illusion is also a temporary negative mind, for it too can be ceased. This is the mind that sees the object in the wrong way, in a way that is in direct opposition to the real, factual object.

The mind has continuity, in the same way as a seed has the ability to produce a plant and another seed, and so on. As it is not possible to have a seed in one place and a plant in another, it is only through the development of our own mind that we can achieve enlightenment or perfect peace. As there must be a relationship between the seed and the plant, so also must there be a relationship between the development of the mind and enlightenment. The seed develops in association with the necessary elements and this produces the plant. The development of the mind is our own decision and creation. Perfect peace cannot be given by a buddha or a lama, nor can it arise from the use of drugs and so forth.

How does Guru Shakyamuni guide his followers? As is said in a teaching, “The Perfected Ones do not purify the negativity of their followers by water, nor destroy the suffering of sentient beings by hand. Neither do they transplant realizations.”

How does he guide and release sentient beings from suffering, from the cycle of death and rebirth? He does so only through showing the absolute truth. In order that they might realize that absolute truth, Guru Shakyamuni also presents many other teachings such as those on the suffering nature of existence, impermanence, great love, great compassion, and bodhicitta. All of these teachings lead to the realization of absolute truth.

However, the realization of absolute truth does not only depend on the fact that the teacher shows these teachings—in order to bring this about you need to study, practice, and put the mind into these teachings, into the essence of the Dharma. Through the continual practice of right understanding you can thus become free of suffering and samsara and reach enlightenment.

The pure, clear light nature of mind is not one with ignorance—if this were the case it could not be purified, as ignorance cannot attain enlightenment. Ignorance is composed of the obscurations preventing enlightenment. Ignorance means unknowing, therefore how could it become the fully-knowing mind? Ignorance is a negative mind—it cannot be dirty and clean at once but it can become pure, as a dirty place can be cleaned. Dirty and clean are not one. We are not trying to make ignorance enlightened—delusions are always obscurations to the realization of enlightenment, and if the mind were one with ignorance there would be no way to achieve understanding. The intrinsic

nature of mind is not one with ignorance, rather it is obscured by ignorance, which is what makes knowledge degenerate, and what makes us forget.

THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF MIND

Your present intrinsic nature of mind has a relationship to your future omniscient mind because this intrinsic nature of mind will become the completely purified, omniscient nature of your mind in the same way that a seed is related to the future flower that will grow.

LIFE

If we don't understand what life is how can we understand what death is? We talk about it but we don't recognize what it is. We have been alive so long, yet still we don't know what life is.

The mind is the luggage of impressions, packed up from previous lives. The way that the various external expressions occur depend on the karma therein. An enlightened mind contains only enlightened knowledge. The mental luggage is pure and remains so forever, a complete collection of merit—good karma—and the complete purification of negativity. Therefore, the enlightened mind arises from karma although its action is not karma-dependent. The negative mind, on the other hand, has never been enlightened.

LINEAGE OF THE TEACHINGS (Page 5)

ATISHA'S TEACHINGS

1. Fully realizing all pure views of enlightened beings
2. Listening to subjects and meditation stops delusions and purifies a lot of negativity
3. Knowing different practices and levels of teaching—Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana — increases the height of practice. All lead to buddhahood. The latter is fastest, but all depend on the practitioner's understanding. We cannot say which one does not depend on the teachings—we need both wisdom and method to reach buddhahood.

We can practice all three teachings at different times as our level of understanding progresses.

There is great benefit that arises from listening to teachings—they can impart understanding by explaining everything. There is no way to perfect peace without the teachings. The full explanation of the subject brings full recognition, and then we must make full observation—we must check and think. We must practice the teachings, and avoid meaningless actions.

In order to act positively we should recognize positive actions. The increase of wisdom decreases ignorance and negative minds. Then the knowledge of enlightenment—of nirvana, perfect peace, and everlasting happiness—can arise. If we do not control the intense agitation of the mind, however, we will be unable to reach the higher meditations.

TSONG KHAPA

Tsong Khapa, who is the founder of the Gelug school, was a highly realized manifestation of the Buddha of Wisdom, Manjushri. He gave extensive commentaries on Atisha's teachings and explained the graded path to enlightenment.

PRAYERS (Page 10)

This meditation course can be the key to make your life meaningful; this includes so much research.

OFFERINGS

There are physical offerings and visualized offerings, or offerings made by the mind; both create good karma. The purpose of making offering is to purify miserliness and attachment to objects our mind cannot renounce. Without purifying miserliness there is no way to achieve enlightenment. Even just to get out of samsara we have to eliminate of miserliness and attachment. Making mental offerings helps us to become unattached to making actual offerings, and making actual offerings helps to destroy attachment and miserliness towards any object.

When we make visualized offerings to enlightened beings, although there is no such thing as that offering, giving up those mental objects is training and creates good karma as it makes miserliness decrease. It is good because the offerings are to enlightened beings. We should not be mentally attached, we should not be like we are in church—giving offerings but still thinking “I like that flower.” There is danger when we make offerings to ourselves, so we must check up. Our minds enjoy samsara, that is why whenever we go into actions with details we can always find faults. The best offering is the mind that is not attached to external things, that is the essential offering, and making offerings of material things on the basis of this creates double good karma—internal and material.

Thinking, “If I do this some people will think I'm such a good benefactor,” or “If I make this offering I shall get many things and my life will be happy,” is bad karma, done with greed and attachment to the comfort of this life. If there is attachment to the offering it becomes a black offering. Therefore, when we do actions we should check up on our motivation—if it is a dharma motivation it is a pure action. As it arises into your imagination you should check. You will then be able to lose your strong attachment.

If your mind is well trained in this practice you can use your own method. The problem of discrimination and attachment to different people will decrease, so you will remain at peace, away from the negative mind of attachment to the object that is that person. Also, mentally, in your imagination, during meditation you can work with the person who arises in your memory. You do this using your imagination—it is just a mental thing, fighting attachment. Visualizing offerings without attachment always creates good karma and fights the negative mind of attachment by using the temporal life. Fighting miserliness is a positive action and it also stops jealousy for other beings; even in the future if you become rich, then you will be able to use those riches in a Dharma way because you will not be attached to them.

Why do we make offerings, prostrations, and so forth? It is only to finish the problems in the mind; this is also the reason for mantras, meditation, using symbols, and so on. Even if your work in this respect is finished for one it is not the end—there are so many other solar systems, there are so many other beings who have problems. The purpose of this is only to achieve enlightenment and cut

off the problems in the mind, the mind of suffering. You visualize as your mind is capable. This is easy to do if you have understanding—you can even make a really big offering like prostrations to Chenrezig. This all depends on your level of realization.

CONFESSION

The more repentance you feel, the greater the positive action you create and the less the suffering result will be. Then you make the decision that you won't repeat the negative action—in this month, year, or until death. The strength of your repentance affects the strength of the confession—if your repentance is strong your confession becomes stronger, more powerful. In order to make confession you need strong repentance, and the strong will not to do engage in that action again. If I kill an insect and make a confession today, as quickly as possible, it is that much easier to purify negativity. If I don't confess today then the negative karma that I created increases and is that much harder to purify.

Some people may find difficulty with these prayers, and of course it is difficult to understand these prayers as they are very powerful and contain much meaning. One who understands Dharma can talk about these prayers for years, for to talk about Dharma one has to talk about everything that exists.

As our meditation deepens, we become more and more able to understand the necessities and meanings of the prayers. The prayers are very profound. Like the water that comes from the ocean, all water finally returns to the ocean. In the same way the whole Dharma that Guru Shakyamuni gave—84,000 Teachings to dispel 84,000 negativities—all that vast teaching is related to this prayer Dharma. For those people who are concerned of the creation of karma when they travel, when they make retreat, and when they practice Dharma in their lives, these prayers can be very beneficial in bringing realizations, and help in meditation.

In the monasteries of Tibet the monks have many texts that they have to study, but only to study is not the way to develop wisdom. Study can create so much inner and outer disturbance. Of course the monks study, but they also have to make prayers, or puja. Puja means purifying and creating merit. Doing a lot of puja to helps them to study, to stop the disturbances to meditation, and to receive realizations sooner. Realizations need study, checking of the study, purification, and the creation of merits. Therefore, it is for those people who wish to use them that I am giving this introduction to these prayers.

MORNING PRAYERS (Page 10)

The prayers are arranged to allow one to perform the ritual by oneself, alone. They are to be used to purify negativity and to allow successful meditation. No other books on Dharma have this arrangement, nor do they show how to meditate on subjects. The prayers are very deep since they contain the essence of all the teachings that follow.

The main idea is that for those who wish to do retreat, if the prayers are made as shown, the practice becomes more perfect and beneficial. Each one is of great importance of purify negative minds and to create merit. All of these prayers are powerful, containing much Dharma, and are correlated with all the meditations which follow. As so much of the vast teachings of the pandits is related here, to go into great detail would take time.

The whole purpose of these activities of prayers, prostrations, making offerings, and so forth is to prepare for meditation. They are to be done each morning after waking, before meditation. They are something that has to be done as part of daily life. The better the preparation one has, the quicker and better the realizations of meditation will be, and the deeper the understanding. Then your meditation will help you to understand the meaning of the prayers as well.

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REFUGE IN THE HOLY GURU (Page 10)

The disciple who takes teachings from the guru does so by viewing the guru as the Buddha who is the founder of the teachings. Listening to lectures is not the same as learning from the guru. Discipline is made for the disciple, which means that the guru has his own rules.

The disciple should not have a negative mind, and especially he or she should not create negative actions with his teacher, or give up. The disciple also should not judge the teacher, and think, "He doesn't say sweet things," or judge the teacher's physical body.

When listening to the guru we should avoid the three defects of a pot. Our mind should not be like an upside-down pot that cannot be filled, nor should it be like a dirty pot, which can be filled but pollutes the food within. A dirty pot is like the mind that holds wrong meanings. Nor should our minds be like a pot with holes, easily forgetting everything we are taught.

We must practice the teachings with the mind. We should consider ourselves, the disciple, as the patient, the teachings the medicine, and the guru the doctor. Our suffering will be cured more quickly if we follow instructions correctly. In the same way that it is of no use to collect many medicines and not take them, so not practicing the teachings we are given renders them useless. Just writing in a book is not writing in the mind. Guru Shakyamuni said that if we do not practice correctly and fully after listening to the teachings, he will not be able to cure our suffering. We cannot cure the sickness by reading the prescription; we must take the medicine.

Every part, every atom of Buddha's holy body has the same total, infinite knowledge that his holy speech and mind have. To fully understand this is to be enlightened; it cannot be explained. A painting cannot replicate his holy body.

THE BENEFITS OF FOLLOWING THE GURU CORRECTLY

The guru has to have higher knowledge even to give minor teachings. The Buddha in the guru can't be seen until the person looking has purified his or her mind. We can follow a guru who is not perfected until we reach a certain level of knowledge or understanding, and then we can move on to a higher guru who, according to Dharma, is leading a better life.

The first benefit of following the guru correctly is that doing so brings us closer to the enlightened state. One of the Tibetan words for a spiritual teacher is *ge wai she nyen*. In this sense the guru is like a brother or a friend. He makes corrections in the mind of the disciple, thereby correcting his actions. He instills the virtuous dharma and moral disciplines into the mind of the disciple.

The second benefit of following the guru correctly is that if we do so, it pleases all of the other buddhas.

Third, if we follow the guru correctly we will not be disturbed, influenced, controlled, or drawn by evil friends or spirits, both in the external world and in our own minds. The disciple who practices correctly will not be affected by ignorance or negative mind. It is the guru's responsibility to show the disciple how to remain in control and not be influenced by such things as ignorance, greed, or hatred.

The fourth benefit is that we will not be reborn in the three lower realms.

The fifth benefit is we will experience the success that we wish for in both temporal actions and purposes and in terms of our dharma practice. For example, our meditations will lead to quick realizations.

The sixth benefit is that we will receive enlightenment more quickly.

The seventh is that we will extinguish all devils, or delusions.

The eighth is that our realizations and understanding of Dharma will increase without us being distracted.

The shortcomings of not following the guru's instructions correctly are almost infinite and include plagues and so forth, as well as the experience of results opposite to the above.

PRAYER: REFUGE IN THE HOLY GURU

This is a very powerful and blessed prayer; each time we recite it we benefit because it leaves an impression in our mind. This prayer can be said for refuge, but it can also be recited before eating food, to offer the meal, to purify the action of eating, to purify greed (which creates negative karma and the result of suffering), and to create good karma. This prayer contains the meanings of all the paths and realizations from guru devotion up until enlightenment, which can take a very long time to explain. It is one of the most profound subjects and is most difficult to realise. It is not like talking about shunyata using logic, it is much more difficult than that. Realizing guru yoga practice brings very quick enlightenment, but in order to realize it you need much purification. It does not depend on logic alone. In addition to what is given here, there is a separate meditation on the subject that can be practiced continuously in daily life. What I am giving here is just a tiny seed to give you some idea. If you have the skill and the wisdom you can understand the whole essence of the subject from just this. It contains everything. If you wish to have this meditation, to make vows to continuously practice this, further explanation can be made.

Just the introduction to this prayer alone has such vast meaning. The guru is the one from whom we take teachings for enlightenment. In Tibet the ancient yogis checked their gurus and the gurus checked disciples, but if you spend your whole life checking it will be over before you get teachings. At the very least the guru should have greater knowledge than yourself, to your own view. This can be difficult to recognize because of your limited and obscured mind. In order to actually see an enlightened being, with light rays all around, having full realizations, you need a fully purified mind.

Generally speaking, it is also good to have a guru who is living in the practice, in discipline. His setting an example can help your practice a great deal and can be a great inspiration. For example if the guru meditates a lot, so will the disciple. Usually since we have so much negativity in our minds, we see the guru as a mirror of ourselves and all that reflects back at us are what we see as his faults, which in reality are only our own. When our minds are purified we will be able to see every manifestation of the buddhas with all qualities and perfections. So in the very beginning it is very helpful for our own practice to have a guru who is living in the discipline. In this situation the disciple takes his example, which is good for purifying our minds. Of course this mainly depends on our faith, practice of the dharma, and living in that practice.

The highly realized Tibetan yogi Padamba Sangye said, “While sentient beings are in distraction there is the danger of being captured by an evil death, therefore it is necessary to practice Dharma right away.”

This was the advice that he gave his followers before he passed away. While we spend our lives trying always to work for the enjoyment of samsaric happiness, deceiving ourselves, our lives are in danger of being taken by an evil death. At the moment death has not occurred so we have a chance, and it is therefore necessary to practice pure Dharma all the time. Also, when listening to Dharma for a few hours we should make it as pure an action as possible, an inner being action because the pure motive depends on having refuge in mind, fear of suffering, and full confidence and belief in the knowledge of the Triple Gem. Furthermore, we should make it a Mahayana action, which depends on having the Mahayana thought, “I must receive enlightenment to be able to enlighten every sentient being, to release them from all their sufferings, to repay them for all their kindness in providing all my past, present, and future happiness. To receive enlightenment I must purify my mind, so in order to do that am going to listen to teachings on the graded path.”

Chandrakirti, who wrote much on shunyata, said, “The Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—are objects of refuge for those beings that wish to receive liberation.”

You cannot follow the path without refuge. It protects many other future lives from suffering but that doesn't necessarily mean that it protects this life. You cannot become an arhat without refuge. Actually there is much to learn on this subject; to understand refuge more fully you must learn Tibetan language and then study the texts—it is difficult to translate the entirety of this subject and it takes much time.

Any non-enlightened being cannot guide us from samsara. If any living being doesn't have the realization of the absolute true nature and the true cessation of suffering, even if he has a light around him he is not free from samsara. We cannot take refuge in such beings, and we cannot completely rely on them no matter how they look. Many spirits who look far out are no better than beings in the animal realm. For instance, in Tibet a shepherd once saw a being with light rays emanating from it and thought, “This must be the Buddha.” But it was a spirit, and it suddenly disappeared because it didn't have the full power to be the recipient of this shepherd's prostrations. It wasn't the perfect guide. The perfect guide must be free from samsara.

Also in Tibet there are piles of stones along the mountain trails and these are actually places where there are temporal spirits. Spirits usually have a leader who sends the servants to look for flesh. Once, a man who had a large goiter had to sleep near one of these places and the servant spirits took the goiter for their leader's food. The man was very pleased to have lost it, trusted the evil spirits,

and told others. So another person with a goiter slept at that place, but as the spirits hadn't liked the flesh of the other goiter they added it to the goiter of the second person. Betrayed!

There are different ways in which a person can become a guru, he doesn't only have to give teachings. A guru can also be a mandala or a deity. Learning the hand mudras for enlightenment can also be a guru. The practice of relying on a guru is one of the most important things there is, more important than anything else. However, it is a little difficult for us to understand the actual meaning and purpose of this.

Without the guru there would be no existence of the Buddha. In the tantras it says, "Even the name Buddha does not exist before the existence of the guru." In order to understand this quote, we need to understand the relative and absolute guru, and realize the actual guru.

The line of the prayer that says, "The guru is all creators," means that just as all the water on earth comes from many different places—lakes, streams, wells—it is always water and it all comes from one main place, the ocean. Without the ocean the lakes, streams, and wells cannot exist. Just like that, without the existence of the guru, the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and the path cannot exist. This is a very deep subject.

Generally the entire process from now, the beginning, until we reach enlightenment has to begin with guru devotion practice. This practice is like the gate at the border of the country—the correct approach to the gate allows easy entry into the country and to the enjoyments therein. It is the same with guru devotion practice—it is the entrance to the path to enlightenment. All realizations depend on how pure we make this practice, how perfect; that is why it is so important. It is the essential practice of ancient yogis and present practitioners. How quickly we attain different realizations, the different levels of the path, all depends on the guru, and depending on this the rest of the process is much more quick and successful, takes less effort and is easier.

Incorrect practice, however, causes our problems to increase. It is very important not to break the guru's instructions and orders—this can cause a great obstacle to progress and may prevent enlightenment in a lifetime when otherwise it would have been attained. For example there is the story of Milarepa's disciple Rechung, who was told by Milarepa not to go to his home near Lhasa. Rechung didn't listen and he went. When he reached home he gave away a turquoise to a beggar, then was beaten by his wife with a soup spoon. Finally after much trouble, he left and returned to Milarepa, who showed him the turquoise—as it turned out, the beggar had been a manifestation of Milarepa. All the trouble he had was due to breaking Milarepa's instructions, and from then on he experienced much more trouble, and didn't attain enlightenment.

The absolute guru comes close to being the absolute or intrinsic nature of mind, the essence of non-self existence. Without the absolute guru there can be no Buddha, Dharma, or Sangha. Without the absolute guru there is no way for an enlightened being to exist; there is no way for all past, present, and future happiness and suffering to exist. There is too much to talk about in relation to this topic—this is only a seed.

If our guru is a monk or Sangha member it is a good example for our negative mind to follow. If our guru is a layperson with a wife and family the reason for following the precepts are not so obvious—we might think, "Why should I do this and that?" and so forth, and these kinds of questions create negative karma. The superstitious mind always looks to the faults of the guru and this is a hindrance.

This is why the example of the guru must be as perfect as possible. But merely wearing robes is not enough. Seeing faults in the guru builds negative mind. We think, “He is such and such,” and so forth, and we never seek knowledge, thus there is no way for us to attain enlightenment. Like a reflection of our own face, greed sees the guru as greedy, anger sees the guru as angry, and ignorance sees him as ignorant. It is possible for the guru to appear in the form of our negative minds, which should prove to us that we, the disciples, possess this negative mind that must be purified.

The first time Milarepa saw his guru Marpa, Marpa appeared as a very ordinary man, dirty and digging in the fields, and drinking *chang*. Later in their relationship, Marpa made Milarepa do great physical work—but actually all these things were teachings, purifying negativity.

Also consider the story of the great yogis Tilopa and Naropa. For many years Guru Tilopa didn’t give Naropa teachings no matter how much Naropa followed him and asked for them. For many years Naropa had to carry out strange orders constantly, taking things from others and getting beaten as a result. Once there was a wedding going on in the street and Tilopa sent him to go and take the wife, which resulted in Naropa getting beaten. Also, Tilopa appeared as a poor fisherman, wearing few clothes, and eating the wrong parts of the fish.

One day, after all these years, Tilopa asked Naropa to make a mandala offering, although there were no materials to use. But Naropa needed to offer this mandala, the universe, to purify his negative karma—as had all the previous sufferings he had experienced over the years also been to purify. Tilopa told Naropa to make pee-pee into the sand as there was no water, and Naropa made the offering from that. Then Tilopa threw the wet sand into Naropa’s face saying, “Here’s your mandala!” and told Naropa to look into space. At that point Tilopa transformed the space in front of him into the full mandala of the deity Heruka, and Naropa received full purification.

Therefore we should remember that there is nothing to trust in outer appearances. It is the inner mind that is important.

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GENERATING BODHICITTA (Page 13)

If we make charity of many universes full of the seven types of jewels to each living being without bodhicitta or of a small bowl of rice to an animal with bodhicitta, the benefits of the latter are much greater. They are much greater than we are capable of realizing, beyond the conception of the ordinary mind. The action of giving, making charity, depends on the mind, not on the action or the materials.

Even giving with the realization of shunyata but without bodhicitta is nothing in comparison to giving without shunyata and having the realization of bodhicitta. Such action is always helpful and brings enlightenment more quickly for ourselves and others. Therefore, it is so important to practice bodhicitta as much as possible—even if we don’t have the full realization yet, this keeps the mind living in the practice and keeps ourselves and others in peace, never causing confusion to arise between ourselves and others. If we do not train in this practice, our minds will be negative and cause confusion to others. Therefore, besides our own enlightenment and perfect peace, this practice is important for others—because we make this kind of an effort, others become less confused and there are fewer problems, therefore it is necessary. If we have that positive mind,

bodhicitta, wherever we go, it makes other people happy to even see us. There is always peace, everybody likes us, and wants to see and help us. Such is the power of bodhicitta. Seeing such an ascetic, bodhicitta person has a strong effect on the mind of even the person without any Dharma knowledge. That person will get a good vibration even though he doesn't recognize a holy person. Doubt is controlled by the power of the holy being's bodhicitta. Even the very evil person's negative mind is subdued by the power of this mind. And so the holy mind of bodhicitta, besides being helpful in terms of our own realization of enlightenment, is also extremely helpful for other people.

Our physical body is made of father and mother, from the combination of sperm and egg, and is composed of bone, flesh, blood, and so forth, and is of limited size. Due to the power of bodhicitta, it becomes possible for us to sell this body and buy the holy body of the King, the holy body of a buddha, which has such infinite knowledge not even realized by the highest bodhisattvas, has no suffering of rebirth, old age, sickness, and death, is completely free, can appear in many trillions of manifestations according to different beings' level of mind, and also possesses the function of his holy speech and holy mind. By selling this body, which is always living in suffering, we can receive the precious holy body of a buddha due to the power of bodhicitta. The value of this present body is insignificant by comparison—it always gives us great trouble, always gets us to work so much—so why shouldn't we be pleased to sell this body in order to replace it with the holy body? However, although it is relatively valueless we shouldn't waste this body—if we don't practice bodhicitta we are wasting this and a much greater amount of human life.

EVOLUTION OF LIVING BEINGS (Page 55)

It is important to constantly check up what makes different people have different feelings—about food, likes and dislikes, and so forth. What causes it? If it is only the particular external condition then there is no reason for hundreds of people to have different feelings. For example, if we try to build something somewhere, some people like it, and some people see it as ugly and dislike it. We should not check up on external conditions, because since the beginning of the earth we have been trying to cease our problems externally, and after all this time not even one country's problem has been solved. What brings peace? If we try to find out by looking at the external conditions then there is no solution. What we should check up on, instead, is the mind that makes the person enjoy things through the senses. Without knowing the nature of the mind, the door to finding the solution is closed. There must be a reason that one hundred people each get a different feeling from food in one pot than from the food in another pot, and there must be a reason why some people like Tibetan tea and others don't. These problems are not created by the physical body and do not depend on our genes.

The different feelings that we experience are not brought forth by the cooperative cause, rather, they arise from a principal cause, that which is in the mind. This cause was created by the person, in the mind, not in the physical body. If the principal cause was in the elements, the stones, the water, or in non-living things, it follows that there must be a creator—it is not intuitive. If this different principal cause originally arose from these non-living things, then the elements, suffering, and happiness should arise from these as well. That means that if the elements arose from earth, earth should have mind, because if the cause of happiness is an inner thing, then the earth should be a living being. In that case, each atom of the earth should be a living being. Then all those elements that have arisen from past elements also have to be mind, the cause of happiness. Then there would be no existence of non-living things.

This is a big wrong conception, no one thinks like this. If the original living beings came into existence without reason, without another creator, intuitively, then there is no reason for all people on this earth to work for peace, it is better that all people just die. That way the troubles will cease, and every problem will cease, and there will be no living beings on earth. Yet we are building so many things to make life livable. If everyone dies there will be peace, if everyone lives, there will be suffering—talking frankly it comes down to this. If the original beings on this earth had no reason to exist, if there were no creator, then when the mind ceases there would be no reason for continuity. The great conflicts that we see in the world today should be the fault of these people's existence. So everything else becomes unnecessary, it is better for life not to exist, and all problems are completely stopped. Anyway, there is always a creator of our minds, of all living beings—for without reason nothing can exist.

We should check up, why is there existence? What makes the elements exist? What made the original elements of this earth exist? As we understand the subject of this evolution more deeply, our understanding of the mind will also deepen. If there is no creator there is no reason for us to exist. Each thing you see here has a reason for its existence. Whatever we see has a reason to exist, even the colored flower in a pot—they are related to us, being in this pot, sitting on this table, relating to us. Also, sometimes when we go to some countries and see new people, we may feel that we have lived with them for a long time, and that they are familiar—we may feel a close feeling. With other people we may get frightened—there are reasons for these experiences, they have something to do with the mind.

When you see a new person for the first time in this life and feel afraid, you should check up in the mind. That means that before this life, before taking this body, you were probably in the form of another human being. We have been human beings numberless times, and also animals. In this past life maybe that person killed you, so now, due to that vibration that is carried on by the mind, in this life you are frightened by this person. If someone was a friend in the past life then that is carried on in this life. Or some people may especially like different animals. We should study these things, research them—finding reasons helps us develop wisdom and find solutions. It means that there was a relationship in the previous life, which led to the creation of good or bad karma.

By subduing the mind, every external suffering that arises from outer cooperative causes can be stopped, and transformed into the nature of pleasure.

BODHICITTA

Tsong Khapa said, “The person whose mind has less anger and is humble is well liked by everybody, attracts helpers, and has few enemies.”

Generally, all actions become less trouble as we follow the path due to the power of the holy mind, the noble mind. It is noble because it is the opposite of cruel, and for this mind even external things become helpers. In contrast, the negative power of the cruel mind makes external objects—living and non-living—into enemies. The noble mind has patience and is humble.

Wherever the bodhisattva goes there is less disturbance—even in a wild dangerous forest his mental power, great love, and compassion protect him from tigers, snakes, and other animals that might kill human beings, and they become respectful instead of harmful. This is not due to their

understanding, but do the bodhisattva's powerful vibrations. This has been the experience of numberless beings who developed the positive mind.

The opposite example is a person who is very cruel and angry. His body shakes, his nose gets red, and he whose mind is like this is not respected, creates much negative action, and is disliked. He is recognized as a bad person, then he suffers because no one helps him. This is the result of negative mind.

To have a white, positive mind and try to imitate the bodhisattvas is very important when cultivating bodhicitta mind. There is not one tiny happiness that doesn't arise from bodhicitta, and thus because he desires happiness and wish to avoid suffering, even the person who doesn't want to meditate and doesn't believe in karma has to develop bodhicitta.

Each of us has a life to live; the duration varies but will not be more than one hundred years. Among this group here, someone will die first—maybe me, because I'm smaller, you see—someone will die first. After fifty or sixty years none of us will exist—we will become only the names in books, or on tombstones.

If we search for "life," we find that mind isn't life and body isn't life. Life is the association of mind with body, the combination. Nothing is permanent. So I think, "Perhaps I shall live forty years." But "forty years" is just a title for the time, an appellation, the name of a number, a collection of that many years. If one year is missing then it's not forty. A year is the collection of twelve months, and if one month is missing then it's not a year. A month is the collection of weeks, or the collection of thirty days—if a day is missing it's not a month. A day is the collection of twenty-four hours, an hour is the collection of minutes, minutes the collection of seconds, seconds the collection of split seconds and so on. If we check up we cannot find anything permanent. There is no concrete conception of time. Everything is in a state of flux. As each split second passes, the second, minute, hour, day, month, year finishes—that "forty years" is finishing in dependence upon the split second, and in this way our life is finishing continuously, not stopping for even the smallest amount of time.

Now that is clear. Or supposed to be clear, anyway. That is how time goes so quickly—it does not stand as we believe, as concrete, permanent, and self-existent. By a split second finishing, the "forty years" is on the way to finishing, like a river passing, like everything becoming decayed. Thus it is important to constantly think that each moment our human life is finishing, getting shorter, and that we have less and less time to live. This understanding of truth doesn't cause suffering and the development of ignorance, it only causes the release from suffering and ignorance.

The worry that arises when we consider the shortness and impermanence of the human life, of how we are wasting time and missing Dharma practice, is very worthwhile because it makes us focus on positive action in preparation for the next life. Always thinking of the way life changes only keeps the mind more and more mindful of seeking the inner method to escape from ignorance and suffering and to purify the causes already created. This kind of thinking is always helpful.

We have to study any existent object in order to know its true nature, and usually we do this with our school subjects in order to become knowledgeable about them. Because they exist there we want to be aware of them, not be ignorant. Therefore why don't we study this fact of impermanence? Studying this is much more worthwhile. People who don't want to know, covering the truth with ignorance, make no difference to the facts. The truth cannot be covered, no change can be made to

the true law. The study of external things will never cease our own ignorance, and will never release us from suffering. When we don't want to hear the inner truth explained, when we are afraid to listen because of shock, it's crazy—it's like looking in a mirror, finding black marks all over our face, and smashing the mirror in order to not have to see them. Now we laugh at this, but through our ignorance we try to close off wisdom as much as possible in order to not realize the truth. Then after some time we miss the mirror, and we realize "Oh! I've broken it."

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PURIFYING THE PLACE (Page 13)

The purpose of purifying the place before invoking the buddhas, arhats, and holy ones is to create good merit. This action becomes an offering to the holy beings and creates good karma. The better we can visualize purifying a place, the more it will purify our negativity. The action of purifying the place before invoking the holy beings brings a result such as rebirth in the pure lands, the realms of the enlightened beings. Pure lands are much higher than the lands we live in—there are no ugly objects, and when you take a step it is like walking on rubber beds, very soft, which reflect like a mirror. In a pure land none of the cooperative causes to generate a negative mind arise, only those that will decrease the negative mind. If you can visualize in this way, it will be very good. You should do so in order to create good karma for the purpose of enlightenment.

There is no doubt that the Enlightened Being knows this. But maybe we have doubt or skepticism, thinking, "Maybe this Enlightened Being doesn't even exist." If an action is done with skepticism, it will not be very powerful. The more faith we have, the more power our actions have to purify negativities. The enlightened beings are always with us. Not seeing God is not His problem, it is only our problem of not seeing. If we don't understand the nature of the mind that we have within us, how can we understand the enlightened mind?

"The place" can be seen as Guru Shakyamuni himself, just as all beings and ourselves can be visualized as Guru Shakyamuni through continual practice. Purifying the place creates good karma, especially if it is done before the invocation of the buddhas, making it beautiful for them.

Creating the best smell that we can through the offering of incense is creating good karma. This offering represents the reduction of miserliness, and purifies our attachment to things we designate as "best." In reality, of course, all things smell good to an enlightened being. But at the same time, passing wind in a place where there are enlightened beings, such as in a gumpa or a place where people are meditating, is considered a negative action.

INVOCATION (Page 13)

Invocation creates good karma and purifies negativity. You should do invocation when first moving into a new house and so forth. In these situations, you should first organize the house and fix it up, and then make the invocation. The same can be done for altars.

ECSTATIC PROSTRATING MEDITATION TO ONE THOUSAND EYES AND HANDS CHENREZIG (Page 14)

1. (a) The Vinaya Pitaka sets forth rules of conduct that counteract certain kinds of extreme conduct, such as (i) attachment to wealth and expensive possessions—clothes, cars, houses, and so forth, and (ii) attachment to individual possessions, such as one set of old clothes, a suitcase, a house, and so forth.

(b) The Sutra Pitaka sets forth rules of conduct that counteract certain kinds of extreme thought, such as independent existence.

2. When we make prostrations, if we are inner beings practicing the Enlightened Being's teachings, we should hold our hands together with the thumbs inside enclosed by the hands. This symbolizes holding a jewel. (There are two other ways to hold the hands.) Then touch the top of the head, the mouth or throat, and the heart to symbolize body, speech, and mind, respectively. The prostration of the body creates the good karma to receive the double crown protrusion of Guru Shakyamuni when we attain enlightenment.

When we prostrate to Chenrezig we create much additional good karma. One prostration to Chenrezig equals one thousand prostrations, and the resulting merits are that much more. Chenrezig's one thousand eyes represent one thousand buddhas and their great compassion. If we pray to this aspect of the enlightened form, which appeared especially to grant bodhicitta, we will find it very easy to contact, like a kind father.

Making offerings and prostrations is not only a practice intended for temporal beings. Even noble beings transform their bodies into many, each having many hands, heads, and eyes, and into the different realms where there are enlightened beings, and then make offerings and prostrations with each of these bodies, chanting prayers admiring the knowledge of the enlightened beings.

Although we do not have the power to make such transformations, we should think that if noble beings who have so many realizations do so, why shouldn't we? Those who can see their past and future lives and have attained psychic powers make such offerings to enlightened beings, creating merits through body, speech, and mind, and seeing this we should realize that it is very necessary that we should do likewise. Actually, we should engage in these actions even more than they do. We are supposed to be able to transform into different manifestations like these beings, yet we have deluded minds. We need very good fortune to have the ability to create good karma through making offerings and purifying; this ability is very precious and those who are able to do it are rare.

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3. (a) To prepare, begin by thinking that there is no self-existent "I," that your "I" is completely empty of the self-existent "I." This is no ordinary conception of "I." Simply think like that—even the conception of this "I" is empty. This "I" doesn't depend on the relationship of the body and mind; from the head down to the feet it exists nowhere, in no atom of the body. This conception is completely empty.

3. (c) Visualize countless buddhas of the past, present, and future in front of you, and all become one with Chenrezig. Imagine that there are that many Chenrezigs on each atom of the universe, as already visualized. That same number of you makes prostrations to each of these Chenrezigs—i.e., on each atom of the universe are countless past, present, and future buddhas in the manifestation of Chenrezig. The number of your bodies equal to the number of atoms in the universe makes prostrations to each of the Chenrezigs.

Why such a visualization? This is a method to create merit and to purify as quickly as possible. Higher beings actually have the power to transform into many thousands of manifestations, but as we do not have this power yet, we try to visualize like this. The more bodies we visualize making prostrations, the more good karma we create. We do not create good karma only through the physical action, however—making prostrations to trees and to dogs does not create good karma. We create good karma and increase our faith in dependence upon the object to which we prostrate—in dependence upon the infinite power and great knowledge of the enlightened beings. By the power of the object, it is in its nature to create good karma. Sometimes we might do samsaric prostrations, merely imitating someone. Instead, we should visualize this, thinking of the past, present, and future buddhas in the manifestation of Chenrezig on all the atoms of the universe. We should think like this as much as we can.

3. (d) Visualizing yourself in the aspect of Chenrezig, visualize the letter SHRIH. This is a seed syllable of the buddhas, representing the mind. Visualize this syllable letter at your heart. If you cannot visualize yourself as the manifestation of Chenrezig, then just think of yourself as making many offerings to many Chenrezigs. Imagine yourself carrying many offerings for Chenrezig's infinite happiness and enjoyment to each of the limitless Chenrezigs in front of you.

3. (e) Then make prostrations with the mantra. While doing this, you should visualize light entering your body from his holy body, purifying every one of your obstacles to receiving enlightenment. This is all visualized without the shunyata meditation.

3. (f) Prayer—then the Chenrezig in front of you enters your body through the head and comes to be seated at the heart. This visualization can be difficult at first but it becomes easier as the mind is trained.

3. (g) Then, from the Chenrezig at your heart, visualizing sending light out to all sentient beings, purifying all negativities and transforming their realms into pure lands. Pure realms are defined as such by the purified mind. A place that common people see as filthy can be seen as a transcendental, completely purified place that brings only transcendental happiness by the purified mind. This level of view is only created by the mind in accordance with its stage of development.

Again, visualize yourself as numberless, as having bodies as many as atoms in the universe. Think, “As many atoms as are in the universe equals the number of Chenrezigs, with my body in front of each of them, making prostrations.” This is simple.

This visualization is a bodhisattva practice. Maybe we talk more about this later when we do the mind meditation. You should visualize the central *nadi* or channel from your crown *chakra* down. After all sentient beings become Chenrezig within their pure land they are absorbed into the Chenrezig in your heart.

3. (h) Making the human life perfectly meaningful depends on actions of the body, speech, and mind. Therefore, you should pay attention before listening to explanations of the graded path. Listening should be meaningful in the Mahayana way—you should have the motivation thinking, “I am going to listen to explanations of the graded path only for the sake of sentient beings.”

AVALOKITESHVARA (CHENREZIG)

Chenrezig is an aspect of Buddha. There are many aspects of Chenrezig. If fortunate, great devotion may arise in relation to this deity.

I. How He Received Great Compassion

Chenrezig received his great compassion from his guru Buddha Rinchen Nyingpo, in his presence. In earlier times, Guru Shakyamuni prophesied that a being called Holder of the Great Eon would manifest after the number of eons equal to the number of grains of sand in the River Ganges passed, and in that place there would be a Buddha called Rinchen Nyingpo. He would liberate many millions of sentient beings, including insects, by showing Dharma.

At another time, Guru Shakyamuni was surrounded by trillions of arhats in the cities near a king's palace. The king went with many thousands of people to see this buddha, Rinchen Nyingpo, and to make prostrations and receive teachings. For three months he made offerings to this buddha. The king had thousands of sons, the eldest of whom was called Not Closing Eye, and this son also made offerings to this buddha exactly as his father did. In addition, a man of brahmin caste made offerings to this buddha for seven years, and he asked the king to generate bodhicitta. The king did so, and Buddha Rinchen Nyingpo prophesied that this king would later become the Buddha of Limitless Life in the realm called the Western Paradise. The son Not Closing Eye developed such great compassion for sentient beings, wishing to release them completely from suffering and from their negative mental delusions, and because of this Buddha Rinchen Nyingpo prophesied that he would become a buddha called Chenrezig, and that as a result of his compassion he would release hundreds of thousands of billions of sentient beings from suffering. Buddha Rinchen Nyingpo also prophesied that when that son became a bodhisattva he would work as a buddha, and when fully enlightened he would become Pagpa Gyalzig Kelpo, that his realm would become a pure land paradise, and that he would give many teachings to numberless sentient beings.

2. How He Works for Sentient Beings as a Past, Present, and Future Buddha

Countless eons before Chenrezig received enlightenment he was called Chokyi Ngawang, and due to his previous prayers and great compassion, he took the aspect of a bodhisattva many times in order to benefit sentient beings. This aspect of Buddha is the bodhisattva Chenrezig. There are so many other worlds where he gives Dharma as a bodhisattva, or as an arhat. Also he takes many different forms as it suits beings, to show them the Dharma and give teachings. For example, he may appear in the form of a god of the senses, a spirit, a leader of the army, and so forth.

Usually Tibet is admired as Chenrezig's realm on earth, but the story of why this so is too long to tell. All the Dharma Kings who established the Dharma in Tibet had the development of the Dharma as their main responsibility and are recognized as living bodhisattvas. Those of the lineage of His Holiness the Dalai Lama are recognized as incarnations of Chenrezig, including the present one.

The original Tibetan people are recognized as completely separate, of a different spirit, as unique in quality because of the Buddhadharmas coming to Tibet from Guru Shakyamuni and also because of the generations before. Long before the Dharma came Tibet was a very cold country with many jungles, inhabited by very wild people who ate human flesh. It was a very mischievous place of evil spirits, and people couldn't travel there safely. Then Chenrezig took the form of a bodhisattva

monkey in order to bring Dharma to Tibet, and the female aspect of Buddha, Drolma, or Tara, took the form of a female cannibal. They lived nearby together in rocky mountains, and had eight children of different shapes in the form of human beings. Although their blood came from these two deities, their minds came from the realms of samsara, under the control of delusion and karma. So the blood generation of Tibetan people is unique, recognized as a totally different race.

Guru Shakyamuni prophesied that Chenrezig would enlighten so many people in the northern land.

3. The Benefits of Making Paintings and Statues of Chenrezig

The benefits of making paintings and statues of Chenrezig are much greater than those of making ordinary paintings or statues, including images of any other Buddhas, and equal to those of making thousands of other buddhas. Similar benefits arise from meditating on Chenrezig. Also, Guru Shakyamuni said that so many other enlightened beings and enlightened beings realms are contained in each atom of Chenrezig's holy body.

4. The Benefits of Prostrating to Him and Reciting His Name and Mantra

The benefits of prostrating to Chenrezig and reciting his name and mantra are equal to the benefits of doing so in relation to all of the other buddhas. Chenrezig's mantra *OM MANI PEME HUNG* is very beneficial and has to be given at an initiation. It is the same with the visualization.

Also, when you prostrate and recite Chenrezig's name and mantra, it is important to remember their meaning and to visualize the aspect of Chenrezig. Doing so creates much good karma. If you have no idea to whom you are prostrating, just moving your physical body up and down, then it is only exhausting.

THE VISUALISATION OF GURU SHAKYAMUNI AND OTHER DEITIES

There are all kinds of different deities' bodies that can help one in the transformation to the pure land, which is a creation of our own minds.

The Visualization of Guru Shakyamuni (Page 17)

The purpose of doing this practice is to receive blessings and attain realizations, to discover. Visualizing Guru Shakyamuni and visualizing a rock or tree are two quite different things. If you can visualize correctly, the effect on your mind will be quite different. Just seeing a statue of Shakyamuni that symbolizes his great and infinite knowledge is quite different from seeing the picture of a beautiful man or woman because of the realizations he has attained. Merely seeing the statue makes the mind peaceful, calm, relaxed, well-controlled, and subdued. Even a picture gives a greatly different effect, there is a big difference in the vibration received. Actually there is no more beautiful form aspect than Guru Shakyamuni, there is no greater inexpressible knowledge of beauty that we can see. The great effect that we receive from seeing his picture, or a statue of his form, is the decrease of greed.

Guru Shakyamuni is not the sort of person who existed in past days and now exists nowhere, not seeing us; it is not like that. He sees us and we can see him. It is definitely possible that we can communicate and receive teachings from him, but this depends on the level of our obscurations, and

how strongly we do purification practice. We don't see our own mind and body, and it's not a problem of them not being there. This is something with us, but we don't realize it—that mind is obscured by ignorance. Of course, it is extremely difficult to see enlightened beings and communicate with them. Doing so is dependent on the blessings we receive, and our foundation of faith.

There are many instances of beings that received teachings from various deities. Tsong Khapa received the teaching on the absolute true nature from the aspect of enlightened wisdom, Manjushri, who granted this realization for the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings. In fact, Tsong Khapa received many teachings from Manjushri, and is himself thought to be the manifestation of the Buddha of Wisdom. His teachings on the absolute true nature are very clear, and very profound. He had so many followers—like stars in the sky. Many of them received realizations.

Now I will introduce the symbolic statues of Guru Tsong Khapa and two of his closest disciples who helped him a great deal. Both of his followers achieved all of the different levels of realization and completed the Dharma practice. Kedrup Je, because of his deep devotion, saw Tsong Khapa in five different manifestations. Gyaltsab Je was the substitute for the Dharma King; he cleared up misunderstandings in the teachings of Lama Tsong Khapa with logic, in debates. Before he met Tsong Khapa he lived in the lower part of Tibet and was already highly learned. When Tsong Khapa visited that place and gave teachings, Gyaltsab Je, thinking he might be more highly realized than Tsong Khapa, sat down on the same bed. Tsong Khapa took no notice and continued teachings. Then Gyaltsab Je checked up, and when he realized the purity of Tsong Khapa's teachings he moved and sat on a lower level. He later took teachings from Tsong Khapa himself, and after Tsong Khapa passed away Gyaltsab Je helped clear up any misunderstandings that remained.

Asanga, the highly realized pandit, tried to achieve a direct vision of Maitreya, who is the Buddha to come after Guru Shakyamuni, and who will descend from the pure realm of Tushita. Asanga the ascetic saint spent twelve years trying to attain the vision of this future Buddha. After the first three years he came down from his retreat, discouraged. Then he saw water dripping onto a rock into which it had worn a deep hole, and thought that if even water, which is not solid, can make a hole in a rock, how could it be possible not to achieve the realization of Maitreya, and went back. Three years later he came down again, discouraged, saw a man cutting a rock with a thread, and went back again. Three years later he came down again, saw a bird flying into a small cave, and saw that its wings had eroded the rock. He went back again. Three years later he came down again, totally discouraged, and saw a dog whose entire backside was an open wound, full of worms. He felt compassion, and wanted to remove the worms to help the dog but realized that doing so could cause the worms to suffer. Due to his great bodhicitta he made a strong decision, cut his own flesh and placed it on the side for the worms, and, so as not to injure them, bent down to remove them with his tongue. As he did so, the dog transformed into Maitreya. Asanga clung to Maitreya, and asked why he took so long to appear. Maitreya showed Asanga his robe and said, "I've always been in your cave; look where you spat on my body."

We see by this story that Asanga's obscurations were finally purified through the practice of bodhicitta, through caring for other beings more than oneself and thus purifying much negativity. As a result of his fundamental devotion and the deep purification he engaged in with such great bodhicitta, Maitreya asked Asanga what he wanted. Asanga asked for teachings, and, telling Asanga to hold on to his robes, Maitreya took him to Tushita Pure Land and gave him five divisions of teachings in one morning there, which is fifty years of our lifetime. Tibetans still study these

teachings—they are concerned with logic and practice, and also explain the absolute true nature of reality, the development of bodhicitta, and faith.

Once a mother sent her son to find relics of the buddha, but after looking everywhere he found nothing. Instead, on his way home he picked up a dog's bone and brought it to his mother. With much faith and devotion, she believed in that bone, and put it on the altar, made prayers, and made offerings to it and so forth. After some time, real relics began to come from that bone. That was a creation of her mind.

It is definitely possible to perceive Buddha—it is our own mental creation, a creation from within that arises from our own knowledge. Even ordinary knowledge doesn't come spontaneously from outside; it comes from school or university.

Prayers are very powerful and make sense. In order to understand and develop realizations, prayers are set up in each meditation. Before the prayer, begin by visualizing Guru Shakyamuni.

Guru Shakyamuni is seated on a sun, a moon, a lotus, and a throne. The space between the throne and the meditator, you, is equal to the length of the prostrated body, and it should be visualized at the height of your forehead. The bigger you can see it, the better, but the size that stays best in the mind depends on your level of mind. Guru Shakyamuni is smiling and his lips are cherry red. His eyes are thin, narrow, and long. They are very fine eyes, and he is crowned by the double knot. The image should not be visualized as a drawing but as a person, the body made entirely of light. All of the hairs on his head curl to the right and are dark blue in color—they are short but nicely curled. Each of these features is a sign of his holy body. Also, he has chakras or wheels on his feet, and when he walks on the earth he doesn't touch the ground but remains four inches above it. His robes, too, don't touch his body. Guru Shakyamuni has such a peaceful aspect that it dispels all negative mind straight away.

When Guru Shakyamuni was in the form of a bhikshu showing the Dharma to a great number of people, even those who didn't receive teachings but merely saw him were helped a great deal, and their minds were purified of negativity due to the power of his realizations. When Guru Shakyamuni looks at one person, even those who are standing behind him see him in the same way, and he sees everything that is happening all around. When Guru Shakyamuni was born as a prince, one of his relatives was sort of evil and wanted to kill him because he had so much power. Although Guru Shakyamuni walked so slowly, this person with the wrong realization, carrying weapons and chasing Guru Shakyamuni, running, was unable to catch him no matter how fast he ran. Guru Shakyamuni said, "You are running but not coming to me." This was his great control over ignorance.

GURU SHAKYAMUNI VISUALISATIONS

(1) Visualize Guru Shakyamuni's body absorbing into your body, and visualize your mind as one with his, as shunyata, emptiness like space, without "I." Concentrate on this for as long as possible.

Begin with the breathing meditation, then purify with the light from Guru Shakyamuni. Then concentrate your mind as above, without letting your mind and your superstitions disrupt your meditation. What disrupts you is your own negative mind. Also, those who are new to the meditation course can meditate on the other higher meditations, following the outlines and

amplifying the meaning through your own wisdom. The form is inner checking with yourself—most realization has to be attained by checking.

(2) Sleeping Meditation

Go to bed and lie down, and visualize Guru Shakyamuni in front of you sending light rays from his body. Think, “As I do not desire suffering, I should make my sleep virtuous for the sake of all sentient beings.” Light comes from Guru Shakyamuni into your body, which then becomes light itself, and all impurities are expelled. Then Guru Shakyamuni absorbs into you, and you become one with his holy body and mind, as space, with no self-existent “I” anywhere in this absolute true nature. Hold this visualization for as long as possible. This is very good practice for many things. During sleep you may dream—it is very good if you meditate in dreams, with the gross mind not arising much and the sincere mind arising. Then when you wake up, as soon as possible try to be in that state visualizing space—then Guru Shakyamuni appears, and you yourself are him. You should try to remember the last part of the sleep meditation.

During the day visualize yourself as Guru Shakyamuni and also visualize others around you in this way. This helps to destroy partiality, criticism, and judgment, which are all only functions of the negative mind.

OFFERINGS TO LORD BUDDHA

1. Offering Food

Check the mind when it sees food, see how it functions, and what is its personality. Then try to discern if there is any greed, if the mind is not peaceful.

(i) Wanting to enjoy the food, seeing beauty in it, being attached—this is greed, which always sees its object in beauty and craves temporal comfort. This is very difficult to recognize. Greed is a main cause of rebirth in the three lower realms and a major cause of our present suffering.

(ii) Also, we should check and see if we want to use this food with the self-caring conception of the self-cherishing mind by which we think more of ourselves than other beings—human, animal, or buddha—and by which we take most care of ourselves. This is the most subtle negative mind, and it is very powerful in its capacity to prevent us from attaining enlightenment.

These two negative minds are the main disturbances in our lives, and since we don’t want to experience suffering, we must destroy them. We should think, “Eating with greed and ignorance only makes me more greedy and ignorant, and is eating just like an animal. Since I am human my actions should be higher, and not like those of a dog eating kaka. Animals don’t check up since they have no wisdom; they just eat as quickly as possible before the food gets taken away by someone else, and it doesn’t matter to them if the other is more hungry or not. Therefore, I am going to make an offering of this food to Guru Shakyamuni, the essence of all buddhas, who is at my heart, that I may receive enlightenment by purifying all negativity.”

Visualize the sun, moon, lotus, throne, and Guru Shakyamuni at the heart, as beautiful as possible. The more beautiful, the better the karma. Then think that this food doesn’t belong to me, it is Guru Shakyamuni’s holy mind and belongs only to him. This is the most important thing—to make a

strong and clear decision that will have a great effect on the mind. Great Tibetan meditators recognize this sort of thing as the best puja—done in one’s own mind and body. As you do this meditation, don’t think of other things, but think that Lord Buddha has received infinite happiness from your offering, and when he is finished he sends the light of realization, power, and happiness to fill your body.

2. Offering Beauty

Whenever you hear a beautiful sound, or see a beautiful sight, offering it to Lord Buddha will greatly purify the negative mind.

3. Sleeping

When in bed, visualize Guru Shakyamuni and pray from the heart to receive enlightenment by purifying negativity.

Before the visualization is made you should think, “I am going to dedicate to receive enlightenment in order to help all sentient beings.” This makes your sleep different from that of animals and insects; it gives meaning to the human life so that it makes sense. Then visualize that light enters your body and that your mind becomes one in the nature of infinite space. Then try to sleep at that stage.

OFFERING FOOD

When taking food you should meditate to control the negative mind, to clean and purify it of rubbish with the broom and water of dedication, without being involved in samsaric practices. But it is not so good to purify sometimes and create negative karma at others, this way we are never finished. Therefore, the mind must be kept as clean as possible once it has been cleaned. The purpose of meditation is only to clean the mind, so there is no point if we continue to create negative karma once we have purified. Instead, we should try to create as much positive karma as possible. And if we meditate to purify we should meditate all the time—the less negative karma we create, the less purification we will need. We must have discipline when eating and drinking. In retreat every action—getting up, washing, and so forth—is done in conjunction with a meditation. The effects of this depend on one’s level of realization.

You should visualize yourself or your mind as one with Guru Shakyamuni, or else visualize him at your heart, then offer the food to him without attachment. When eating, think, “I must become free from all suffering, I must not be attached to these objects, this is not mine, I am offering it to him, it completely belongs to him.” Just as we don’t have much feeling for someone else’s ordinary possessions, we should try to feel the same way about the food. Strongly feel, “I am Guru Shakyamuni,” and give it to Guru Shakyamuni, thinking, “I am offering it to he who is infinite buddhas.” Don’t talk while eating; concentrate fully on Guru Shakyamuni and on giving him food. This lessens attachment, creates much good karma, purifies negativity, stops suffering, and brings you closer to him. Think that Guru Shakyamuni has received infinite happiness from the food and sends light to you so that your entire body is filled with it, from your head down to your feet, purified. His infinite knowledge dispels every single negative mind from you so that it exists nowhere, neither inside nor outside the body—like a light switched on in a dark room. This will help you to soon receive all his knowledge.

Before eating say the offering prayer. (Page 10)

When I'm on the mountain it is customary for people to bring food, so it is very useful to visualize it as kaka. This way the mind is so free, not attached, but relaxed. Sometimes the mind becomes one with the object, stuck to it, but visualizing kaka is most helpful to release one from attachment.

INTERFERENCES

When making puja, mystic, secret, and inner interferences appear in fearful forms like the images on some tangkas, but as light. These interferences appear as beings with wrathful aspects, outside and around each of us. Also, other interferences are invited, spirits who disturb the teaching: they cause different kinds of sickness and can disturb us and make our minds unhappy. Inner interferences are our delusions: greed, ignorance, and hatred. The secret interference that destroys Dharma is the impure view.

Interferences appear in the form of very wrathful beings surrounding us, and also around the edge of the country. An offering of nectar from the skullcup is given to them as a gift to fulfill all their wishes. Because of this, they vow to never harm the practice, to leave this place, cross the great ocean, and leave this earth. Their forms are like that of Yama, and are just to exemplify the different spirits that are karmically created by mind. "Yama" means those who disturb our success in Dharma practice. If we do this visualization with confidence it can be useful, because then we can think that there are no inner and secret interferences left to disturb our practice.

Ignorance, suffering, and so forth depend on one thing—our conception. If everyone recognizes a doctor as a person who can completely cure them, they will have full confidence in him, and that doctor can help them. But if someone is doubtful and skeptical of the doctor, a full cure might be difficult to effect. For this reason, having full confidence can be helpful.

The wrong conception is considered to be the secret interference in tantric practice. Stopping the secret interference depends on eliminating the inner interference and this depends on our study and listening to these teachings.

Since so much good karma from previous lives has brought this precious human rebirth, and it is our responsibility not to waste even one hour of it, this practice can also help many mother sentient beings, and also help the government, since we have bodhicitta motive. It is a widely beneficial action—it doesn't mean not working for the government, which is also a group of people.

VAJRASATTVA (DORJE SEMPA) MEDITATION

Visualize the deity above your head, facing in the same direction as you are, in the embracing posture with a body of white light upon moon and sun discs and a lotus. The body emits rays of light and nectar that drip down onto you like rain, purifying negativity, greed, ignorance, and doubt, and turning the body into light.

GREEN TARA

Tara, the female aspect of Buddha, possesses green and white forms. Green Tara encompasses all the power and great compassion of all buddhas. Remembering and praying to her constantly can help divert dangers and catastrophes.

Tara is especially effective in helping practitioners to gain realizations of the teachings, especially the teachings of bodhicitta through the method of exchanging oneself with others.

The green color of Tara's holy form symbolizes the granting of wishes and the symbolic purification of the defilements of envy and jealousy, as well as the purification of the ordinary impure aggregate of form. The fifth of the five transcendental wisdoms is the completely purified transcendental wisdom of the fulfillment of wishes. Her green color also symbolizes success in action.

Reciting her mantra and remembering her knowledge can bring success and realizations. Countless people who have faith in Tara have received the benefit of her blessings, including travelers of old that were pure practitioners. Within the Tibetan community, so many Tibetans have received great benefit from making prayers and pujas to Tara. Even family problems such as infertility and so forth can be overcome with Tara's assistance. One of her great qualities is that she grants the wishes of those who petition her very rapidly.

There is no way to receive enlightenment without receiving the realizations of the meaning of Tara's mantra.

OM refers to the Buddha's holy body, speech, and mind and the three *kayas* or bodies of a buddha. It also symbolizes release from temporal attachments the suffering of the three lower realms, release from samsaric attachment and cyclic existence in general, and the great release from the subtle obscurations, attachment to personal peace and liberation, and the thought of perfect happiness for oneself alone.

TARE symbolizes the release from temporal attachment and the suffering of the three lower realms.

TUTTARE symbolizes release from samsaric attachment and from samsara itself.

TURE symbolizes great release from the subtle obscurations, attachment to self-peace, and the thought of perfect happiness for self.

SOHA is said at the end of the mantra and enables the blessings of these syllables to take root in the heart, and to absorb and remain in the mind.

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YANLAG DUNPA: THE SEVEN BRANCHES (Page 31)

Usually, people in retreat say this prayer every day. This is the essential puja. The purpose of saying this prayer and meditating on its meaning is to purify, to lengthen the lifespan by stopping dangers, and to create infinite good karma without physical activity. This prayer contains so many meanings, and meditating on these meanings while saying the prayer creates good karma so powerful that it can never be destroyed by anger or heresy. Such is its power. It also purifies negative karma created

from beginningless lifetimes until now. Even high bodhisattvas engage in this practice. The effect of this prayer depends on your motivation and understanding.

1. The first of the seven limbs is prostration, the antidote to pride. Respect for a person is the remedy for pride. Pride is one of the worst negative minds. For instance, if you have pride in your own knowledge of some subject, and you think, “I know that,” pride causes you to feel that you don’t want to receive knowledge from others, that you don’t want to be told about anything. The person with pride never develops his wisdom.

Sometimes this kind of mental state can arise when listening to Dharma. You may think, “Why is he repeating this?” Pride also sometimes involves a negative form of shyness, the mind that is attached to the comfort of this life. This means having the kind of mind that just wants others to understand that you know, the mind attached to the reputation and to what other people will say, such as, “He’s clever, he knows this.” This is negative samsaric shyness.

A common Tibetan proverb says, “The nature of pride is like a glass turned upside down.” A person with strong pride is like this—nothing goes inside, and he will never become the receptacle of Dharma knowledge.

2. The second of the seven limbs is the limb of offering. (see Introduction to Prayers in these notes)

3. The third is the limb of confession. (see Introduction to Prayers in these notes, also page 78)

4. The fourth of the seven limbs is the limb of rejoicing. Rejoicing is the best remedy for jealousy and envy. Rejoicing does not depend on material or physical actions—it can be done while you are working, eating, or sleeping—it can be done at any time and it is such a simple way to create good karma. If a person has many friends and you feel joyous in your heart, that person is lucky. This result is due to the good karma he created in past lives. Having many possessions and children is the same. Seeing this, you should feel joyous in your heart. You may feel jealous of some couples, of their harmony and enjoyments—but you should think that this result is due to the fact that they created the cause for such experiences in past lives. So why shouldn’t they experience the result of enjoyment now?

Avoiding jealousy and envy and trying to feel joyful for others’ happiness creates much good karma. Feeling joy also keeps the mind at peace. If the mind is jealous and envious, you will feel very uncomfortable—like you have a big stone in your mind. But feeling joyful keeps the mind peaceful, without problems. Also, feeling joyful, you don’t create any bad vibrations or show any bad aspect to others—there is no confusion going on between you and the object.

You should also try not to feel jealousy or envy for anyone who meditates and studies the Dharma a great deal. Instead, you should try to feel joyful. When bodhisattvas see other beings receiving bodhicitta, their holy minds are extremely pleased, as if they have found a jewel. They feel very joyful that the other beings understand Dharma and are working for sentient beings due to karma. This kind of thinking keeps the mind relaxed, not bubbly like boiling water, and keeps peace between you and the other person. Judging other people exaggerates so much, and jealousy, envy, and putting people down creates so much bad karma. Whenever we see other people creating good karma we can always create good karma ourselves by feeling joyful. This keeps the mind happy, and creates infinite good karma as there are infinite numbers of ordinary beings. This is a very simple

way to purify and create good karma. The mind that rejoices for others' merits is always pure—it is something inside you that cannot be shown, creating good karma. There is no danger of having too many expectations from thinking like this, such as hoping that others will like you or having other desires for temporal rewards for the comfort of this life. The mind that is pleased that others create merit is always happy.

5. The fifth of the seven limbs is requesting the buddhas to remain in existence until samsara ends. The purpose of doing this is really to request our own purification, that we may receive the path. It doesn't imply that the buddhas will become non-existent. There are many different nirmanakaya or emanation bodies of the holy form of the buddhas—giving teachings, showing the path in many different worlds, and showing people the nature of suffering. When we request the buddhas to remain in existence, we request that these emanations will remain longer in that form, so that many other beings can take teachings. For example, if His Holiness the Dalai Lama didn't exist, then all the hundreds of realized beings in this world would be without guidance, especially in these times. Asking them to remain until samsara ends is a cause for our own purification, as well as a cause for us to continually receive teachings.

So when you are doing retreat, at this point in the practice you should offer from your heart a throne with a double vajra on the front (for longer life) and adorned with jewels to the nirmanakayas in order to make the conditions for yourself and other sentient beings to continuously receive teachings from them. This also becomes a cause for you to live longer.

6. The sixth of the seven limbs is requesting the buddhas to reveal the teachings. Here you should meditate that you are offering a golden wheel of Dharma from your heart to the visualization of Buddha. This is also purification. Stepping over Dharma books or pictures of Lord Buddha arises from great ignorance of Dharma, and is one of the worst things you can do, creating much bad karma.

7. The seventh limb is dedicating the merits. As grain burnt by the fire no longer has the power to produce any more seed, as the plants will become black, merits when dedicated become like the burnt grain—they cannot be destroyed by anger and heresy. Dedication of merits protects them from being destroyed by anger and heresy, which cause the greatest destruction, obliterating the existence of undedicated merits, delaying the results of even merits that have been dedicated. For instance, if a person in this lifetime creates much good karma but gets angry just before he dies, if he doesn't purify that, it will delay the arising of the result of his good karma. If, say, a person was about to realize bodhicitta, anger and heresy are the worst bad karmas preventing enlightenment. Don't let anger arise.

The perfect prayer must include impulse or motivation, action, and dedication.

THE MANDALA OFFERING (Page 23)

This is only a rough presentation of the mandala offering—this practice has other high meanings, but this is for now.

In the mandala, there is the universe—the sun, the moon, the planets, and the different worlds. Generally, there are many different ways to look at the universe. It cannot always be the same shape—according to different people's karma there are different ways of seeing it, and according to

the time it appears in different shapes. The shape cannot be exactly true, the same all the time—this is also according to the person's karma. Also, the universe is not something that permanently exists, it is possible for it to become empty. This earth, too, is just one world from that. This is also the way that enlightened beings are explained.

As there are four categories up, there are also four categories down. The suras are up, the asuras down, and sometimes they come up to fight. The main, principal cause of human rebirth on this earth is karma and ignorance. It is possible to be able to see these realms when we have developed high psychic powers. These realms are karmically created realms. The main description of these realms was given by Guru Shakyamuni, and also by ancient highly realized pandits. To be enlightened, one must have omniscient mind, seeing every place and so forth. These explanations were given in order to help us understand other beings' karma and how they live their lives when we meditate.

Besides this, we should meditate by offering the universe to the guru, the enlightened ones, to complete our realizations and purification. This is one of the wisest ways to practice, to gain higher realizations. Even those with highly developed powers make mandala offerings. It is one of the most vast and important ways to practice and create good karma, especially if you understand every aspect of the evolution of karma and how different beings live. We should practice like Naropa, whose main offering was in his mind—the symbol of the universe. This is such a great Mahayana tantric practice. Just after Tilopa threw the mandala in his face, Naropa saw the deity transformed by his guru in the sky. If he had not made that offering, his ignorance would never have allowed him see the deity, his guru.

Yesterday we talked about a mentally transformed offering, visualizing a universe full of jewels, and making the offering to the Guru Buddha from whom we receive enlightenment and perfect peace. As much as we can visualize, that much good karma we create. This is why the mandala offering is especially recognized as the best practice to do—the yogis consider it better the more times per day that the mandala is offered. In the last course we only did the short one—but maybe, if there is one person, it can be worthwhile. Offering the mandala is the most beneficial practice to purify the mind.

After you visualize the mandala as it is explained here (page 27), think that the outer mandala is the universe, and all your possessions are as explained. The inner mandala is the transformation of your body. All of your past, present, and future virtuous actions are offerings around Mount Meru. There are also the mystical, secret, and absolute ways to offer the mandala.

Mandala offering is very useful purification. Having visualized and offered the body, speech, and mind and transformed them into the inner mandala and all existence in the universe into the outer mandala, offer it to Guru Shakyamuni and think that it belongs completely to him—everything, including friend, enemy, and stranger in our world. This will bring peace in your environment, for oneself and others, and it will equalize and subdue the partial mind that creates friend, enemy, and stranger. World peace will never come about until the partial mind is eliminated.

We should think that all sentient beings have been friend, enemy, and stranger in countless former lives, are so at present, and will continue to be in future lives as long as we have partial, discriminating minds and are not free from samsara. Besides offering all possessions of the universe, we are also offering every enemy, stranger, friend, and all beings, and our body, speech, and mind to

Guru Shakyamuni. Whatever is ours we completely give and dedicate to him, and as it all belongs to him, how can we be attached? These things are definitely not ours; they are his. The success of this practice depends on the mental decision.

As Guru Shakyamuni used his holy body, speech, and mind to fulfill his wishes, now our body, speech, and mind should only be used for the same purpose. Also, as we have completely dedicated enemy, friend, and stranger to Guru Shakyamuni, we cannot make sentient beings our enemy or get angry with any of them, as they are his possessions. How can we get angry? If we kill a Nepalese person it is like we are hurting the King of Nepal because they are his population, so harming any enemy, any sentient being, is completely opposed to Guru Shakyamuni's wishes. It is like telling a lie. As the buddhas brings all sentient beings to enlightenment and release them from suffering and the negative mind, his wish is for us to do the same, to enlighten all beings from suffering. So how can we bring them suffering? In the same way, how can we be attached to any sentient being—the present friend in the southern world to whom we are now attached, or to any beings at present in other realms, as we may live together with them in the future. This is a very shameful habit, to offer them, yet be attached to them. We cannot be attached to them as we are responsible for fulfilling his wishes to release sentient beings from suffering.

It is very effective for the mind to think like this. If we are attached to them, they also become attached to us, and this, too, is against his wishes. To release all sentient beings, to enlighten them, first we ourselves must attain enlightenment and release ourselves from negative minds. If we are to bring this about, we must not be attached.

Then, as we offer, we visualize Guru Shakyamuni accepting our offering and we see the entire offering absorb into his heart, as if it had been given into his hand. Then we visualize light shining from him and absorbing into our own bodies, and all the negative interferences that stand in the way of the practices from guru devotion up until enlightenment are purified, and I receive every realization.

We should not offer money to the sangha that has been raised by wrong means, such as money that has been raised from the sale of holy books, statues, and so forth. This creates bad karma, degenerates wisdom, and builds ignorance.

Outer Mandala (Page 33)

The practice of offering the outer mandala is the practice of offering the universe without transforming oneself, and without the details of the inner mandala practice. In this practice, we offer the mandala as it is.

Mount Meru is not the kind of mountain that we can see, such as the Himalayas. It is in a different category, on a different level. The gods of the senses live here—in the sura realm. We can't see these levels with our human bodies, and without a great deal of control, but we have been born in all of these levels in the past. If the appropriate psychic powers are developed through meditation in this lifetime we can make a trip to these places. Mount Meru is karmically created, as is the world of form.

Inner Mandala (Page 38)

Although we say the prayer at certain times, we should not regard this as a job lasting a few hours. Our minds should live in the meaning of the prayer all the time. It should be said in such a way that we feel release, a weight off the mind. We should make this offering from the heart. It is best if done for a day, each day.

We make the decision to give up attachment to the negative minds of ignorance, greed, and hatred. We give them to Guru Shakyamuni and to the other enlightened beings, and we should think that they now belong to them and are no longer ours. Therefore, we cannot feel attached or averse to them. All of our possessions should be visualized in the form of the mandala. A strong decision makes the best mandala.

To “give up” doesn’t mean actual separation from body and mind, for then one ceases to exist, but means giving up the attachment from the heart. This is the most important thing. These things are no longer mind, they are offered to the enlightened beings in the same way that we would sincerely give something to a friend. Then, as the enemies, strangers, and so forth now belong to Guru Shakyamuni, we must take good care of them.

If the mandala offering is made in the morning, it can be remembered if problems arise during the day. The mind is strong and conscious, and we can’t get angry at anybody. It belongs to Guru Shakyamuni. Nor can we become attached to gifts or anything else, and if we do so we should feel positive shame.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT IMPULSE (Page 43)

The nature of the impulse is what determines the nature of one’s meditation; for perfect meditation the impulse must also be perfect. If dirty water is used to make tea, the tea becomes dirty. If the water is chemically purified its taste is spoiled, so again the tea is not perfect. If dirty water is used to prepare food, so does the food become dirty. As the water is important here, so is the impulse is important for Dharma practice in determining whether actions will be virtuous or not. If the impulse is impure, our meditation can become the cause of suffering and confusion. Therefore, to avoid wasting time and life we should take care to prepare our impulse well. Carelessness results in confusion.

Preparation and impulse is more important in Dharma work than in temporal jobs. In the latter, we may be late and get fired as a result, but this may make no difference in obtaining another job. Non-virtuous meditation, however, can cause problems even in this lifetime, so the impulse must be as pure as possible.

Why do we care if it’s virtuous or non-virtuous? Because, if we check up inside ourselves, we find that the purpose of our actions, such as taking this meditation course, for example, is to find some deeper happiness. This means that our actions are done with the expectation of happiness. No sentient being, including us, desires suffering. But the bodhisattva experiences suffering for the benefit of all sentient beings. Most of us do not wish to experience suffering for ourselves, let alone for all sentient beings

Therefore, the solution is to seek the cause of happiness. In order to do this it is very important to try to recognize the cause of suffering. Wanting happiness yet still creating the cause of suffering is

like being a blind man walking towards a precipice. Numberless beings even now are in great suffering, just as that blind man is.

Most people think that the cause of suffering lies on the material level, being related to the presence or absence of material possessions. But this external method never causes problems, and has itself always to continue.

Food, for example, is not the principal cause of happiness or suffering. It can fill the stomach yet bring diarrhea. If it were the principal cause of happiness it should always bring happiness, and never change to suffering, and yet this never happens. We can eat cake, believing it to be the principal cause of happiness, but we get bored after only three or four days. This is the nature of the mind that finds pleasure at first and suffering afterwards. These feelings are merely a creation of the mind. Thus, such external methods are not the principal causes of happiness.

The real principal cause of happiness is such that as much as one creates it one will always have it. It is that which is in the mind, that which can be mental. Similarly, the principal cause of suffering is also mental. The cause of happiness is virtuous action, and the cause of suffering is non-virtuous action. The creator of the actions of body, speech, and mind is the impulse.

At the moment we can see only two different forms of sentient beings, but there are many other kinds of beings that we are unaware of in different realms that we cannot see. Some of these living beings can see us. Different people and places are seen in different ways, with different feelings by each person. We should check up to see what makes the difference, what causes it. Then perhaps we will understand how some people see these different beings.

In Tibet there was a very famous holy statue formed by one miraculous bodhisattva. Every day it was very crowded by many people coming to make offerings and receive blessings. Yet one person saw a dog instead of the statue. This shows that there was something wrong with his mind. In its nature, mind is clear in perceiving objects, so there was something wrong with his power of mind—we say this is lack of fortune. Fortune is built up by the creation of many positive, virtuous actions; the creation of many negative actions affected the mind of the pilgrim such that he could not see the holy statue. Another example of mental obscurations created by evil actions is the mind of the person who, attending teachings given by a lama who had a large pile of texts in front of him, only saw the lama eating from a large pile of meat.

There are many other types of beings in the world, and we should not limit our understanding of them. There are essentially six different types in the uncontrolled cycle of death and rebirth, the cycle of samsara. Samsara is created by ignorance, and ignorant actions. We are included amongst the samsaric beings. The six different realms are divided into three upper (sura, asura, human) and three lower (animal, preta, narak), and all beings are living in ignorance, in this cycle of samsara.

We should think, “I must receive enlightenment only to help release other suffering beings, besides myself, from samsara. In this way I will meditate.”

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MEDITATION ONE: CHECK IN AND CHECK OUT (page 46)

“Checking in” is the inner method to discover the negative mind, which we must fully recognize as the creator of suffering by understanding its wrong views. “Checking out” is done after checking in, when the outer objects and wrong views are more easily recognizable. Then we can find the solution to the problems between subject and object, and the answer to conflicts. If these are not found, more problems and conflicts will arise.

Making the mind positive and holy depends on our recognition of the negative evil mind that makes the person evil, and of the false object in which the negative mind believes. Without recognizing the creator of the negative evil mind and its object, there is no way to make the mind positive and holy. Without recognizing and avoiding the false object created by the negative relative mind there is no way to see the true positive object and its absolute nature.

Each person has a negative mind and a positive mind, but there is only one object. If the person sees it with the negative mind he sees it falsely. To be holy depends on the creation of the positive mind, the mind that sees an object in its true nature, as it exists in fact, and to see it like this depends on recognizing the negative mind and its object, created relative to self, as both false. Through this process we can avoid the negative mind and cultivate the positive; this is the way to become holy and to cut off problems.

The solution to problems does not depend on destroying the object and making it non-existent. For example, if we have a thorn in the flesh and we suffer, finding the thorn ugly, the problem is not solved for all time by completely destroying the existence of the thorn—by burning it and so forth, because we can always get another thorn in the flesh at some other time and place. The external solution is not true because it doesn't help externally.

(i) Before this earth even existed we experienced great suffering from thorns and even in the future we will continue to have problems with external objects. To destroy a thorn at one place doesn't make all the earth's thorns non-existent.

(ii) Also, the external solution doesn't destroy the relationship between our suffering now and that of the future.

For example, the enemy is hated, I don't want him as the object of my view. This negative mind of anger is created by ignorance, so I kill the enemy with the wrong belief that he will never be my enemy again. But he can be reborn, as an animal, for example, and become my enemy. Killing the enemy in this lifetime is nonsensical because that enemy will continue to be my enemy again in many lifetimes. All this gives me great suffering—this one negative action keeps me in ignorance longer, and holds me in the cycle of death and rebirth for so many eons. As long as I keep myself in the suffering realms, further ignorance is always produced. So his becoming my enemy is my fault, not his, for I keep myself in the prison of ignorance—samsara.

Ignorance, greed, and anger produce problems. Ignorance produces greed and anger and is the cause of all suffering. No problem can ever be ceased until we are released from ignorance, so the whole problem is only our own fault. Even killing all enemies or totally destroying a particular place will never bring a final solution. Ignorance only causes more problems; it never cuts off the problem. Actions done with ignorance are never checked in and checked out. Checking with ignorance creates greater and longer lasting problems; it never ends, always cycling round and never bringing any solution.

A solution is the complete cutting off of the problem between the object and the subject, and cessation of the negative mind that is the creator of suffering. To bring about such a perfect solution we should check in—examine the causes—ignorance, greed, and hatred, and the way they think. In this way we can realize which object is true and which is not. With right understanding we can develop the positive mind, and through this all problems can be ceased.

The cessation of negativity composes much of the subject of Dharma. Without checking in, we always make mistakes—no solutions, just problems. And checking out depends on checking in.

NOTES ON THE NEGATIVE MIND

The essential Guru Yoga practice is to receive realizations that lead to enlightenment. This is like fuel for a rocket. Disciplines are the main thing: when we eat food, when we go to bed before sleep, we should have the discipline of meditation, a discipline for the mind. The main purpose of meditation is to clear the mind of negativity and impurity, therefore we should meditate at many times. In this way the sick mind can be cured—if it didn't depend on each person's effort it would not be possible, therefore each must meditate for himself. Also, realizations cannot be transplanted, and the only way they can be received is through following a method based on discipline, based on our own efforts, just as Guru Shakyamuni did by following the methods of the past buddhas. After him countless beings practiced correctly and attained enlightenment. Therefore it is possible for us. All buddhas were sentient beings, suffering and so forth at one time. The difference between them and us is that they practiced the teachings correctly and so became enlightened more quickly.

The mind that enjoys eating food, drinking tea, putting on clothes, and so forth is a negative, greedy mind, wanting to enjoy comfort and temporal happiness by seeing objects in beauty. For example, think about peanut butter in Nepal. The loose mind sees it and goes off—we don't check, we just let the mind act as it wants. The person doesn't recognize the character of his own mind. We must check and bring the mind back. Besides being greedy, the mind that sees the object in beauty and wants to enjoy it for reasons of comfort is a selfish mind, taking more care of itself than of other beings.

Greed is the creator of all suffering. Also, it builds up even greater ignorance. The greedy mind leads to greedy actions and makes the person more ignorant. Greed is the servant of ignorance: if a person helps greed, he helps ignorance. Greed comes from ignorance, from the unknowing mind. Fundamentally it arises from wrong mind, a mistake. Branches of greed and hatred arise too from wrong mind. They are like a sick person's possessions. Nobody wants to touch the body or belongings of someone who is sick with an infectious disease like T.B. And yet the sickness is in his mind, related to the physical body, and not in his possessions. The suffering result comes back on a person's self—he is suffering in mind and physical body. So we make disciplines to control the branches of the negative mind and to stop suffering. We practice Dharma, and follow disciplines.

The whole purpose of all people and animals who seek solutions to problems or ways to avoid problems is to not suffer. If the cause of suffering is not ceased the fear continues. The cause cannot be ceased by way of good food or beautiful apartments. Even the richest family in the world has no solution to suffering. All are still ignorant of the recognition of suffering and its cause; they do not know their nature. Correct Dharma practice and meditation will stop both the general suffering that is experienced now, and also that which is to be experienced in the future.

Some people, wealthy and others, think that Dharma practice is only for the poor—for beggars and so forth, or that Dharma and meditation are only for the “crazy.” Such people do not know the meaning and purpose of Dharma and meditation. They think that it is merely a custom or something. Even if they’re in a place where Dharma exists they don’t come due to ignorance. They think that because they have wealth, a house, wife, friends, and so forth, they don’t suffer. They think of suffering as disease, injury, or starvation, not recognizing the nature of suffering. But this is not the definition of suffering, and they continue to suffer in their minds.

Suffering is not knowing the evolution of actions, of cause and effect, the difference between negative and positive actions. Not recognizing these or our own ignorance is suffering; so too is not recognizing the nature or character of our own mind. The ignorant person’s concept of suffering is, “One day things are okay, and another day there are problems.” From the Dharma point of view, freedom from suffering is freedom from ignorance.

The basis of world politics is greed, hatred, jealousy, pride, and so forth. The basis of Lord Buddha’s politics is to prevent the branches of the negative mind from arising.

When we eat, we should visualize the heart inside, and think, “I shall make this food offering to him who lives at my heart, for me to receive enlightenment by completing all the virtues which lead to enlightenment, and by interrupting all negative mind with the total aim of guiding all sentient beings to enlightenment. Furthermore, if I eat this with greed and selfish mind it only strengthens this greedy, selfish mind, which disturbs happiness and the path to enlightenment. The nature of all this food is Buddha’s sacred mind, and it does not belong to me, but to him.” Remember the shortcomings of greed. The object is to decrease greed, so one must be detached from the food

When there is trouble with the body there is trouble with the mind. A clean body does not result in a clean mind, but a clean mind does result in a clean body.

Lord Buddha said, “The enlightened beings do not purify the negativity of sentient beings by washing with water, nor are they cleansed by hand. Neither is it possible to transplant the realizations of enlightened beings.”

So how can sentient beings purify the negative mind? Everyone can be released from suffering by seeing the absolute true nature. All the meditations and disciplines we practice are for the purpose of fully realizing the absolute true nature. To do so, we need a lot of help, much purification, much cleaning. All meditations and disciplines are for the purpose of purifying the obscurations of the mind. To see the absolute true nature is the method to cut off ignorance, and through one’s own mental practice perfect happiness will arise.

We should not talk too much as this distracts the mind—for example, if we talk while trying to listen to a lecture. Similarly, if we talk when we eat we forget to notice the taste of the food. Attention to this strengthens the concentration, and brings us closer to enlightenment. It stops selfishness and greed from entering the mind. Such discipline must continue until the mind is purified, not just for the duration of this course.

Shantideva said, “If one wants sour fruit to taste sweet, it is of no use pouring syrup onto the ground near the tree.” Similarly, as the negative mind has been obscured by many delusions for

numberless previous lives, it cannot be purified by practicing for only a month or a year. Much time is required, because the negative mind has no beginning. It is an incredible job, but the most profitable job there is. A crippled beggar who practices Dharma is actually doing the best work. He is the truly rich man. We must not cling to the negativity inside.

We need a guru to receive enlightenment. When listening to him we can question, but listening while waiting for mistakes is listening with a negative mind.

THE WRONG VIEW: SAMSARA

The reason we are still in samsara is that from beginningless time we have had the wrong conception that causes the wrong view that sees the suffering realms as realms of pleasure and happiness. This view has betrayed us, showing samsara as opposite to its true nature. We must avoid seeing greed as good.

Medicine, food, and clothing should be used without attachment, to keep the body healthy and give a long life for the purpose of the pure practice of Dharma. We should also regard the body without attachment, as a temporary dwelling place, and so look after it. Deep understanding and fear of the suffering realms will stop us from using these things as temporal comforts. As we feed an animal to make it healthy and strong for work, so we should feed our bodies, to use it for Dharma practice.

Usually as we feed, clothe, or regard the body we feel, “This is me,” as if it’s a permanent possession to be had forever. This view is the greatest hindrance to the realization of impermanence and this conception leads to greater attachment to the body. The feeling of permanence deep in our hearts blocks the ability to see objects and oneself in their true nature. If we realize impermanence we see all objects as such—changing every second, and this changes the mind from negative to positive, stops us from wasting time, and gives us more time for the practice of Dharma. For example, one Tibetan meditator’s cave had thorns outside. He was meditating on impermanence, and as a result when he went outside he thought he might not live to return, so he didn’t waste time cutting the thorns that caught him. The same thing happened as he returned inside. For years he didn’t cut those thorns, and spent more time meditating.

Working and living for our own temporal comforts and enjoyments alone is leading a life like an animal.

The concept of “world peace” depends on war, control of other countries, destruction of property, the use of force, and so on—the complete opposite of Dharma peace. The former has no end, but the latter does have one. Trouble and happiness do not exist by themselves—they are concepts of the mind.

Illusions are gross (as in delusions) or subtle (as in subtle superstitions). The views of the negative mind are non-existent, the objects it sees are illusions—it is an illusive view, the objects are false, non-existent. It is all false or illusive mind; the creator of that view sees the false object as existent. After delusions and the gross negative mind cease, the subtle illusions, the subtle superstitions, which are tiny impressions of the delusion, still remain. After these cease the mind is completely pure, enlightened. It is easier to cease the gross delusions. An arhat has done this, but is not yet fully enlightened due to the subtle impressions of delusions that remain.

The mind purified of delusion is free from ignorance and the twelve links. But it still has subtle obscurations and goes to a pure land where there is no death and rebirth. Here the mind receives enlightenment by following the higher path. Some are there with ignorance, not following the bodhisattva's path, and without bodhicitta, but have other realizations. They then have to destroy illusions by following the bodhisattva's path. Even though they are out of samsara, without bodhicitta they cannot become enlightened.

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THE EIGHT FREEDOMS AND TEN ENDOWMENTS

The Eight Freedoms (Page 46)

The eight freedoms are also sometimes termed the eight “rests”—the human is “resting” from these restless states. We may be born in one of the second four and the situation changes to a perfect human rebirth.

The Ten Endowments (Page 47)

1. The first of the ten endowments is birth as a human being. But this is not enough: check how many humans lack the other endowments.

2. The second of the ten is being born in a religious country, which means a country in which Buddhism is present. If we are born in a place where there is no Buddhism, it means that there are no fully ordained monks, and therefore we cannot become ordained. Ordination is a discipline for the mind at a high level. In Tibetan we say *dom pa*, which means protecting the mind from negative actions, keeping it away from delusions, freeing the mind. This is a quick and profitable way to practice Dharma and reach enlightenment. As the number of monks increase, so the teaching of the Dharma increases.

In the center of a religious country there are people—monks and nuns—keeping the different levels of ordinations and precepts. This enables us to practice morality, as these are the people who grant the ordinations. We are extremely lucky to be born in a country where there are such people. Some may think that this has nothing to do with them, that it's only a tradition or custom, but the person who receives ordinations is very fortunate, because keeping the different precepts is a quick way to be led to enlightenment and freed from suffering. People who observe such precepts are in the safest place; it protects them against the outside enemies and their harmful actions, like a protective fence surrounding them. The enemies are outside interferences and dangers, and the ordinations protect from these. If we go outside and break the ordination, there are too many problems. If we have no fence then there is no protection from danger, and it is so easy to be disturbed by living beings, elements, and so forth. Ordination protects us from ignorance, and creates positive action.

3. The third freedom is being born with perfect organs.

4. The fourth is avoiding the five inexpiable sins. Avoidance of the five inexpiable sins is necessary for ordination. The deaf can't hear the teachings or the sound of Dharma—there is much suffering, and no freedom. If one is born with an ugly body, no one will like it. One cannot be ordained. The extreme negatives are very difficult to purify. An arhat is one out of ignorance, who doesn't himself

suffer from death, but it creates very bad karma for the killer; the tathagata has full realization of absolute truth, and there are different levels of tathagata.

5. Fifth, if you are born with no belief in the three divisions of the teachings, you cannot develop your wisdom. Realizations depend on the complete understanding and practice of those teachings. Within the three divisions, Abhidharma contains the explanations on the evolution of the universe, both about the mind and the outer universe. Sutra explains much about the path and the absolute true nature of reality. Vinaya gives the details of the precepts and ordinations, the necessity of taking them, and many other things.

6. Sixth is being born during a non-dark period. This is a non-dark period because there are still highly realized beings in the world who have the continued lineage of the teachings from Buddha.

7. Seventh is being shown the teachings of Buddha or his followers.

8. The eighth is the existence of the experiential teachings in the world. Our present gurus have received the teachings from other gurus back to Guru Shakyamuni continuously, without a break in the lineage. The Tibetan Dharma practitioners look upon the present teachers as representatives of Guru Shakyamuni. If there is no existence of the experience of the teachings in the minds of beings, then something is missing—it is not enough for the teachings alone to exist; there must be realized beings.

9. The ninth is following the path of Buddha's teachings. We must follow the path of Buddha's teachings as our future enlightenment is only a creation of our own mind, and so our suffering is the same. There would be no suffering for all sentient beings if there were no reason for it, but all suffering is a creation of the mind. It is important to know this at the beginning. Without looking for ourselves we will not find the solution to our problems for hundreds of eons. Yet as sentient beings become their own worst enemy they can also become their own best friend and helper. Through the purification of the mind, each human being can achieve enlightenment—the time it takes depends entirely on the person. Enlightenment is a creation of each being's own mind. If suffering were not our own creation there would be no need to create our own enlightenment—but there is no suffering that is not a creation of mind, and if we don't try from our side we shall not find the solution to our problems.

However, when we try to perform positive actions there is often much interference from the negative mind. That is why there are fewer holy beings than non-holy beings. It is difficult to be a holy person, with peace in the mind, the mind well-subdued, because there are so many disturbances to our good actions. So today, a short method to be able to prevent those interferences as much as possible is to practice and talk about Dharma. As we have more negative than positive minds, so that much easily the outside interferences can disturb us. Our negative minds interfere in the development of our Dharma practice. Even outside evil spirits and non-living outside interferences such as elements afflict us. But when there is pure positive mind, there is no way that interferences can disturb us, because these things themselves arise from the negative mind.

Consider two countries, India and China for example, who want to create war. India had some kind of negative aim towards China—they wanted to get some goods—so they put a bridge across the border. Then they had a disagreement and because of the bridge the Chinese were able to cross easily and cause many problems. So the bridge that was fixed by the Indians for that negative reason

now causes the great problem of war. If those negative aims hadn't been there, there wouldn't have been the bridge, and there wouldn't have been the problem. This is an example of how the negative mind creates problems. None of the interferences are the fault of the interference itself, but are only a creation of the negative mind, which makes the passage through which we receive interference.

Each topic in Dharma practice is correlated. This is why it is such a vast, profound, and deep subject. There are two perfect guides. One is internal—who you become, and one is external—the one who gives you the teachings. The outer guide is the causal guide, and the inner guide is the resultant guide. When we talk about an enlightened one we should not think that we are talking about something separate from ourselves. It is within.

10. The tenth of the ten endowments is receiving the kindness and compassion of others. We must have a compassionate guru, and someone to help with food, clothes, and so forth. In Tibet the practitioner's life was easy as far as begging goes, because all the people greatly respected anybody who observed the precepts. Some benefactors gave food with faith and others with compassion, so there were no distracting problems of temporal needs. In most parts of the world this is more difficult.

So there are the chances to practice Dharma.

The purpose of meditating on these eight freedoms and ten endowments is to experience the suffering of these unhappy states, to feel beyond words, and to understand what it is to be a heretic—to see how ignorant we are, and what bad karma we can create. There is no such definite suffering as that of the narak realms—in these realms is as if the earth itself were made of red-hot burning iron with no escape and no control. In the cold hell it is as if we are on an ice foundation; the body is one with either fire or ice.

So we can discover how precious and useful the perfect human rebirth really is, to help us to understand and develop the mind, and to escape from suffering. The human birth has great freedom compared to the other states. And we can see how lazy we are, following ignorance. Even if we receive the teachings, we don't follow them.

This meditation destroys laziness. We can prepare to not be born in these states. It gives an answer to the question of the purpose of the human life—its great freedom to practice Dharma and to escape from suffering.

It is important to see the benefits of the human rebirth so that when we come into contact with the teachings we use them and are not lazy. Therefore, this meditation comes first. If we don't understand the sufferings of other rebirths, laziness will stop us from using the method. The Enlightened Being's method is like this—it stops many dangers with the discovery that this present human birth is extremely precious. We can gain enlightenment and escape ignorance. This is the technique of such highly realized pandits as Nagarjuna and Tsong Khapa; this is their method.

Meditating on the eight freedoms and ten endowments is not just counting numbers—it has great purpose. By realizing the previous examples we come to realize the value of the human rebirth. If we don't know about these lower realms then we don't see the importance of this human realm. This is due to our lack of checking with wisdom, not realizing the mental state of the beings in other realms, and deep ignorance.

We should check up and feel pleased—if we can sacrifice our lives for our possessions, why can't we work for all sentient beings who have served and helped us since beginningless time? We should check up and feel joyful for as much as we have. And we should prepare to receive whatever is missing in the future—we should create good karma so as to be reborn with perfect organs for the development of Dharma practice. During our meditation time we should remember it all.

In this meditation we should feel joyful for our perfect human rebirth. Then in the true dharma way we should take care of it and not waste it. On this basis we can develop Dharma practice, and without it there is no possibility of following the true path. It was from this basis of the perfect human rebirth that the great yogis such as Milarepa gained enlightenment.

THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH: HOW IS IT USEFUL? (Page 47)

When we really check up to see how useful the perfect human rebirth can be, we see that it stops the ignorance of using our lives as if we were animals. We should also compare our precious human rebirths to the lives of those humans who can't practice Dharma. It is a sad thing to consider an animal born as a human.

The selfish mind suffers from the self-caring conception based on the delusion of the false self. This ignorant, impure mind prevents everlasting happiness. These mental hindrances must be destroyed—samsaric happiness cannot be everlasting. The clever person does not care for the present, small suffering because he knows that the future suffering is great. But the future cannot happen without the present suffering. Greed, ignorance, and hatred are not useful, even for a moment—this is the most important thing to realize. Kaka is better than chocolate since it doesn't create greed and negative mind, and so is less of a hindrance to existence.

The great yogi Milarepa, Guru Tsong Khapa, and other ascetic lamas lived in the essential practice of Dharma by begging, under great temporal difficulties, before their powers were well developed. But they got great energy from understanding the nature of ignorance, which causes suffering. Also, by taking themselves as examples, they understood great numbers of other beings. They renounced their own greed, ignorance, and hatred, and had the great will to clear out their own negativities. In this way their compassion became energetic—the knowing of their own suffering to understand that of others—and so they could help other beings more quickly.

Temporal illnesses will continue to arise while the person is concerned only with these—we should control the future great suffering by eliminating ignorance. For the great yogis, each time a mental or physical temporal trouble arose, it helped their realizations and practice, since they deeply understood the cause as rooted in ignorance, which they further tried to control. Instead of feeling hatred towards other people, they would feel it towards their own ignorance, the enemy.

The Reasons the Perfect Human Rebirth is Highly Useful

1. The perfect human rebirth is highly useful because this is our chance to end the round of samsara and end all the mental sufferings and worries that we don't desire. Yet still we keep on suffering as we have been from beginningless time. We often think that this suffering is new, but this is only due to our lack of understanding—each experience of suffering has no beginning, yet still we haven't stopped it completely. We have always had imperfect births, births in irreligious countries where

there is no Buddhadharmā, thus creating more bad karma. So this time, having attained the opportunities of the eight freedoms and ten endowments, we have the possibility to extinguish suffering because we have so much freedom to practice Dharma. This is the life with the chance we didn't have before—as this life we have the freedom to break the continuity of suffering.

If there was no suffering mind there would be no suffering body. Through Dharma practice we work to stop suffering by realizing the absolute nature of existence. This is the meaning of life, the reason we are born human having the freedom to practice Dharma. This is why we do the meditation course, this is why we came here from the West. An airplane is used for flying in space, not in the jungle or in bushes. The perfect human rebirth has been created by past lives for the same purpose and it is now in our hands to do it, it is up to us, the pilots of our perfect human rebirths.

We are trying to figure out how to best use our lives. Like traveling to America, how quickly you go depends on expenses; the time it takes to reach enlightenment depends on your will and the strength of your practice. The fewer mistakes in the practice, the shorter the time—but the practice must be pure, for purity is its foundation.

Different levels of realization are created by practices such as circumambulating. A variable amount of good karma is produced depending on the person's understanding. Going around a blessed holy object creates good karma even for one of low understanding because the object itself is associated with the holy minds of so many buddhas to guide sentient beings and to allow them to create good karma. This is especially true when considering famous stupas such as that in Bodhgaya—many highly realized beings become associated with it, having invoked and blessed it, and such blessings stay with it and can help purify negativity and create good karma. Such objects remain holy until the earth is destroyed. And even without pure impulse one can create good karma by circumambulating these precious holy objects because of the power from the object's side.

There are so many ways to create good karma, but without understanding the Dharma they cannot bring quick enlightenment. Any action done with the expectation of comfort for this life is negative. This is the greed that is to be destroyed by this meditation, and is the purpose of this meditation.

The student of one guru, with strong will and faith, freely cleaned around the guru's house for many years. Due to this good karma he achieved enlightenment, despite difficulties in receiving teachings.

2. Also, in this lifetime, even if we do not attain enlightenment, we can become bodhisattvas and gain psychic powers to see beings of many past and future lives. According to the level of realization, we can help in the realms of many sentient beings by transferring our bodies there. As our realizations become higher, we will see more and more buddhas and great beings, and hear their teachings. This is also possible in this lifetime.

3. It is also possible that we might become a lower arhat, released from rebirth in samsara and having achieved everlasting happiness without going through the bodhisattva's path.

4. This perfect human rebirth gives us the opportunity to realize bodhicitta, the will only to help other sentient beings.

5. We can also attain other realizations, such as perception of the absolute truth and the true nature of mind. The knowledge of Dharma mind arises from practice.

These points above are the higher usefulnesses of the perfect human rebirth.

6. Also, we can attain the possession of many universes.

7. We can experience worldly benefits that arise from the creation of good karma. Usually we don't pay attention to the usefulness of our human life, due to lack of understanding the Dharma. So now we are checking it, to see.

The cause of the result of a precious human rebirth can be created in this lifetime and not necessarily in past lifetimes. If we look at the sufferings of lower beings, such as animals, we can discover how precious our human rebirth really is. This is important to discover, for understanding these differences causes us to not use our human life as if we were animals. In this way, we destroy our ignorance and use our human rebirth for a higher purpose. The more we realize this, the more energy will come to encourage us to do so.

Generally, such things as sleeping, eating, desiring self-happiness, killing other beings, and having sexual intercourse are all done by animals. If we do the same thing as an animal it makes no sense, and gives no purpose to our birth and life as a human being. There are more animals suffering than numbers of men—we are talking in big views, with a broad outlook. How can an animal perform good deeds?

The mind is beginningless and it takes rebirth in the six samsaric realms, entering the cycle of death and rebirth created by ignorance. After one life has finished, the mind takes another body in the same country or on the same planet, or in a different realm. This is determined by luck, according to karma—the positive or negative actions of body, speech, and mind. As the mind is beginningless, so is the experience of taking the human, animal, narak, and other realm bodies and forms. For instance, in one day, month, or year, a human being creates all kinds of different karmas for future rebirths in all six samsaric realms—good and bad karma, and even creates karma at the time of death. The experience of creating karma is also beginningless. At the time of death, of all the countless trillions of created karmas, whichever is the closer, heavier, or more habitual, brings the result for the next life. If it is the karma for rebirth as a pig, the craving and grasping of a pig arise and give strength to the seed of the ability to become a pig. At the death of the pig, if the karma to be reborn human is the heaviest, closest, most habitual, or done first, we take a human rebirth. Usually the good karmas for the human rebirth were created in the human realm; in the lower realms it is almost impossible to create such karma. But when human, we can break the continuous, beginningless chain of bad karma, so this rebirth is extremely useful and precious for our escape from samsara.

Meditation without sacrificing ourselves, our possessions, or our names to sentient beings can never purify us or bring enlightenment. We are fortunate in that we have a method of making even our breath beneficial to each sentient being. This aim we cannot see, it is formless, so each time we exhale we are sacrificing nothing to sentient beings, yet we are buying the perfect peace of enlightenment and therefore should feel fortunate. Many times we have been born human, but have wasted these many lives, using them for ourselves. So now we shall use the human life for other sentient beings. Also, doing this is offering service to the infinite enlightened beings. We become Buddha's best servant by working for sentient beings, because enlightened beings exist only for the benefit of sentient beings, to lead them from suffering to enlightenment. So our helping sentient

beings is the best offering to enlightened beings, like the army which fights to protect the country does service to the king.

We should compare a lot of people, especially those who don't have freedom to practice Dharma, whose lives are not so useful. There are so many human beings on earth but the perfect human rebirth is very rare. And compared to non-human beings there are so few humans—they are rarer than jewels. Try to remember all the possibilities and compare them to those of beings who don't have so much freedom. Then we can see more and more how precious the human life is. With such experience we can renounce possessions, we can use our rebirth for sentient beings in contrast to ordinary people who dedicate their lives to the care of material possessions and non-living things. With the perfect human rebirth we can enjoy as we desire—non-humans can't enjoy both worldly enjoyments and the practice of Dharma.

There are two ways to see how the human life is useful, the Dharma way and the worldly way. Beings in the lower realms can enjoy neither, and those in the upper realms cannot practice Dharma. If we don't check the usefulness of the human life in a Dharma way we may not use it most wisely.

Why are people on earth not yet in peace? Why are we not released from ignorance? Why are there so few with clean, well-subdued minds, and so many with suffering minds? The reason is that the latter do not understand Dharma's perfect methods, or the usefulness of the perfect human rebirth in allowing Dharma practice. As a result they spend their lives in a low, unskillful way, according to their wisdom and understanding. We are really lucky that we can recognize the wise and beneficial alternative way of using this life. The limited view holds that life has no meaning and is to be used only in a temporal, worldly way: This is a short, sad view that brings feelings of loneliness and boredom, unhappiness and dissatisfaction.

If material possessions were the cause of perfect peace and happiness, we would already have received it, because in past lives we have had great wealth and numberless possessions. But still the mind is ignorant. To change the mind's personality from negative to positive is the way to perfect peace. All the jewels in existence cannot even destroy one of the thousands of negative minds, cannot cut off even one of the negative mind's branches. But the perfect human rebirth can be used to completely cease the billions of problems and their foundation—ignorance. Nothing can compare to one lifetime of a perfect human rebirth, even jewels filling infinite space, because these jewels do not stop the continuity of one single type of suffering. Momentary cessation by material means is not the cure or cessation of suffering. True cessation from the Dharma point of view is ending the continuity of suffering.

Unless we can recognize the nature of suffering we cannot recognize its cause. Nor can we recognize perfect happiness and the way to attain it. Trying to use temporal means for the momentary cessation of suffering is only creating the cause for more suffering; beings that do so are preparing for the arising of future suffering while thinking that they are stopping it. Because of attachment to temporal pleasures by greed, they do such things to fulfill the desire for momentary freedom from unpleasant things. We have been working for greed; we are slaves to it. Always check up all of your actions—each can be clearly seen to be following greed. As the three negative minds always see the object in the wrong way, not in the absolute way, they always cause problems.

WASTING THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH (Page 48)

Shantideva said, “There is nothing more foolish or ignorant than one who does not subdue or train the mind’s non virtuous actions when he has received the highly meaningful perfect human rebirth.”

Since animals have no chance to know Dharma, they have limited opportunity to create positive karma and create negative karma instead. Many humans, such as barbarians and heretics, are in the same situation. Therefore, those who have the perfect human rebirth, with its eight freedoms and ten endowments, and do not train the mind in Dharma practice are much more foolish and ignorant. To waste this chance is the worst thing. To use it for the pursuit of temporal happiness, higher samsaric happiness, or for our own peace is selfish, and the greatest waste there is. We must use this time for the purpose of enlightenment, and not be like the man with great wealth who dies of starvation because he doesn’t want to spend any of it.

Shantideva said, “If I have the fortune to lead a virtuous life and don’t do virtuous work, what will I do when born in the animal realms, where beings are deeply ignorant?”

The meaning of this is much the same as that of the previous quotation. If born an animal, we will be unable even to enjoy samsaric pleasures, let alone practice Dharma.

A human is reborn as an animal when there is the appropriate negative karma. As Chandrakirti said; “If one does not regard a person from whom one receives teachings, even if just a few words, as a guru, the result will be rebirth as a dog.”

Nagas are sentient beings living in ignorance. They can make or stop rain, and they are related to the karma of the beings living at that place. Special pujas can influence these beings.

If Buddha sees an object it exists, even if we don’t see it. If we see an object and Buddha doesn’t, the object does not exist.

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THE EIGHT TEMPORAL DESIRES (Page 49)

Lord Buddha said, “Life continues until death, starting from the time of conception in the mother’s womb, following worldly ways without following a new path.”

The sufferings of death and after death are the fault of not following the new path as shown by the enlightened being in this lifetime. Any kind of worldly life, in the East or the West, is the old life, the life experienced countless times in previous lives; there is nothing new.

“One should not be attached to one’s own body.” Milarepa said many important things in his teachings, including this. He also said, “Food is like the spice of devils—as we enjoy more and more it brings worse and worse effects. Therefore give up clinging to food and other enjoyments, which tie one like a rope.” In other words, give up the eight temporal desires.

The main problem is not the object but the mind, the negative creator. Control the mind and objects cease to be a problem. The pure mind, free of illusions and delusions, can change poison to medicine or kaka to amrita; it can prevent the penetration of a thorn and can bring infinite happiness.

The senses of touch, hearing, and so forth are limited, a result of the negative mind, and result from enjoying objects in the wrong way. By changing the creator (mind) we can definitely change dirty objects into clean objects, ugly into beautiful. But the method works at different levels, according to the level of wisdom, and it can't just be done straight away.

Consider a friend who always speaks beautifully. One day, instead, he speaks angry and ugly words, and he is no longer seen as beautiful, but now is ugly. His appearance has not really changed, yet the sight of that same face induces anger. Then we make up—with words, gifts, and so forth, and it changes again. Greed sees beauty, anger ugliness. Purification of the negative mind brings perfect peace.

Milarepa said, "The riding friend is the devil's daughter." As values change we will be betrayed, therefore be cautious.

Also, "Our own homeland is the devil's prison; it is difficult to get out of, so better escape soon." Milarepa says that as all these things have to be left at death, better to do so now—leave those friends, that homeland. Then, "If one can do all this then one has the fortune of practicing Dharma."

The door to the understanding of our own nature, the door to positive mind, is the recognition of problems created by the negative mind, such as not wanting to meditate. Of course ignorance objects to new subjects, new practice. Ignorance always likes things that are wrong and false. But Dharma is meditation on ignorance, suffering, death, and so forth, and therefore not "pleasant." Since beginningless time we have taken great care of our greed, ignorance, and hatred. Suffering will continue in all of the future lives of the person who continues to work for those things—keeping ignorance in comfort and out of problems and confusion, out of positive action. Lord Buddha's way of helping people is to make them understand, and to then let the person make a free choice about following the method. There is no with force without understanding in the Buddhadharmas.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, "If we can't renounce the momentary life through the practice of meditation on impermanence, the Dharma actions we perform become a service to the eight temporal desires."

Any actions not done under the influence of the eight temporal desires should be done with a mind living in the practice of the meditation on impermanence. If the mind can renounce the temporal life, actions can then become positive, Dharma actions.

"Dharma" is not just a name. It has great meaning. It does not only belong to Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and so on. The pure practice of Dharma belongs only to oneself—it is created by the mind. It is the method shown by the enlightened being; it is the method he followed, practiced, and experienced completely. In the same way, truth and impermanence belong to no sect.

Literally "Dharma" means "holding" or "guiding" living being from the suffering of:

1. the three lower realms
2. the total samsaric suffering of ignorance, greed, and hatred
3. and the subtle obscurations.

Dharma leads from these three states to enlightenment. Each of us has to create our own essential practice of Dharma and become a positive guide instead of an enemy to ourselves. For example, following the negative mind, the ignorance of the suffering result that will follow, we are led by greed to steal.

Even if our main aim is not working for the food and clothing of this temporal life, we still work against enlightenment unless all of our energy is devoted to achieving this result. If we live in the pure, essential practice of Dharma we will get still food and clothing. After death we will not be able to work for enlightenment. In traveling to another country we see many things on the way, even though this is not the main purpose.

Since we don't know the time of our death, it is most worthwhile to seek enlightenment soon. For one living in the essential practice of Dharma there are fewer problems. Through understanding comes a great mental change, less physical activity, and as a result less physical worries. We renounce the eight temporal desires.

All problems depend on mental conception—they don't exist by themselves, but arise from the way that we judge situations. The same person is sometimes a friend, sometimes an enemy. Avoiding the eight temporal desires cuts off so many problems. Our conception changes and with deep understanding comes perfect peace. We must realize the shortcomings of the eight desires, and be as afraid of them as we are of even the smell of a poisonous plant.

Attachment to the eight desires brings worry when they can't be fulfilled; renunciation means cessation of such worry. There are more important things to worry about, such as the creation of bad karma, the suffering of the three lower realms, and so on. This kind of attachment disturbs meditation.

The peace of renunciation is inexpensive and doesn't depend on rockets, factories, weapons, armies, or presidents. Such peace continues into enlightenment, growing stronger and greater. It starts with renunciation of the eight desires, which is like opening a door—a simple step that requires an understanding mind, and not an ignorant action. We must know the evolution of such an action—the reasons for it and the expected results. Most actions are done with ignorance of their evolution, such as taking drugs—but instead of making us more and more crazy, renunciation makes us less and less so. It is like a saw, cutting problems and confusion, and is opposite to the temporal desires that actually stop all happiness, including samsaric happiness.

Many people who don't understand Dharma and have no experience of it are shocked by those who follow a spiritual path and give up temporal things. This is especially true in the case of parents of Westerners. Many of them get a big shock and think that this is a great suffering and the action of a limited mind. They think that those who do such free actions are foolish and leading a nonsensical life. They think that it is only causing more problems and that it is not a non self-supporting life. However, all this is judged with ignorance, without understanding the benefits of such true actions. Since they have not been through the experience they cannot know. Besides not seeing the future benefits of such actions, they think it causes us problems in the present, which is a view opposite to the true evolution. In reality, these actions bring future benefits and immediate help. Renunciation of the eight desires releases us from the mental troubles of confusion and samsaric worries, bringing peace. Thus the practice of Dharma brings future happiness, and peace and happiness to this life.

It is very dangerous to think, “I was happier before doing this.” Such thoughts destroy the merits of good actions, are poisonous, disturb the practice, and bring the good life down. If we have a problem with our practice it means that there is something wrong with the practice, so we should check what is wrong and check its cause, which is some mental action. Until we sort this out continual practice is difficult.

With renunciation, the power of practice grows stronger, our future improves, and we get things without trying. But if we try too hard we might be reborn a preta.

As it is said, “Has there been any great meditator who dies of starvation or suffered cold through not trying to collect materials?” This passage refers to the sincere meditator, and applies to both the present and the future.

There was one Tibetan who had trouble satisfying temporal needs until he practiced the essential Dharma, after which it was easy. He said, “Before I practiced Dharma my mouth had trouble finding food; now the food has trouble finding my mouth.”

The unenlightened mind is a friend to ignorance. This helps us to understand how things are created by the mind. Others might use these troubles to build ignorance and agree, but the holy beings use temporal problems for enlightenment and peace.

The eight temporal desires must be renounced—freedom from them creates real peace. Renunciation is a mental action arising from a decision. It is difficult; it is harder to change mental actions. To do so requires a positive mind, and to not allow it to happen is a creation of the negative mind. The problems are not the objects or pleasures, but the desires themselves, the mind—suffering is created by the mind. We must understand how this works beyond intellectual knowledge.

The craving desires and our negative mind have caused us to continue in the samsaric realms. From the smallest animal to the biggest, from beggar to king, those whose lives are not focused in the practice of Dharma are concerned only with present momentary problems, not with future suffering, and they lack understanding of the nature of suffering. Their greatest mistake is to always create the cause for greater sufferings while trying to stop or cure the temporary ones; they do not understand the nature of suffering nor its cause. Therefore there is no recognition of true happiness. Actually, they think of trying to stop temporal problems by temporal solutions, yet that itself is the real cause of more temporal problems in the future.

How do we cease this? If we don't recognize our mistakes it is important to know this essential Dharma point: temporal methods never help—if they are checked up those methods only create the cause for the continuous arising of future temporal sufferings. And the reason for this is that such methods are done mostly for the eight temporal needs, done for greed as this negative mind wants. Greed is attached to the eight temporal needs, which can all be seen in the light of greed. They all depend on greed and work for it, like servants cooking for the master. We are the same, most of us have been working for greed: check up your own actions even now. Ask, “What am I doing this action for?” We can discover how to stop temporal problems by asking, “Is this what greed needs?” We can discover this greed more and more. But the result of actions done with greed, ignorance, or hatred is always suffering and problems.

Greed is the creator of samsara. Love mixed with greed is love created by ignorance, and one still remains in samsara. This love is not the same as real love, and its results have to be experienced in the three lower and three upper realms. Why doesn't it bring peace? Because the principal cause is the unsubdued, untamed mind; the root mind is confused, is a wrong mind, because the three negative minds always see the object in the wrong way and not in the absolute way. They see the object in a way that is not true to an enlightened mind. So the rest is like this, just as one with a black mark on his face can't expect to see a clean face in the mirror. It is impossible for peace to arise from those three negative minds, so the whole problem is their fault. All methods done according to greed for temporal needs are negative actions. We use all those negative actions to cut off all those temporal problems that were created by a previous mind's karma in a previous lifetime. And that method of the eight temporal needs is the cause of future temporal problems. The present methods of solving our problems bring the same problems because the methods are negative, arising from a mind that is not well-subdued. It is just a cycle: to stop that which was created by previous negative karma we use a method similar to that used before, and so it continues.

Besides the actions that follow greed—for example, having a job as a butcher where one lives by killing animals—we may also cause much suffering for other beings. This is like a double negative action. But a butcher does that job to keep his life in comfort, this is his method to take care of the temporal problems that arise. He doesn't think of himself as a negative person. However, his life is the result of previous negative karma whose result has to be experienced. But as long as he doesn't try to understand the method in the Dharma he will definitely have to experience the suffering result, if not in this lifetime, then in some other lifetime.

That method doesn't really take care of all temporal problems, the physical and mental sufferings—they are not completely ceased. Furthermore, this method creates negative karma—simply in order to take care of this life he is creating the cause of suffering, creating bad karma to stop bad karma—an impossible thing. This is no one's fault, but he will have to suffer in a future life and so it always circles round. To stop suffering on the temporal level he is creating the cause of suffering for the animals he kills.

Also, stealing and telling lies are double negative actions, because besides the action of our own greed, they create suffering for others. Such actions are also done by animals.

Any actions—even reciting mantras or making music—done with greed, hatred, or ignorance only bring the result of being in the cycle of samsara for a longer time in which more suffering results.

Buddhadharma has no definite form of action—every action can be either of the two, Dharma or non-Dharma—eating, writing, playing, dancing, and so on. No matter how they look, if any actions are done without involvement in the eight temporal desires and with bodhicitta motivation, they are Mahayana actions, and if they are done with attachment and greed for the sake of the eight temporal desires they are non-Dharma actions. The method that avoids the eight desires is a method to stop the continuity of bad karma, leading to escape from suffering and to enlightenment. This is a perfect, true method.

What makes a Buddhadharma action? Positive action avoids the eight temporal needs and opposes them; it is against greed and attachment. Such action creates good karma and brings happiness in

this and future lives, human rebirth with better conditions and a religious life, bodhicitta, perfect peace, and enlightenment.

When one comes to really understand Dharma it can come as a kind of shock. Many people think it is easy, just imitating another person—if he closes the eyes, I close mine. But the real Dharma is the person's actions that are pure of the eight temporal needs, positive, against greed, free of hatred and ignorance. It doesn't matter what he is called because the action doesn't depend on the title Buddhist, Hindu, Zen, Missionary, or Muslim. He may even be called "evil," but if his actions are pure and positive they have the power to destroy the negative mind and to create good karma. Such actions arising from pure motivation are called Buddhadharma because they can bring enlightenment and escape from ignorance. This must be created by the mind, not by the actions alone.

The form of Dharma actions is not definite and Buddhadharma is open to anyone, something that everyone can do as their freedom to practice allows. But we, sentient beings, close it off ourselves. It has nothing to do with class, caste, occupation, titles, color of skin—beings do not create good karma as a result of ignorance. Any deep, profound subjects, any deep Dharma teachings difficult to discover, are only a creation of our mind—they are not something that the Enlightened Being made deep and profound, but only a creation of mind. The level of Buddhadharma that can be practiced depends on the person's level of wisdom. Why aren't more people practicing? Because their ignorance doesn't give them a chance. Renunciation and avoidance of the eight temporal needs is more powerful than the atomic bomb. The bomb destroys the place and the people, which would end anyway, but it cannot destroy the mind, which is continual. The bomb also causes danger to our comfort by causing danger to others. Even if it were to destroy all other beings and we were left alone on earth, still other enemies would arise to make us unhappy. Even if this ended, the body ends, the mind transfers to another realm because it has not been released from ignorance, the delusions are not cut off, and the continuity of previous bad karmas are still present. In other realms we meet other enemies, and we will always do so until the problem is cut off. The real cause of the outer enemy is the mind, the real enemy is the inner enemy, ignorance. As long as we travel in the six realms behaving as friends with the inner enemy instead of destroying it there will be no end to the problems with the outer enemy. Rather than helping, actions such as destroying our outer enemies with atomic bombs only create great bad karma.

The action of avoiding the eight temporal needs, however, doesn't depend on madness or chemical things for its practice, and is done in our own mind. This mental action is the main power, the energy that brings enlightenment and all the paths. It is like fuel for a rocket and brings quick escape from ignorance and the illusive mind; it is a direct method to cut off the continuity of the bad karma and all branches of the negative mind, bringing perfect happiness.

Guru Shakyamuni became enlightened by completely purifying his mind of all negativity, and he became the object of respect and refuge for all sentient beings. All this was the result of his practice of avoiding the eight temporal desires, allowing him to work for the happiness of all sentient beings. This mental practice has great power.

Due to the power of Guru Shakyamuni's practice and realizations, many people are able to create much good karma by keeping statues of him with the knowledge of what this represents, and making offerings to remember his knowledge. Now, many Western people are starting to realize

what the mind is, that life is meaningful, and so on—this too is the power of Guru Shakyamuni's practice and enlightenment.

The power of the atomic bomb is nowhere, is lost, and has only negative effects. This is unlike the power of avoidance, the benefits of which can affect numberless sentient beings, including those we've never heard of. Practice in the mind, as Guru Shakyamuni did. Even this meditation course results from the existence of his teachings, the power of his enlightenment, and his practice of avoiding the eight temporal needs. The mind that has this practice is shapeless and cannot be seen, yet this mind has incredible power such that numberless sentient beings can achieve enlightenment. The person who says he wants to be exactly like Milarepa has to practice the avoidance of the eight temporal needs. This is the fundamental practice of the Mahayana teachings and meditation. Many ask why should we study these subjects, why not kundalini yoga? So many people have wasted the perfect human rebirth without knowing the highest and best purpose of the human life, so many humans have achieved psychic powers from such methods only to die and be reborn in the lower realms. Many people waste their lives like this; they make mistakes and do not use their lives in the most precious way.

Practicing Dharma is the wisest way to use the human life and make it meaningful. We do not do this in order to destroy the comfort or to miss the happiness of this life. Using the life in the most beneficial way is for the purpose of not causing suffering. Dharma practice has the power to give subdued peace in this life. It can give the happiness of release, whereas any pleasures that are received from the action of greed are pleasures of bondage. The happiness from the practice of avoiding the eight temporal needs is the peace of release. We must check up, we have to experience it.

With practice, renounce greed. Renunciation of the eight temporal needs doesn't mean physical separation—this is not the definition of renunciation. A king who has everything can live in renunciation; the beggar who doesn't practice renunciation doesn't depend on physical separation. We have to check up—how do we generate renunciation? What is the definition? Avoiding the creator of suffering and renouncing the greed that desires the eight temporal needs is something to do with the mind, the inner mind. Pure renunciation can never cause problems—as the cause is pure the result will always be pure—happiness. But if we make a mistake it can cause hassles for us and for others. However, correct renunciation brings release. "Release" has a very tasty meaning. The main problem is not merely the attachment to the temporal life but the greed and ignorance that lie in the mind—we have to avoid the negative mind, and at the same time avoid the actions of the negative mind, because the negative actions make the negative mind's existence continual, like a cycle. This practice helps now because as it is done, even though we don't renounce, is important to know.

Not understanding is ignorance. If someone says bad words to us, slander, and we have attachment to the eight temporal needs, we won't like to hear them, we will suddenly get angry and at the same time see that person as ugly. All this creates bad karma of mind and may create bad karma of body and speech. We have so many problems, why did it all happen? Anger arises from the greed that is attached to the temporal life. Greed sees beauty, but it is poisonous, one of the worst things. A very tricky mind always causing suffering, created from attachment. Negative karma and the negative suffering result arises; this continues in a circle. All of the above arises from attachment to comfort with pleasing words and from the dislike of displeasing words. For a person in the essential practice of Dharma—avoiding the eight temporal needs, not following the action of attachment—there is no

anger, as the mind is opposed to this in the way it works; there is no reason for anger to arise so the person doesn't care. The other's words are like the sound of the wind; we see no difference and don't care about sounds. Such a mind is really a strong mind—no anger and no attachment, no bad karma so such peace. That is something that brings complete perfect happiness; that mind is very free, loose, and released, but the other is very tight.

We are all equal in desiring happiness. We all come to this meditation course seeking happiness, not suffering. We must make our actions positive so that we create good karma, for this is the cause of happiness. At least we should have this small little idea or thought. We must make our motivation positive, even when listening to Dharma: just taking the teachings isn't enough to avoid rebirth in the three lower realms or to attempt rebirth in the three upper realms. Even taking the teachings with the thought and will to release ourselves from suffering is the low and selfish thought of a self-cherishing mind, despite the fact that it will bring perfect peace. Not realizing other sentient beings' sufferings never helps anyone. All other beings and I are exactly equal in not desiring suffering and in desiring happiness, so there is no reason to care more for myself than others. But the others are unlike me in that they have not met the teachings and do not have the wisdom to recognize practice and avoidance. They are always suffering and creating its cause. From them come all my happiness, realizations and enlightenment, they have always been kind and always will be, and therefore they are more precious than any possession. I should repay and take care of them, dedicate myself to them, for there is no other way to enlightenment. The best way to take care of them is to enlighten them, but now I do not have the power to do so, therefore I must receive this power. To do this I must destroy all negativity, so I shall listen to the teachings of the graded path, meditate, and purify myself. In cultivating such a pure motivation the action of listening to the teachings becomes that much more powerful, beneficial both to myself and to all sentient beings.

The knowledge of avoidance of the eight temporal needs is infinite; the power of this practice of renunciation is such that we can never finish explaining the value of knowing it. The more we recognize Dharma the more we recognize the infinite, transcendental knowledge of the buddhas. At the same time we discover for ourselves how powerful and precious this practice is—it is more precious than any jewels and there is no danger of its ever being lost or stolen. The more jewels we have, the greater the worry in the mind, the more the thoughts of them arise—how to use them, protect them, and so forth. But the more purely we practice the avoidance of the eight temporal needs, the more quickly we escape from ignorance and wisdom arises, and the sooner the problems associated with material possessions disappear. The more we live in the practice the purer it becomes.

The person living in renunciation of these needs at the time of death definitely avoids rebirth in the three lower realms. But anyone who has not renounced greed, despite any high psychic powers he may have developed, must be reborn there. In ancient times there was a Tibetan who practiced tantra without practicing renunciation, and with merely a look he could kill one hundred people. But when he died he was reborn in the narak realms. Anything that does not cut off greed and attachment only keeps us in suffering and cannot guide us to release.

The power of renunciation can allow us to transform a stone into a flower. There are three powers in dependence upon which one can do miraculous things—the powers of medicine, mantra, and the elements. But the power of this practice is the safest, firmest power that protects our mind. So many meditators in past times could protect themselves by this practice. Take the example of the meditator Kharag Gomchen. Before his achievement of Dharma practice he was in a greatly

miserable condition, suffering much sickness from leprosy. Nobody wanted to contact him and so he was always away from people, which made him very upset. He decided to make this situation worthwhile, and left his place to stay in a little cave on the road, live there, beg and recite a mantra—there was no other practice. One night he dreamed he was in water and a white man appeared and took him out of it; much water came out of his body and when he awoke he found he was cured. This was due to his strong mental condition—the mind that caused this was the mind working against attachment, living in the avoidance of the eight temporal needs. Even momentarily, instantly, mental suffering can be cured by this practice—it protects and helps even in this temporal life, helping one with temporal problems and bringing happiness. The happiness arising through this practice can be developed until enlightenment. The leper didn't aim to be cured, but this came about as a result of his pure practice.

Many people think that Buddhadharmā is all about renunciation and not having a happy life by enjoying things that cause suffering. Many think that they cannot experience happiness because they renounce. Such a conception is completely wrong, completely opposed to the logical experience gained from this practice. The more the mind works in the opposite way, the more the mind is put into confusion.

This can be proved clearly by personal practice. If you want to check up, the observation has to be made by mental practice. Do not be attached to temporal comforts. As practice is done it can bring happiness in this and future lives. The conception that renunciation doesn't bring happiness is wrong.

Shantideva said (page 49), “The perfect human rebirth, the most difficult to find and a greatly beneficial foundation, is, however, received by good fortune. While having the wisdom to know practice and avoidance, if one again leads oneself to the narak realms, one is purposely making oneself ignorant.”

Engaging in any action opposed to the renunciation of the eight temporal desires is like purposely keeping ourselves in ignorance, in the cycle of death and rebirth, and will bring rebirth in the lower suffering realms again. That is why it is very foolish and nonsensical. The fact that it is crazy is not recognized by a worldly person because ignorance does not see ignorance as being crazy, it only sees its own actions as positive and good. The ignorant mind thinks that understanding suffering is crazy. This kind of craziness is worse than temporal craziness, because the latter is the fault of this ignorance. By not avoiding the ignorant mind, without purifying the inner craziness, one can never cease temporal craziness, that which is recognized as craziness by worldly people.

Many practitioners practice Dharma by surmounting temporal sufferings. This is a wise action, because such beings are trying to stop the continuation of suffering—bad karma and ignorance that arise from past lives. They are also trying to not create any bad karma for future lives. For this reason they practice Dharma, not caring about temporal problems, and thinking that by cutting off the cause of all suffering they will cut off all temporal difficulties. If you can practice like that, with such great will, temporal problems will be overcome. Disturbances will be overcome, and then temporal problems will be overcome. Disturbances depend on your mind, how you think, your wisdom. The ignorant mind is a very limited mind and always gives you the method to continue the cause of suffering. The Dharma mind is completely opposed to that.

The negative mind is that which is attached to the pleasure of samsara, and using this human rebirth for these purposes always creates suffering. The negative mind never helps. There is not the tiniest bit of help or happiness that can come from the negative mind, from greed, so how can it be useful? It is important to know that its effect is always harmful to the person.

Many people think, “Without greed, how can we enjoy food and so forth?” If we don’t check up we can make this mistake, this wrong conception. Perfect peace has to be achieved by removing the negative mind, greed. Many think that happiness comes from greed, and without it things cannot be enjoyed. This represents a lack of understanding of where greed comes from. Happiness doesn’t arise from greed, ignorance, and hatred. It arises from the mind of non-greed, non-hatred—it comes from positive actions and positive minds.

The happiness that arises from Dharma practice is free and loose; its nature is release. Samsaric happiness that is recognized by the limited mind is of a tied or binding nature. All happiness that is not the suffering of suffering is never caused by the negative mind. The principal cause of samsaric happiness is ignorance—not having the realization of the absolute true nature or the reality of existence—and any actions that are done without this realization. The mind living totally in the conception of self-existence intuitively conceives of charity as self-existent, and due to this ignorance causes human rebirth and the enjoyments of temporal needs. The samsaric happiness that comes from this type of ignorance is suffering from the Dharma point of view, and true happiness is that which does not arise from the negative mind.

The craving to hear sweet words or sounds, the craving for praise and admiration, and so forth are defined by ignorance as happiness. Such pleasures do not continue—in time they become suffering. As such they are not real happiness.

Attachment to the eight temporal needs is following greed, as a servant follows his master.

It is stressed in the teachings of the Enlightened Being that we should not trust desire and that we should not be attached to samsaric happiness, which is created by the deluded mind, is suffering in nature, and is not true happiness. As long as we believe in such pleasures we shall remain in samsara. The true Dharma happiness is that which arises from the practice of renunciation of the eight temporal desires. This kind of happiness can never end, its enjoyments can never finish, yet the work to achieve this state *can* be finished. In the case of samsaric happiness, however, the enjoyment and happiness always end, so the work to attain them will never finish. The action of trying to be happy never ends, and in samsara there is no end to working for temporal enjoyments. This is like eating and defecating. Until we cut off the karma created by ignorance we have to go round and round like this, and as long as we still have the cause to take rebirth again we die, always cycling around. Until we cut off the cause it can have no end. The Dharma practice of renunciation can end in time, but samsaric actions have no end.

The wise, holy beings who know the meaning of life, comprehend its best use, and understand the evolution of karma always try to do the work that can be finished. The peace that arises from renunciation can be developed at higher and higher levels, and the experience of it can never end. Samsaric happiness cannot be developed. We get pleasure from bathing but if we stay in the water too long it becomes cold and we crave warmth. We are happy eating food, but if we eat more and more, we lose the taste, our stomachs fill up, and we vomit. All this proves that the nature of such “happiness” is suffering—it cannot be developed, it always turns to suffering, and it is not

permanent. Sherpa people who enjoy drinking wine drink one cup and then drink another because they liked the first, and so on until they become very uncontrolled, with no discipline. Usually they fight and use nonsensical words, then they break things that were usually obtained through many difficulties. Their minds are not happy, caused by the wrong belief that does not see the true nature of suffering. The same things can be said about the use of drugs.

THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH: IS IT EASY TO RECEIVE? (Page 50)

Shantideva said, “The perfect human rebirth is extremely difficult to get and brings all good success in the future life. He who doesn’t create good karma in this lifetime will not receive a perfect human rebirth in the future.”

This quote explains the cause of the perfect human rebirth, that is, good karma arising from actions that are beneficial to the pure mind and not to ignorance. It also emphasizes that the future life depends on the present life’s actions. That’s why the present is so important and precious, and is as useful as the earth itself. There are so many good things that we can do—especially, in this lifetime we can cease the cycle of death and rebirth. The quotation also emphasizes that the present rebirth depends on causes from the previous life. For the human it usually results from knowledge of the teachings; there is a logical reason for the human rebirth—the creation of good karma through virtuous mental actions and virtuous deeds. But any actions based on ignorance and done with greed or hatred for the comfort of this life causes rebirth in the three lower realms, and such actions are not Dharma actions, for the fundamental definition of Dharma actions is that they be done without ignorance, greed or hatred, and with future lives in mind.

Good karma is Dharma—it should be created with positive understanding, not by instinct or intuition. It is the aim or motivation of an action that creates the karma, not the action itself. Karma is an inner subject, and is something to be checked with the mind.

“Without the aim of the comfort of the temporal life” doesn’t mean that we should not eat or wear clothes, and so forth. If there is no understanding of Dharma, then no matter what the action, even virtuous behavior is not Dharma practice. There are many levels of motivation for good actions, but the ultimate motivation is to consider future lives—for example, having the motivation to reach enlightenment so that we can best help others. Other motives have less power, such as the motivation to attain our own perfect peace. If we help others expecting a reward in this life, we do not create good karma.

As we eat fruit and plant the seeds to grow more, in the same way as we enjoy the results of good karma we should create the causes to experience more.

Karma is evolution based on cause and effect. If we fully understand the inner evolution, we can understand the outer evolution better and more deeply. The best way to study science is by studying inner evolution. The practice of Dharma clears obscurations. All depends on karma, therefore all is created by mind. The earth that we see is created by our minds although it is not necessarily mental. Mind has the power to perceive objects, and that which is not mind does not. Samsara is a creation of mind, but buildings, mountains, and so forth, which are also created by mind, are not in samsara.

The life related to this rebirth depends on the karma created by the previous life’s minds. This means that the present is created by mind. If there is no mind, then there is no creation.

There are so many ways to understand Dharma—just a few words can mean many things to those who know.

The great, highly realized Tibetan pandit Atisha said, “As one has received the perfect human rebirth this time, one must try to fulfill the cause to achieve it again in the future.” This cause cannot be created by the negative minds of greed, ignorance, and hatred. Bad karma is principally a creation of mind, expressed through actions of body, speech, and mind. But greatly evil actions can be created in the mind without the involvement of body or speech. This is one of the most dangerous things. Even if we stay in silence in one place for our entire lives, we can still create bad karma and suffer for countless eons. The mind can be very dangerous, especially as it is responsible for the actions of body and speech. Yet every good thing is also created by mind. The whole object of Dharma practice is to stop the negative actions of the mind. We do this by increasing the positive mind so that there is no room for the negative. And this is the whole point of taking ordination and following precepts.

The mind is the creator of all suffering and all happiness. Enlightenment is a matter of time—wisdom requires energy, and energy comes from the mind, through meditation.

Morality and Charity

Ignorance obscures the purpose of morality and charity so that there is self-propagation of the negative mind. This mind that thinks that practicing morality is creating suffering for itself is extremely lazy. We should understand the evolution of morality and charity, and also understand the negative actions so that we can avoid them.

It is extremely rare to find anyone practicing pure morality and charity not just in action but in reality. We could count the number easily. There are too many disturbances to practice this way. There is an explosion of the negative mind and such practice is very difficult in the West and in the East, but especially in the West. This is nobody's fault but it is created by the negative mind.

We must practice while human if we want a perfect human rebirth in the future. Shantideva said, “This opportunity, the perfect human rebirth, is exceedingly difficult to obtain. The purpose of humanity is the attainment of the bodhisattva's performance. If it is not made useful here, how can perfection be gained hereafter?”

In Lord Buddha's time there were many nagas living in the ocean. There was a great increase in their number at that time, and when a king who was surprised by that increase asked about it, Lord Buddha explained that this was due to the fact that these beings did not correctly follow the moral precepts they taken in previous lives, and failed to purify themselves after breaking the vows.

It is difficult to create the cause for a perfect human rebirth in the six samsaric realms (see next page). In the lower three it is impossible due to the great ignorance and suffering of these realms. In the upper three it is difficult due to distractions. Also, at the present time in human existence it is also difficult, and it is getting increasingly so. Yet the cause for this present human rebirth was created in many previous human lives, not just one, so wasting it wastes so much previous time and effort.

In Dharma practice the level of realizations depends on the degree of purification of obscurations—it takes time, and the continual energy required comes from basic understanding, the result of continual practice. It is not easy. Yet laziness is not self-existent or intuitive. As we create it we can destroy it. We must give up samsaric comforts and the happiness of this life as the holy beings did.

From the Dharma point of view, morality is abstaining from negative mind and negative actions, from actions that are not permitted by the Enlightened Being if one is to achieve enlightenment. Abstinence is essential for morality and requires a strong motivation or will. We must want to take care of ourselves and our minds. Charity also requires the will or the motivation to dedicate to other beings.

The practice of charity without morality brings rebirth as a rich animal, like a naga, for example. The breaking of moral precepts or not observing morality brings an animal rebirth, the charity of karma brings riches in that rebirth. But in that animal lifetime one is too ignorant to create more charity, so that karmic result ends and no further enjoyments arise. As Chandrakirti says, “One who breaks the leg of the precepts and is reborn as an animal never receives enjoyments once the result of charity has finished.”

According to the Mahayana view, charity doesn't depend on materials. It is our responsibility to give pleasure to others, but it is not our responsibility if they are attached to samsaric pleasures. If you offer drugs in the food of a person who is living in mental discipline (ordination), disturbing his practice, it creates bad karma. We must be careful when we give, and develop skillful wisdom to help others.

Keeping precepts cleans the mind of created impurities and helps to not create more.

Difficulty in creating the cause for the perfect human rebirth in the six samsaric realms is further explained as follows. In the narak realms there are so many beings. This is a terrible place, a karmic creation, without escape. Naraks do not die as we do, and the environment is extremely hot and totally dark. Their lives last a long time, varying in accordance with the karma they have created. It does not matter how much they desire to escape, there is no freedom to do so. With all this suffering, ignorance, and desperate desire to escape, there is no opportunity to create good karma, especially through the practices of morality and charity. In these realms, the beings cannot create the cause for a human rebirth. The preta and animal realms are similar.

The beings in the god realms are too preoccupied with enjoyments. They have bodies of light, drink transcendental nectars, and enjoy long life. They neither see nor recognize suffering and can't practice renunciation.

Even in the human realm it is difficult to practice morality and charity. Just unthinking abstinence is not enough. There must be will and motivation, and understanding of the suffering result of not practicing this way. The person in a cave, never coming out, isn't necessarily practicing morality. One must make the choice. There are few humans creating morality—we should check up on our own lives.

People following morality are more rare than jewels, and decreasing in number each year. It is difficult to practice this way because our minds are more and more obscured by ignorance. Morality fights the negative mind of ignorance and greed, which finds it difficult to practice for even a day.

Even when trying to observe morality we break it. If we think that keeping moral conduct is like being in prison, then it will be very difficult to achieve the perfect human rebirth in a future life.

We can now see how difficult it is to create the cause for a perfect human rebirth. Therefore we must take the most care of this life since it is so difficult to receive one again. We can only create the causes for this to happen if we know what they are.

The cycle of suffering is such that as long as we don't seek the truth through continuous Dharma practice, the problems will continue. If we don't do this when we have attained a perfect human rebirth, then when? How long will we have to wait for another opportunity?

HOW SHOULD I MAKE THIS PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH HIGHLY MEANINGFUL?
(Page 51)

The highly realized Tibetan Guru Tsong Khapa said, "If one recognizes that receiving the perfect human rebirth is difficult and highly meaningful, then one can definitely avoid any meaningless actions which make the life meaningless. One must recognize what is meaningful in life through meditation."

To make the life meaningful, meaningful actions are required. To create such actions we need to recognize the perfect human rebirth, therefore we start our meditation with this. This is the principal cause to build up energy for going long-term, and receiving all the realizations that lead to enlightenment. This takes a long time, in dependence on how quickly we purify negativity and many other things. The long trip requires many porters.

We must have the interest to create energy. Why does it depend on energy? Because that trip is the hardest, and that is why we never made it before, from beginningless lifetimes until now. Why is it so hard? Because it is solely a mental trip. There are many obscurations and interruptions concealing the passage. Therefore we have to prevent and purify the hindrances that stop us from seeing the path to enlightenment. We must destroy the self-created mental hindrances. It is easier to destroy the earth.

In our previous lives we have killed every sentient being without exception, countless times. Such actions are old habits, nothing new. Furthermore, each of us has been killed by every other sentient being countless times. There is no reason to go on like this—it has not helped. The evolution of samsara is a very interesting subject, but shocking if fully understood. Understanding brings wisdom, which brings method, which leads to perfect peace. Also, the meditation on death is the greatest solution to the negative mind that asks, "What does it matter if he or I die today or tomorrow?"

Shantideva said, "In the human boat one can cross the great ocean of suffering. Such a boat is difficult to receive again, so while in ignorance one should not sleep."

Building ignorance is like sleeping—when asleep we are unconscious of even large and heavy objects. If we don't make the effort to wake the mind from ignorance, to gain enlightened knowledge, and instead use our efforts for the comfort of the temporal life, all of our actions only create ignorance. As long as we work for greed, hatred, pride, jealousy, and the many other negative minds, we are working for ignorance. On the contrary, if we help sentient beings, if we have the great power to do this, we are working to help the buddhas, the enlightened beings. Helping the

branches of the negative mind is acting as if we are asleep, with unconscious minds, not seeing objects in the dark. The mind is beginningless and that is why it has not recognized its true nature, itself. Recognizing the mind is the mystical point—mystical until now, but until we clarify this subject we shall make many more mistakes in our actions. Due to failure to recognize the true nature of the mind, the results of our actions are always opposite to those expected, and we are ignorant of the knowledge of positive and negative evolution. As long as there are mistakes in our mental actions there will be mistakes in our actions of body and speech. Until we recognize the mystical aspect of the mind, no matter how long and how strongly we desire to cure suffering and receive happiness, our methods will fail, no matter how hard we try.

Also, as long as we don't discover this inner mystical subject, in general we are ignorant of the outer mystical objects, and the many things that have many different levels. Such ignorance—we don't recognize the mind or ourselves, we have been using the mind from beginningless time until now, yet still don't know what it is. If we don't recognize it when we are human, how can we do so when we take rebirth as animals? It will be impossible.

Discovery of the mystical point of the mind is the key to opening the door to the understanding of every other existence. This discovery is also like a medicine, for it gives the solution to and cures all problems.

We should use this perfect human rebirth like a boat, to cross the ocean of suffering and reach enlightenment. This is the reason that we received this rebirth.

The mind that wishes to be reborn in an upper realm does not have the greatest will, but if we can't receive enlightenment in this lifetime then it is best to be reborn in the upper realms, so that we can create the karma to receive a perfect human rebirth. Then, using that life as a bridge, as a temporal place, if it is not possible to receive all realizations then we should create the causes for another perfect human rebirth. In this way, gradually, we will reach enlightenment.

Remember the two types of fear: positive fear that results in preparation for the future life and negative fear that doesn't, and arises from ignorance.

Shantideva said, "After receiving such a precious human rebirth, there is no ignorance greater than not realizing its purpose—creating merits, developing wisdom, and receiving realizations, which most other sentient beings can't do."

We who have received the perfect human rebirth have many freedoms, and if we do not use this life to receive higher realizations we are more ignorant than any animal, and we are betraying ourselves.

Therefore, it is important that even our practice of listening to Dharma be done in the best way, making the most of the perfect human rebirth. Bodhicitta, this high motivation, should be especially strong so that the listening becomes more successful. If we don't have this, then at least we should be free of the eight temporal desires and of samsaric motivation, such as wanting to learn the Dharma to teach others for the sake of our temporal reputation.

In ancient India and in Tibet the highly realized pandits had the full experience of the practice and fully saw their own nature and that of other beings. Yet they never showed pride. They looked simple, as if they knew nothing, like beggars, and just slept and ate—but this was just their outside

appearance, and their minds could not be seen. One could ask them for teachings, but realized teachers do not teach those who are not ready, for it might disturb them. Even though such pandits had lifetimes of knowledge, they had not an atom of pride, and their minds were at rest and peaceful. They would never say, “I know Dharma, I have these achievements.” They did not show their realizations as if in a market and they were always very humble, losing themselves so that others could win. This is bodhicitta. They only tried for enlightenment to benefit sentient beings—and we too are free to cultivate this motivation.

We should think, “I am going to listen to this teaching in order to achieve enlightenment only to benefit other sentient beings.”

This is the motivation that makes an action most beneficial. How should we make the perfect human rebirth meaningful? The best, highest way is to work for the achievement of enlightenment in this lifetime. If not that, then we should work for the state of a bodhisattva, or the destruction of ignorance as an arhat, or the realization of bodhicitta, fully renounced mind, and the understanding of the absolute true nature to equip the mind before death. At least we should be sure to avoid a lower rebirth.

If a person develops bodhicitta it is definite that he will not be reborn in a lower realm. This mind has the power to protect us from bad karma. It has more power than all the material possessions on this earth, because those things cannot protect us from the cycle of suffering and rebirth, old age and death. But bodhicitta can stop all these problems, it has incredible power and can be developed in our own mind through meditation without having to fight, steal, kill, or destroy.

If, however, we receive the method and don't use it, then no matter where we go, run, or travel—even to the moon—we will never realize bodhicitta. And life will end before our travels are over, before we have seen everything. However we travel, it can never be finished, and without opening the door of wisdom with Buddhadharma we can never fully understand even one existence. We could continue to travel and study, yet even on our own bodies is there too much to learn, and we could study it for our whole life without realizing our absolute nature. In this case, it would not be possible to see that of other beings.

We should study Buddhadharma and the absolute nature of reality and then put it into practice by meditating and purifying. With the support of purifying our bad karma and not creating any more, our practice brings realizations, which are impossible to achieve without doing this. Even now we don't know what such basic, relative things such as “I” and “mind” are. Becoming aware of ourselves in our own nature makes it simple to realize the nature of other beings' minds. The more we understand the inner evolution, the more deeply we understand the outer evolution. To obtain full knowledge of the outer evolution we have to make full study of the knowledge of the inner evolution, and this can only be done by making ourselves the object of study.

This is the key to the museum of the mind. Receiving all levels of realization depends on avoiding, fighting, and purifying the many different types of unsubdued mind. This is not easy like cleaning the body or sweeping rubbish from a room. It depends on the continual practice of Dharma, not being lazy, surmounting many hardships. But any hardship is well worth surmounting and experiencing for the practice of Dharma, because the Dharma, which sees the innumerable sufferings and their cause, can finish the whole thing. By one action—the completion of Dharma practice—all those sufferings and their causes can be completely ended. This can never be

accomplished by any samsaric action, by any action of the negative mind. This is one of the reasons for the existence of Buddhadharma, why the Enlightened One showed the teachings—a reason for practice, a reason for meditation.

It is generally worthwhile to experience any hardship for the practice of Dharma. So many people undergo incredible difficulties just for this temporal life, so why not for the greater cause, for so many future lives? Ordinary people experience hardships for the one life that may go on for only five, ten, fifty, or seventy years—why then is it not possible to experience hardships for the practice of Dharma? It is so much wiser to take care of all future lives and cease the cycle of suffering. From the Dharma point of view this is the wise action. The other action is ignorant.

Furthermore, the many people who work for this temporal life only have to experience the result of that, which is suffering due to rebirth in the three lower realms. The temporal comfort it brings doesn't last—in this life we have to work until death, and even then it doesn't end; in the next life's body we have to do the same thing again. Therefore it is not worthwhile to experience hardships taking care of this life—experiencing hard work for the sake of temporal comfort cannot end until we are out of ignorance. Therefore this kind of activity is very boring, but due to the evolution of our past lives karma we don't get bored, which is the result of ignorance.

The lowest purpose of human life is the avoidance of a lower rebirth, so we have to make definite preparations before the time of death. Consideration of the next life is more important than thinking about how to live tomorrow or next year. Of course we all have a gross awareness in the mind that we will die after a time, but most of us will have no idea when. How many days? Another year? We have complete darkness in our minds, no wisdom perceiving this. Yet it is common for everyone to die. Death is definite, the next life is definite. If we check up we will find that there is no certainty that we will exist in the future; this is indefinite. So why should we work for the future of this life, the existence of which is indefinite? All these actions are unwise and trivial because we are unsure of receiving material comfort in the future. But the future life, future suffering, is definite, and as we create less positive karma and more negative karma there will be great suffering in the future. Therefore it is important that before this temporal life ends we make a definite preparation to never experience the sufferings of the lower realms.

We may think that in fact there is no existence of future life, that this is a Tibetan idea. “We Westerners don't have a future life, we Westerners, no.” But this fact does not depend on belief—not having belief cannot change the true nature of evolution. We think that there is no future life; yet we prepare for next year, future projects, and so forth. But can we really see that each of us will exist next year? Can we see it now? Check up. It is not an object of our mind—we can't guess, we can't tell if we will exist in three or four years or not. This is the nature of ignorance. Without knowing clearly we make arrangements.

You ask, “What are you doing this for? We don't want to know about death.” The answer is that you don't want to experience suffering; you want to experience happiness without depending on the cause. You want happiness without creating it. But you have to understand the evolution of happiness—you must create the cause, it is your responsibility; that's what evolution is. We make arrangements to make the life permanent.

Without knowing clearly whether I shall exist after a month, I'm making arrangements to experience comforts, like going here or there, doing this or that. We ask, “Why does he make arrangements,

really believing he'll enjoy them?" The standard answer is, "I'm happy now, so I make plans to enjoy myself in Greece. I don't think for today, I think for the future and so I'm happy today." But that mind is skeptical, thinking, "If I can be happy then..." But you can't prove you will exist in some future time. In the same way you can't prove that there is no future life—it depends on your level of realization. You can't prove that there is no past or future life by saying that your limited mind doesn't perceive it.

You see, I think it's really foolish not really knowing even the evolution of death, denying that it exists and reasoning that, "I don't see it; it is not taught in school; I don't read it in science books," and then not making any preparations, not being concerned with the future life. This is the greatest mistake. By reasoning that because your mind doesn't perceive the future life the future life doesn't exist, you make no arrangements. By the same reasoning someone who is preparing to go to Greece shouldn't make any arrangements either.

Prepare for the future life? Yes? No? Check up!

We cannot clearly see the future of this life, yet we still plan and prepare for it trying to avoid suffering during those years ahead, so it is illogical not to plan for future lives, also unseen. Why not prepare for death and the future life in order to avoid suffering at those times which are much more definite than the assumed future of this life? Because death is definite it is much more worthwhile to prepare for it than to work for the time until death, making plans about how to enjoy it. With human wisdom this is easy to understand.

We think we are wise—we think, "I know this and this, I want to do these things, I'm always correct." Yet we always make such mistakes, like not preparing for certain death, not being aware of it, and so on. And if we don't prepare for the life after death then we shall again go through suffering, generally more than that of this life because it is far more likely that we shall be reborn in the lower realms than the upper. This is not difficult to understand if we check up on our daily lives. Those humans who do not see, believe in, have concern for, care about, or prepare for the future life, and make plans only for this temporal life have the same level of wisdom as an animal; there is little difference. Animals are only worried about the present temporal life and their every movement is for the purpose of taking care of it, this short time. They never prepare for the coming life. The human who acts in the same way has exactly the same level of mind, they are equal—building homes, hunting food, and so on. Between a hunter and a spider there is little difference—both are clever, taking care of this life. In fact, sometimes we humans can't do as well as animals. The spider can make beautiful webs that we cannot, and there are so many other animals that can do things that we cannot do. Even a bedbug is so clever—it waits until the light is out and then emerges to eat people, taking care of the temporal life. It is very upsetting to see humans leading such a life.

The conclusion is this—instead of always spending time making arrangements for the indefinite, we should prepare for the definite. If we know there is suffering to come we should prepare for it. Once it arrives there is no choice to avoid what has happened; having fallen over a precipice and broken a leg we can no longer avoid the suffering. Dharma is like a dam built before the flood—it helps the present as well as the future. Even the skeptic should prepare for future lives as he prepares for the future of this one; he can't afford not to.

The essence of the meditation course is to understand that if it doesn't help for the future lives then doing it makes no sense. Consider the man working in a dangerous, potentially fatal job for money

in order to buy comforts of short duration for this life that is also of short duration. For example, think about Sherpas on an expedition: they have to keep on doing dangerous things, expending all their energy. Soldiers also have many difficulties, in training, in combat, in trying to get higher rank for more money. The object of any army system is completely self-destructive with respect to karma—everything is for temporal comforts that last even less than this life. The soldier's greed, great effort, and entire life is spent for the purpose of temporal comforts, money, self-destruction, and destruction of other beings, which is the complete opposite of bodhicitta.

Nagarjuna said, "Any action arising from greed, ignorance, or hatred is non-virtuous."

It is very worthwhile to give up the temporal comforts of this life for Dharma practice, and we are very capable of bearing the difficulties we may experience in doing so.

We usually think like this, "As the body disappears, the mind also disappears. How can it be possible for mind to exist without the body? It's impossible—without the body there is no brain, so how can there be mind? Such things as continuity of mind are not described in any English science books, are not the experience of any Westerner, and I don't fully see it, I don't understand. So how can the continuity of mind after the body has finished and the existence of future lives be possible?"

If we think like this, it is the same things as saying, "I won't exist tomorrow." No matter what the facts are we can contradict such things as future lives, therefore we can say that in any future there won't be me or there will be me. Yet we say, "You can't say that the mind will exist in a future life," with a skeptical mind.

If we are skeptical about future lives we should be skeptical about scientific explanations of the evolution of earth and man, but we believe in this past evolution because we were taught it in school, or have seen it written in books. This also applies to the future evolution of the earth. The mind is not skeptical because it believes in the scientist, even though our own experience of it is not clearly seen, and the source of our information is another person's experience. In the same way, the evolution of past and future lives has been the experience of numberless beings, it is the experience of the enlightened beings. They became enlightened only to work for numberless beings through the completion of the practices of bodhicitta and great compassion, with all kinds of different methods as fit beings' minds. Through practice and realization they fully saw numberless past and future lives even before enlightenment. After the holy beings achieved enlightenment, they clearly explained to their followers what they clearly experienced—their practice of Dharma, the evolution of all beings through karma—and their followers wrote it down in books for us, the ignorant beings. Then others practiced the teachings and also received the same realizations and enlightenment. As they received experiences they also explained them to their followers; then it was passed on again through the practice of the teachings of the other enlightened beings. Such a teaching has no beginning, it is continual—it is not just one person's experience. The pandits proved it through practice, through mind development, and they wrote many commentaries on that experience, as did Tibetan yogis and lamas. In the same way, we don't fully see the scientists' experience, and yet we don't contradict it. So how can we contradict the experience of those who experienced mental development? If we don't believe the latter then we cannot believe the former.

What applies here for rebirth also applies to the experience of the great pandits by which they discovered the different realms, such as those of the pretas, gods, and so forth. These exist even though we don't see them. To negate any other person's experience because we don't see it

ourselves is very foolish, keeping us a prisoner of ignorance and never opening the door of wisdom. We don't believe, so we don't try, so we are always in suffering, creating the cause of suffering, and not understanding the cause of happiness. This is what is happening. We run here, go there, travel to the East, return to the West.

To achieve power we have to practice in our minds, with understanding. If we have no belief we have no practice, and if we have no practice, there will be no realization. This is the whole thing, like it is.

Guru Shakyamuni, with his omniscient mind, once prophesied that a man would be reborn in the upper God Realm. The man said there was no such thing. To make him understand, Guru Shakyamuni asked if there was a certain type of tree in existence, and the man replied, "Yes." When Guru Shakyamuni said, "No, there's not," the man argued that there was, he'd seen it, "It's my experience." "Ah," said Guru Shakyamuni, "Just like this, seeing future lives, seeing the god realm, is my experience."

If we waste this perfect human rebirth, which is the result of good karma created in previous lives, it makes both this and our previous lives meaningless. Therefore, as we have the freedom to make our every action meaningful and beneficial to ourselves and all other living beings, one with the Dharma, purifying negativity, any action, big or small, can be made a method of purification in the highest way. We should even keep material possessions in a Dharma way. As we listen to Dharma, having this freedom, we should listen wisely so that the action is of stronger, greater benefit to sentient beings, done with bodhicitta motivation.

Therefore, think like this, "Since I have attained this perfect human rebirth, I must receive enlightenment as quickly as possible for the sake of releasing all sentient beings from suffering. To fulfill this aim I must prevent all obscurations that hinder my achievement of full enlightenment. Therefore, I will listen to the teachings of the graded path."

HOW LONG IS THE LIFESPAN? (Page 52)

This life is perfect, hard to receive, and perishable. To not care about aging shows a selfish attitude, a mind ignorance of the suffering of others, such as that of animals that are killed. Some people say animals are a gift from God to be eaten. When asked what God is, they say such a thing cannot be expressed in words. They say that animals killing each other is "natural" and they don't care for their suffering. Such minds are like stone, and see nothing.

Sickness can be the best medicine. We can use any of life's illnesses or other problems as medicine to bring enlightenment. It is better to use the mind than chemicals. That doesn't mean we should suffer, but we can meditate upon our illness as regards previous bad karma, for example, to check up on the cause of the sickness and cure it. This is true Dharma practice, and through this method we come to understand better how not to create any more causes of suffering.

There is nothing new in the treatment of sickness, in doctors, hospitals, drugs, and so forth. We have all experienced these things countless times before. But receiving high levels of realizations by purifying the obscurations, giving up the idea of self-everlasting happiness, and renouncing temporal comforts—that is new. It is difficult to generate a new mind to work with a new method—

ignorance is strong. But it is very worthwhile to bear the difficulties experienced; such difficulties are temporal and occur in many lives other than this one.

We should worry about becoming old—this thought should make us practice Dharma day and night, giving up the eight temporal desires.

Life is impermanent and transitory—from the moment of conception, as time passes, we get older; from one split second to the next, as the time passes we miss the chance to gain higher realizations. From then until now our lives have been meaningless, wasted; we have been playing like children. Life decays as a flower, and we are never aware of it changing. Like a river, it changes every moment, but looks the same. Because of continuity we don't see it changing, rather we see it as permanent. Without pausing for a moment, life runs towards death; all the time death is getting closer and closer.

The nature of life is like this. From the moment it begins in the mother's womb it begins running toward death, without waiting for even one of those many split seconds of the days, months, or years. The time from conception to death is like the snap of the fingers to the mind that conceives of it—it is very quick. But this we can only see at the time of death, when we start to realize, "I am dying." There is a lot of suffering, much worry in the mind. We think, "I won't see my father, mother, wife, and children." The mind suffers, it is difficult to hear and see, and as the mind gets closer and closer to leaving the body we experience more and more suffering visions. Then, at that time we think, "Oh! My life has finished in such a short time!" And then we realize how quick it was. But no matter how you realize life's short duration, you still suffer and die with worry, with your mind in a sad condition.

We always believe that we will wake up tomorrow, and based on that we make plans for breakfast. There is always that permanent feeling thinking, "I won't die today." This is due to not realizing the nature of suffering. But one day, due to some karmic condition, death comes and the door to the suffering realms opens. Then we have the thought that life has gone by like the snap of our fingers. Why is there so much trouble at the time of death, why so much suffering? This suffering is a sure sign that we will take rebirth in one of the three lower realms. Before death, the mind is unaware, and so we are lazy and don't care. At death people weep, and this creates more suffering. Especially if we have created great negative karma, the time of death time is horrible—like blood coming from the ear, the eye, the nose. No matter how much I hold my mother, father, and wife, still they are powerless to help me. There was a choice before, but at the time of death there is none. No matter who we remember, no one has any power.

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IMPERMANANCE

Lama Tsong Khapa said, "Please bestow upon me the ability to realize that the changes of life and of the body are like a water bubble, and to remember the death that soon brings decay; to receive full confidence in the knowledge that, as the shadow follows the body, so life follows after good and bad karma that has been created; to have continual energy (caution) to avoid even the subtle obscurations, as well as the gross; and to achieve all collection of merits."

These realizations lead to higher realizations and by practicing this way, Tsong Khapa became enlightened. Therefore we should also have a mind that has given up the eight worldly desires, and should realize that life really is as fragile as a bubble—it bursts as easily and disappears. Life itself is perishable and impermanent, momentary and trivial.

Guru Shakyamuni, our great father, the one guide of all sentient beings, who has every single knowledge and a completely pure mind free from delusions and illusions, said, “The upper, middle, and lower worlds are as impermanent as an autumn cloud, and with the dangers of death and rebirth, so too are the lives of beings.”

Autumn is just a changeable season of the year; a cloud changes every second and disappears in a minute, and can be found in no definite place. This also applies to the three worlds. If we deeply check up—how quickly do sentient beings change, how fast do they die, and how fast are they reborn? We can see that it’s exactly the same as an autumn cloud.

Such are the changes of the inner and outer evolutions. These temporal disturbances also appear in the guru giving instruction, and if we look with the wisdom eye our realizations may progress. Since we woke in the morning, all the impermanent things—mind and body—have been changing every second, yet due to our limited conception we feel the same in our hearts. This is due to not having the full realization that sees things growing older and older, decaying each second, and becoming new at the same time. The mind not living in the practice of impermanence is distracted by other delusions, and so becomes ignorant, not seeing those natures, and doesn’t get time to check those things. So in the heart we feel the same—unchanging, permanent—and we do not perceive the changes of each second.

All the great meditators of old, those holy beings, regarded the thought and practice of meditation on impermanence as essential. As ordinary people regard money as important, useful, and helpful, always trying to get more and more, so the holy beings kept meditating on impermanence for their whole lives, because they regarded this as essential, useful, and helpful. They perceived this as a practice of great benefit bringing every level of realization and enlightenment and releasing oneself and all other beings from suffering and ignorance. Having achieved the realization of impermanence, the rest of their lives became meaningful and pure because their minds were protected from distraction. This allowed them to forget other things. For us, even if we want to meditate for only five minutes, so many other things arise in the mind—the mind goes all around the world, thinking of and remembering all kinds of objects towards which we feel either greed or hatred. We must have confidence in the nature of impermanence through perceiving it well.

The realization seeing that life, body, and mind are impermanent is greatly necessary to enable even an hour’s undistracted meditation, and the realization of impermanence is the best offering to enlightened beings and to the Dharma, which is their realization. Guru Shakyamuni said, “The best offering is to remember that all existence is formed by causes and cooperative causes and has the nature of one second of impermanence; then make such offerings as umbrellas, banners, and so forth to my two disciples, Sharipu and Mongalpu.”

While it is good to make many offerings to hundreds of disciples, there are immense benefits from meditation on impermanence, with realizations of it. At the beginning, remembering impermanence obligates the person to follow the Dharma, the true method that clearly explains the factual inner and outer evolution and every method to release oneself from suffering. Also, the thought of

impermanence obligates the person to create much virtuous, positive action and good karma. This thought helps greatly in enabling the person to see the absolute nature of oneself and every other being, of every existence, and of Buddha's holy mind. In other words, it helps the person to receive enlightenment.

To fully realize the mystical point of our own mind, we must realize impermanence. It must depend on this. Without having the effortless thought that realizes the impermanent nature of things, no matter how much of our life we spend learning psychology, we cannot learn the mystical point of our own mind.

This is why from beginningless times until now our own possession, the mind, still doesn't know what it is by itself. Therefore the cause of problems continues, and will continue until the mind realizes its own nature. Without realizing the nature of our own mind, how can we explain that of others? Therefore, the best study is to try to realize, or to try to make the mind itself recognize, the mind's own nature. Through this we can easily articulate or see the mystical point of others' minds. First, we should research and become our own psychologist in that way so that we can become a true psychologist to guide the minds of others. If this is not done it's like having kaka on our hand and trying to clean other people.

This is the best way to do research, and it all depends on the realization of impermanence, so it's very important to check our own nature of impermanence. It is the responsibility of all of us to do so, not just that of lamas and others living in the Himalayas. Why? Because all of us are suffering and desire to be out of it, and this is the only way—to realize impermanence before the realization of the causes of suffering.

However, this meditation and its realization are not simple. Many think that the practice of Dharma is not their job or their responsibility. They think that it is for beggars, cripples, and other "unfortunates." Such people are ignorant of the nature of their life, body, and mind, as well as of impermanence and suffering. It is a matter of realizing the nature of these things and their evolution.

Also, this practice is one of the things that makes the holy beings happy in their lives, without depending on friends, material comforts, and other external needs. For instance, some of the highly realized Tibetan yogis such as Milarepa lived on single foods such as nettles for years, but despite this had no suffering and were happy, enjoying their practice with understanding of it and its result. It is the realization of impermanence that generated all the energy that they required to live for that time without dependence on external things. Such a happy life, on single foods, living in a rock cave, depending on other things, was not intuitive. They had many gradual realizations from many mental practices at different levels, and these made for a happy and uncomplicated life; these were the needs for enlightenment, and leading a happy and positive life is the correct way. Ordinary people lead a complicated, unhappy life that depends on external things, a life contrary to the yogis. These two are opposites—those who developed practices bringing mental discipline and the ignorant beings' "happiness" which does not arise from mental practices but from collecting materials.

When we are upset we can consider the following quotation from one of the great Tibetan meditators. This quote is like beautiful music, and it is called "The Practice of a King's Son," i.e. a bodhisattva's practice.

“At the time of death related beings, who have been living together for a long while, have to be separate, all material possessions, gained by much effort, have to be left, and the ‘mind guest’ leaves the lodge of the physical body. Renunciation of such a life is the practice of the Sons of the King (the Buddha), of bodhisattvas.”

There is much to be considered in this quotation, especially the apology between mind-body and guest-lodge, which has strong temporal connotations. It shows how foolish it is to spend much effort in looking after the physical body, which is neither a permanent place nor belongs to “me.” Yet a man will spend his whole life working for money to support his temporal body, which he only has to leave with great sorrow.

Ordinary people living in the eight desires take most care of the impermanent, trivial body by harming many other beings, both human and animal. Yet this body has to be left at death, causing suffering and giving no help at this inevitable time. Even if we are reborn human we will have the same problems of having to take care, experiencing harm, and death. As long as ignorance is not cut off, the physical body must be taken again and again, and again the same problems must be experienced.

The conclusion is this: if we do not wish to have such a physical body that suffers, takes so much energy, and so forth, then we must try to live in the essential practice of Dharma so that we can reach enlightenment and be released from all suffering, including that of the physical body, as quickly as possible. We must spend more time and energy in the essential practice of Dharma.

Milarepa said, “Remembering death conquers laziness; any action done remembering impermanence becomes a Dharma action.”

Laziness is the worst devil we can create, interfering with enlightenment and, therefore, future happiness. It is the greatest obstacle to happiness. One of the greatest destroyers of laziness is remembering death with the understanding that ignorance causes us to create actions that will bring about future lives, enlightenment, and escape from samsara. It stops actions that seek the comfort of the temporal life.

There are three types of laziness. The first is the laziness that causes us to object to doing things with the excuse that we are unable to do them. This is the mind that thinks, “It’s beyond my capabilities.” The second is the worst form of laziness, the laziness that is drawn to engage in evil actions of greed, ignorance, and hatred—actions that distract the mind from Dharma practice. The third is the type of laziness that interrupts our energy for Dharma practice and causes us to waste time with distractions. This kind of laziness comes about as a result of lacking the understanding of the nature of samsara, the cause of suffering, and the evolution of karma.

The less laziness we have, the fewer hindrances to meditation we will experience. Spending all day and all night working for samsaric comforts is considered laziness from the Dharma point of view. Because we don’t remember our past sufferings or know those that lie ahead, we are lazy, and we work for ignorance and greed. Examples of this were clearly shown by Guru Shakyamuni.

Full understanding of the suffering of others obligates us to help them as quickly as possible. The person who has the eye that sees suffering experiences a great effect to his mind. We cannot become enlightened without seeing this. To see suffering as it is also causes us to see the real positive beauty

that can't be seen by the ignorant mind. For example, although there is suffering all around, as we purify our minds we see more and more beauty, even in "ugly" things. In contrast to this, the "beauty" seen by the ignorant mind only creates more ignorance. Everything depends on seeing the true nature of suffering. We will not lose beauty by meditating on suffering, but by only by the decrease of our positive minds.

When the problem of attachment to a friend arises, due to greed, for example, death meditation is a very useful practice. Doing this doesn't mean that the friends can't stay together—this meditation has nothing to do with the physical body and is only a mental action. Also, it doesn't mean that we have to sit down and meditate. We can do this meditation in conjunction with whatever else we are doing, including talking to that friend. The meditation asking, "Is the time of death definite?" is especially useful in this situation. It is also useful if we are attached to the friend because of the physical body. We can remember that the body changes all the time and we should check up on the facts of physical degeneration. The attached mind never checks up, it believes in permanence. Imagine the same body turned inside-out. Beauty does not depend on the object.

IS DEATH DEFINITE? (Page 53)

Shantideva said, "Life always becomes decayed without stopping for even a day or a night. Even if life is extended with method, it will still decay. Therefore it will very definitely end." So we must prepare for death.

Among the methods to extend life, we can do pujas, make statues of certain aspects of Buddha, do purification practices, and so forth. Tibetan people would consult astrologers or lamas to see how much longer their lifespans would last, especially if the person is sick. If there is some danger of an untimely death, a method is employed to stop it and extend the human life. Often the person would take ordination and become celibate. There are many examples of this. Sometimes certain families have bad luck—their children die young, and they ask the lama to stop what is happening. The child they have at that time would get a new name and try to lead the life of monk or a nun; when it is older it takes ordination.

My family is like this—many children died; the last child was my sister and through observations it was said that she would die. Our previous karma determines the length of life, and by which method life can be extended.

But to really escape from suffering, rebirth, and death, we must do very high practices in order to attain the fully renounced mind and the perception of the absolute true nature. This depends on practice and realization of these meditations; it depends on the realization of the perfect human rebirth, and on belief in reincarnation. That is why we are working on these here.

We must understand the absolute true nature. "All compounded things are impermanent; let all be well-equipped with heedfulness."

The very highly realized pandit, Nagarjuna, who worked so much for other sentient beings, said, "This life is so fragile, full of harmful things, dangers and catastrophes, and like a water bubble in the air, it is a strange and wonderful surprise that one even wakes up from sleep."

As the water bubble is certain to burst, our lives are certain to end in death. Why? There are three reasons. Since the first human beings came into existence, none has done so without going through death and rebirth. Nothing can stop death—material possessions, other people, fame, and so on. No samsaric enjoyment can ever stop death—even the body that is cared for above all else cannot prevent it.

Therefore, death is definite, and we should remember that there is great suffering at the time of death. Most beings live in the desire of not experiencing the suffering of death.

As time has passed life has become more and more dangerous in correlation to the negative mind becoming stronger and stronger. If only the internal problems would cease, there would be no outer problem or dangers.

IS THE TIME OF MY DEATH DEFINITE? (Page 53)

1. Karma determines the length of life—when the karma runs out that lifetime ends. This depends on unknown cooperative causes.
2. Untimely death means that we die even though the karmic result has not finished. This may occur, for example, from overeating or poisonous food.

Many of the great meditators knew that their death was coming days before they actually died through signs and omens. They could try to put off hindrances by checking the outer, inner, and secret signs. There are long signs, which appear years and months ahead of time, and those that appear close to death.

Nagarjuna said, “The human life will very certainly end, but when is most indefinite; it is just like a candle in a windy place.”

Just as the wind causes the flame to be in danger of extinction, so the human life is full of problems. Both the flame and the life are constantly distracted. Death is entirely definite. Throughout the evolution of earth, not one samsaric being has existed constantly. All beings have to die. Death cannot be prevented by material possessions. There are more conditions harmful to life than cooperative causes that support it. There are many living beings and non-living things that can harm us. Even the conditions we create to look after life may bring danger and death. This is simple to check up on—a son kills his father, a husband kills his wife, vehicles cause injury and death, the body's elements become imbalanced, we have problems with the food that we eat. Because the body is so fragile it is easy to encounter suffering. Some beings even die in the mother's womb.

We should think, “One day death will happen to me—if it happens to me now do I know the evolution of death?” Meditate on some other being's death if you remember it, but the most important thing to do is to try and feel, “If it happens to me now, do I know what to do when I die?” Do you know where to go? After death there are only two ways the mind can go—to the upper or the lower realms. The decision is made by karma, the fruit of your actions; at the moment it is uncontrolled. At that time the desire for the path comes according to delusion and karma, positive and negative. Check up—think, “If I die I will go to the lower realms because up until now I have created less positive than negative karma, not only in this life but in past lives. Therefore it is definite that I shall go into one of the three lower realms where there is so much suffering.”

How much do we suffer in the mind now? In the lower realms there is much more suffering than that, there is no freedom. Now we suffer when we receive food we don't like, but how will we stand it in those realms where there is no choice, no food received at all? If we don't desire suffering here, how will we feel when we experience even greater suffering?

To avoid rebirth in these realms, we should die with a mind that has renounced negativity. Therefore, we should now prepare for a higher rebirth and work toward the end of suffering. Meditate—imagine that you are dying; even in your past life you died in awful conditions. As much as your mind meditates on death and worries, that much your mind can be purified.

The reasons to practice Dharma and meditation are the same reasons that we do things for this life—for happiness, not suffering. To cease the principal cause of suffering we need method, and Dharma gives it. We need Dharma more than we need hospitals and doctors, because without ceasing the principal cause of suffering no problem can be solved. We may think that there is no principal cause of suffering and that there is nothing that cannot be cured by hospitals, but this is not true. Take T.B. for example. If T.B. is contracted when we are young, we may be cured, but it still can recur. We may think that external factors are the principal cause of illness, like food, environment, and elements, but no matter how we improve the environment or change the external conditions, illness recurs or others come on. This proves that the external conditions are not the principal cause of suffering, that there must be something else that makes sufferings such as illness arise continuously, and that it is not outside. In fact, it is in the mind, and that mental thing has to be destroyed. But this cannot be done by way of any external condition or material thing. It can only be ceased by another mental method—by our own minds themselves. The mentality comprehending this has perfect understanding of mind, bodhicitta. It can root out the principal cause of suffering. However, the development of this positive mind is not intuitive—it has to be shown and the method to build it explained by the right person. If we do this correctly, we can definitely develop the positive mind and then definitely cease sufferings. It all depends on receiving Dharma and practicing to build experience. That is why we need Dharma more than anything in this life.

Recognizing The Signs of Death Beforehand

Think, “I must receive enlightenment in order to lead sentient beings from suffering. At the moment receiving enlightenment has been stopped by negative karmas and mental defilements, so these should be purified in order to receive different levels of realizations. Therefore, I am going to listen to the graded path.”

The time of death is discovered by great yogis through many different signs—the outer, inner, and secret signs, and the longer and shorter signs. The outer signs are changes in the body, urination, and the breath. The inner signs are seeing different signs of catastrophe, especially in dreams. The secret signs are changes in sperm and menstruation.

One method to check up on the time of death is to check up on one's clothes on a full moon day. This should be done on the first day of the month when the sky is very clear.

You begin by reciting a mantra one hundred and eight times, stand up, and then on the heart of the shadow write the letter OM. As you stand, stretch out your arms and legs and stare without blinking until your eyes feel uncomfortable. Then, look up suddenly into space. You will see the shape of

your body, and that will show the different kinds of catastrophe with spirits, nagas, and so forth as well as the time of death, in dependence upon the shape of the body—if it is square and so on. If the body has no legs or hands missing, it means that no catastrophe will happen.

After finishing, make seven prostrations in each direction to the holy beings and then recite the mantra. This can be done in the daytime or nighttime. Then check up on the meaning of the shape. The mantra is: OM AH U KO PARA HAKA RESHETE HUNG PE. This kind of checking is for the long-term sign—a year, or five years.

There is also a way to check up on the dangers of this life by means of the breath. Usually the breath works like this: on the first day of the Tibetan month, at dawn, it comes from the left side for three days. After that, at the time of dawn the stronger breath comes from the right side for three days. Then it changes back. As it varies from this one can make observations and check up. When practitioners recognize the signs of death they usually do pujas, although there are all kinds of different methods. Then they check up to see if the signs have stopped or not, and if not they do more pujas. These methods are used to check up on untimely death that is not dependent on karma.

The outer signs are easy to check up on. The most difficult is the secret closer sign. Slightly less difficult is the inner sign, which is a little more difficult than the outer sign. The death shown by the secret sign is extremely difficult to stop, that shown by the inner a little less difficult, and that shown by the outer is the least difficult to stop.

Preparing for Death

At the time of death, it is most useful if we are unattached to anything, if we completely abandon and do not care for our own body, relatives, pleasures, and possessions. Attachment to those things only causes great suffering at the time of death and also starts the cycle into the three lower realms—that is why it is important to not have this clinging. Tibetan Dharma practitioners have many ways to transfer the consciousness at the time of death. If we have no attachment to any of those things we will be okay. If we have the wish to be born in a pure land then that is very good because from there we can receive oral teachings. All enjoyment in a pure land is completely pure, not a creation of the deluded mind. In a pure land, we take spontaneous rebirth in a lotus, so this kind of rebirth does not depend on birth from parents. All the enjoyments in a pure land only cause the understanding of Dharma to develop, and give pure happiness. Anything that exists on this earth cannot compare in quality, even living things. In a pure land all things are spiritual, giving much pure pleasure, developing realizations, and the mind always receives teachings from the enlightened beings, who pray that many other sentient beings may be born in a pure land to receive teachings. In a pure land it is very easy to get out of samsara.

It is important to try even now, before death, to understand how to die and what to do when death comes. We never wish to experience a suffering death so it is important to not be lazy and to make arrangements before death comes. The fundamental method by which to bring this about is to cultivate no attachment at death.

The fuel that will take us to the pure land is the desire to be born there, similar to the craving at the time of death that takes us to the other realms. Rebirth as a human depends upon the desire to be reborn as a human at the time of death.

To renounce attachment, it is important to start with meditation one and continue through to meditation eight. The death meditation is especially useful to renounce attachment; it is very simple, easy to understand, and very beneficial for one who wishes to quickly eliminate attachment. The first meditation is on the impermanent nature of life, and on death. Through this meditation we can be born in a pure land or receive enlightenment. Otherwise it is impossible to escape from the suffering of the three lower realms. If we are not conscious of death coming, then when it comes we have to suffer. When problems arise due to attachment and confusion between subject and object, it is good to meditate in this way. The purpose of this is mainly to train the mind. We should use this method when we have problems to stop the problems and to prevent them from arising. If we do not do so, at the time of death the negative mind will be so large that we will suffer. This occurs due to lack of practice. It is most important to make what we understand when we practice beneficial for ourselves, especially when we have problems and especially in terms of the attachment we have at death. It is important to make it practical for ourselves and other beings. If you don't use what you understand when you meet a problem, it doesn't make sense. If that happens, it means that our meditation is not insightful, and on the basis of not having an insightful meditation, we do not meditate on the basis of our own negative mind, and we do not practice meditation as a mirror. The benefits of meditation depend on what we practice and what we use. They do not depend on how things are written on paper, but how they work within the mind. The purpose of meditation is to train our mind so that it can be conscious.

As we realize the practice on the impermanence of life and death more deeply and profoundly, it is definite and sure that we will be able to solve momentary problems and remove negative minds such as attachment. Who creates the karma that keeps us in suffering? We do, so we are responsible. We do not have to cease ignorance and all bad karma ourselves alone, but with the help of the enlightened being's method as has been shown. If a person falls into a hole and a rope is let down to help him out, if he doesn't recognize it and hold onto the rope, he will continue suffering. Like this, the enlightened beings have shown the path, so it is a matter of us holding to the method—like holding the rope—by first recognizing that method. The more we practice cleaning the negative mind, the cause of suffering, and the mind that is suffering, the stronger our essential practice of Dharma will be, which itself is this cleaning of negativity. Whatever our actions, working in the field, making business—if the practice really cleans, it is the essential practice of Dharma. The cleaning of negativities is the essential effect, no matter what religion we follow—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity. So long as the actions of the religion bring the result of cleaning the mind, that is the essential practice of Dharma. This is found inside, not in the prayer wheel or the drum. Even killing, if it helps to cut off the cause of suffering and the negative mind, may be a true Dharma action, but in order to make this so you have to have the great power of the wisdom to know. Without wisdom you can think an action is a Dharma action, while really it is only developing the negative mind.

Since we do not want to suffer at the time of death or in the life following death, it is important to start training the mind well now with these practices. The mind has to be well fertilized through the practice of the basic meditations even to practice the different specific methods of the buddha deities, as well as the transference of consciousness at death. As wheels are basic and essential to a car, enabling it to take us various places, the basic practices are the same—without them, we cannot go along on the path.

It is not sufficient just to recognize the fact that one day, in time, we will die. Everyone has this idea, not just those who practice Dharma, but this idea is not enough. It is more important to recognize and think that the time of our death is indefinite, so that we will hurry to fulfill the meaning of our

perfect human rebirth. The practitioners who sincerely live in the practice of the first meditation have a mind that is greatly concerned with the purification of negativity and the creation of good karma either for the purpose of achieving a perfect human rebirth or for the purpose of attaining enlightenment. They have the realization of impermanence and are well trained in the realization of death; also they are not so much concerned with this life but are working hard for the next life. Just as one who is late rushes to some entertainment in order to arrive before it ends, these beings do not care for the temporal discomforts such as not having time for food, falling and being injured, and so on. The person whose mind is well trained in the first meditation on impermanence and the nature of death is not so much concerned for this life, but rather is concerned with not *wasting* this life, with not missing this real opportunity to prepare for the future life and attain the goals of enlightenment and the cessation of samsara. This is the result of the practice of this meditation, and this experience brings the result of less distraction and disturbance to Dharma practice, which then becomes more successful. The mind is not so much concerned with little problems such as itches, pains, lice and so forth, and can spend more time concentrating on meditation, paying more attention to the distraction and disturbances, waiting for them to arise.

Great concern for physical comfort gives less time for meditation and wastes time. Why? Because that mind, which is not concerned so much with the development of meditation as with what's going on around the mind, has no realization of the impermanence of life and the indefinite time of death. Those who do realize this understand that only Dharma can help at death, and as a result they see that their Dharma practice must be developed quickly. These minds are more concerned with future lives, the future suffering that is the result of the collected karma from past lives, with escape from ignorance in order to cease suffering by having the realization of the path, and with not creating any more bad karma in the future. To such a practitioner the present situation becomes unimportant and insignificant as far as pleasures and momentary enjoyments are concerned, and aches and pains become trivial. The more positively he sees things, the fewer and fewer distractions to his Dharma practice arise. On the basis of this realization every other higher practice brings realizations that are more perfect and more pure.

It is logical that that person has fewer problems, compared to those who are not living in the practice. These beings think that, "Sometime in the future I shall die," but simultaneously they think, "I won't die tomorrow," not having the realization of impermanence. Their minds are more concerned with the temporal life than with the suffering of the future life. They make preparations for this life, "Today I shall exist," planning for tomorrow, next month, next year, and so forth—round and round, engaging in negative actions produced by greed and ignorance, their lives busy. They end like this, and then they prepare for the next life. But we shouldn't allow this to cause confusion—we can always make preparations in a Dharma way. We should not merely seek to make the temporal life comfortable, which is said to be negative because material preparations do not help for the next life, because that preparation was not made for the practice of Dharma, rather mostly for taking care of the temporal life. This is negative because it doesn't help us at all in the cycle of suffering and instead it keeps us further and further from the ultimate goal.

It is wrong to think that we should not make plans, because they can be positive, like having Dharma practice as the goal, as well as negative, like having temporal comforts as the goal. But our Dharma plans should start from now, because the actual time of death is not definite. At least we should work more for the positive plan than the negative. The more we practice this meditation, the more effort we will make to stop future suffering. A person who knows that a building is to be bombed some time doesn't spend much time fixing and beautifying it, and immediately makes

preparations to leave. In this way, the Dharma practitioner hurries to save his life, not concerned with its temporal comforts.

“Running to death without the freedom of not running for even a second is the nature of samsaric life.”

This is the nature of our lives. If we do not clearly see that the time of death is indefinite, we will never pay any attention to this fact. This wrong conception arising from lack of experience in the realization of impermanence makes us not work to prepare for death, and not create good karma for the future life. We do not care about creating negative karma, negative actions of the negative mind, and in one day we create more negative than positive karma. This is due to the wrong conception of not checking up on the suffering of death or future lives. When death comes all freedom ends, the life is wasted. At death we really miss things—the way we miss the West now is nothing compared to the way we’ll miss it at the time of death. Even if, at that point, we feel the wish to give up our whole life to meditation, it’s too late, there is no longer any choice. Suffering like this has been the experience of numberless beings who have died—it’s not ours yet but we’re on the way, getting closer with each second. At the time of death we will remember much of the bad karma we have created—there is much worry and no choice.

At death we think, “I am really dying now,” and we feel and think that we are leaving our relatives, possessions, and body. As we feel this separation, great attachment to the body and possessions arise, and due to this we do not want to leave or separate from them. We experience such fear and suffering. Due to this attachment, we take a lower rebirth and suffer, especially in the narak realms, and that attachment to body and possessions keeps us continuously in the cycle of death and rebirth. So at the time of death our possessions become our enemy.

This body that we feed and take care of so much is supposed to be a constant source of pleasure, never causing suffering. But in addition to bringing so much trouble during life, at death it also causes great fear and suffering. At death even the body becomes our enemy. It is important to continue thinking like this—that the body will appear as the enemy at the time of death. Concentrating on this more and more, we can loosen the attachment to the body and possessions. As these attachments become fewer and fewer, the suffering due to the body and possessions decreases proportionally.

Let us consider that sweet-talking person who acts as a friend but really aims to kill me soon. Until I realize his intention he is my friend and I am attached to him. When I discover his plan I am no longer attached—I know him, so I no longer look after him. I am careful, skeptical, and doubtful of him. In time he will kill me and the relationship will remain, but motivated by fear I try to arrange to avoid the suffering. The body and possessions are the same as our sweet-talking friend. Therefore, we should meditate on our attachment to them and meditate on our deaths in order to cut the attachment that will cause us great suffering at this time.

There are so many schools and universities on earth, there is so much study and so many scholars, and all of them only show how to take care of this short-lived body. The study of Dharma is the best thing we can do. No matter how much biology we study we will never learn the true evolution—all that study is actually the cause of much suffering, it keeps us busy and worried through attachment to this body.

Due to the existence of the body, we have to go to so much trouble. Marriage is not for the mind, it is for the attachment of the body. Our marriages may be besieged with problems and confusion—we do not have the right man, or the right woman, we are not getting on, we cause worry to one another, we are not free in many ways. If we didn't have this body there would be no need for marriage, which leads to making business and to work keeping busy. Because of this body we need a house to hide it in. In fact, in ancient times they started making houses because of sex—they became embarrassed at the conduct they were engaging in and made houses to hide in. Without the body there would not be all the sicknesses related to it. There would also be no need to trek, to get tired, to carry food, to make kaka and pee pee. There would be much less trouble with other beings.

What makes us continually take the body under the power of delusion and karma?

Our present attachment to the physical body causes us to take the form of a totally deluded body in a future lifetime. This attachment is not to the future body but to the present, and if this attachment were not there we wouldn't take this form. However, if the attachment is there, it plants the seed for rebirth in a human body at some future time. In this way we can see that the body is the root, the principal cause of all suffering. Meditating on this is a good way to eliminate attachment to the body.

(Answer to question) The one who achieves perfect peace is free to leave the form that he or she takes at any time. That manifestation is free to do anything, it is taken with great freedom from negative mind. Such a form is not uncontrolled, like a person's body again, and can always remain young; whatever motive it has for wanting to exist, it is free to do so according to the way it can best benefit sentient beings. Such a holy mind can appear in different manifestations as it wishes; these can never have the sorts of problems we do because they are not made of flesh, blood, and bone. Such a holy body doesn't have any suffering, and is always in infinite happiness. Freedom from greed, ignorance, and hatred is freedom from delusion and karma.

The actions that harm other beings that we do for the purpose of taking care of this body have no end. They will not end until we cut off the cycle of death and rebirth. Our minds are living in ignorance and this cycle hasn't stopped any of those actions. They have no beginning and have been done in many previous lives—such as eating, clothing, marrying, being reborn, and so forth. We think that everything is new, each action to take care of the body is a novelty, but in fact none of this experience is new, many things are old, but we forget beginningless lives and the infinite number of times we have performed each action. We think the people we meet are new, taking drugs is new—but none of these experiences are new; they are terribly old, beginningless.

Padmasambhava said (Page 54), "The vision of this life is like last night's dream. All meaningless actions are like ripples on a lake."

All that we have done, from the time of birth until now, has passed like a dream, as quickly as last night's dream. Both the vision of this life and that dream exist only in the mind, and both have ended. This shows the impermanence of life, how quickly it goes, and that therefore we should practice Dharma because all actions done to take care of this body are like ripples on a lake—meaningless, they come and go one after the other, and give no comfort. Everything we have enjoyed is like this.

Taking care of the body is permissible if it is purely for the purpose of receiving enlightenment to help other sentient beings. In this case, it cannot be mixed up with the eight temporal desires. In

order for this to be so, these actions must be completely selfless, having nothing to do with everlasting happiness for self, with nothing expected in return. This would greatly delight all bodhisattvas, who would recognize a new friend in the world. Bodhisattvas are those whose only concern is the welfare of all sentient beings.

If the mind is occupied with distractions and not with the inner practice of Dharma, we will experience great suffering at the time of death. We should make immediate arrangements for this life and the future.

As the mind cannot take even a tiny hair from the body into the future life, so also it cannot take numberless jewels. Being attached is a negative mental action. If we think about it, the more we become attached, the more our ignorant mind is hidden. And since it's uncertain whether tomorrow or the next life will come first, yet certain that the body and possessions will become enemies at the time of death if we are attached to them, from now on we must be careful and skilful in not being attached to these things. We should train our life like that. Then we will not spend our life and time in the service of enemies—the attached body, relatives, and material possessions, which give only trouble at the time of death.

After one minute the future life is more definite. Visualize your own death—the mind separating from the body like a hair pulled from the head. The purpose of this is to cut off the cause of suffering, the negative mind, and to realize the negative mind and negative actions. This is a method to guide us, to protect our minds from suffering and especially from creating the bad karma that arises from taking care of possessions and relatives because of this body's expectation of gratitude.

At the time of death attachment arises, gets stronger, and obscures our view of it. But we must remain conscious and aware at death and meditate at this time. In order to be able to do this, we need great practice. At the time of death many things are in the mind—fearful visions and so forth—so we should practice during life. To do so, we must understand death as suffering; it is not like a butter lamp coming to an end.

This meditation is more useful than the most expensive medicine—it has too much knowledge. It takes our own body, speech, and mind away from bad karma by cutting attachment to the body and relatives and through realizing the evolution of death, rebirth, and suffering.

Generally, even to finish the first meditation takes a lot of time because there is so much that can be said. But it can also be finished in an hour, depending on the mind. As it takes time to flatten a rocky mountain, so we have to work with the mind throughout our entire lives. This is not working with words alone, but with the mind. The explanations can never be finished because they are related to many other subjects. Generally speaking, the explanation and understanding of the first part of the meditation couldn't be completed in a year.

For the great ancient pandits and the present great yogis, the purpose of meditation is only to control and purify the negative mind, and not for physical comfort and temporal happiness.

Shantideva said, "Since it is so definite that we have to die, why do we fight, with partial mind, for things we leave behind?"

Life is so temporal, lasting only a few months or years. If we check up, thinking about the relatives and possessions for which we fight with anger due to the partial mind, harming other beings or killing them in the process, we can ask, “Will they last; will they stay with me? Isn’t it definite that I shall have to leave them in time, maybe tomorrow? Isn’t it meaningless to get angry with and fight the person who wants to take my possessions, harm my relatives, insult my friends, hurt my body; and isn’t it meaningless to work for these things for a long time?” Every action that we do to protect these things creates negative, not positive, karma. We think like this, “Perhaps I’m going to die tonight, but I can’t know. Still I would fight to protect my body, relatives, and possessions if someone were to harm them.” But it is meaningless to get angry and create bad karma to care for something that will last only a few hours. Some people even die while doing this. In order to take care of these very momentary things we create the causes of so much suffering. These actions are very foolish and the mind, too, is very foolish.

If we don’t meditate on the impermanence of life and on death, we don’t discover or see their suffering nature. Anytime we can meditate on this, we should. The meditation on the Buddhadharma is to be done in the mind; the main meditation practice is in the mind, it doesn’t depend on postures.

Meditate on death—what would you do? If it happened now, what would there be to do? What would you try? You have to experience whatever suffering comes. There are many methods to employ to protect yourself from suffering at the time of death, but they have to be practiced while you are alive. If you have desire, the mind is very uncontrolled, and there are many disturbances and much fear, and so it is extremely difficult. Therefore, the methods have to be practiced in this lifetime, as shown by yogis. In order to practice in this lifetime we have to see death as suffering; otherwise we don’t practice and cause the suffering of death ourselves. Each of us can become his own enemy at death, causing suffering, or can become his own perfect guide.

Without control at death we will continue to be reborn in the six samsaric realms. Like the insect that lands on a spider’s web—who causes the problem? The web is in one place, not fixed so especially for that particular fly—but the fly puts himself in suffering and we do the same thing to ourselves, creating bad karma and cycling around continually. Countless trillions of problems arise from that.

This has been clearly explained by the Enlightened Being, as he fully saw it by the power achieved through realizations, and as he explained. Even though we have not had these experiences, the experiences of his followers proved this.

These numberless problems all arise from not paying attention to death. Being bored, feeling sleepy, being lazy—all arise from not realizing that the actual time of death is indefinite, not having full belief in the next life, and not understanding the evolution of karma. The whole problem starts from this point. We don’t know there is a method, and we don’t try. Even if we remember to do something and practice Dharma, we will have many problems in our meditation and great trouble even in visualizing light.

Even though we put in an effort we may be lazy and only do it sometimes, so it still doesn’t become perfectly successful. We are not careful in our Dharma practice, and we create much bad karma. Then at the time of death we experience upset feelings and great fear, which makes us frightened. This is due to not remembering and not checking up on the subject of death. But thinking about

death is very meaningful—it makes the human life meaningful, and it is very powerful because we can achieve realizations more quickly by not being obscured by worldly thoughts and negative minds. The power of Bodhicitta and of living in avoidance of the eight temporal desires comes from remembering the subject of death, that the time of death is indefinite. All the higher powers that are achieved by higher practices stem from the meditation on death, and this is also what makes the many holy beings highly realized, following the path. Enlightenment is also due to thinking about death and that its time is indefinite.

Even beginning on the path, you should receive the fully renounced mind. This is the first step—to receive it we have to practice the avoidance of the eight temporal desires. This practice depends on the recognition of suffering, realizing samsaric suffering, and understanding the samsaric nature of suffering. That depends on seeing death and rebirth as suffering, which depends on having fear of death, that its time is indefinite, and thinking about this a great deal. Without this the door will remain closed.

What creates the two different views that two people have towards one object? Different past karma accounts for this. Is it possible that two people can have the same view of one object? No—this is mainly due to the level of mind and fortune, past karma. Is it possible to fully experience the past and future life, as past beings experienced it? To know these subjects requires purification of mind. The purpose of meditating on death is to build energy, to build practice, and to create only good karma.

Shantideva said, “The virtues created with bodhicitta are like a tree that always brings fruit, never decreasing, always increasing; the virtues created without bodhicitta are like a tree that bears fruit for a while, but then decreases, not having the continuity of enjoyment.”

Since we have been born human, this is the time to create virtuous actions—this life is like the tree. Therefore, it is important to possess the motivation of bodhicitta when listening to the Dharma. In this way it becomes a pure action. We should think, “I am going to listen to the teachings of the graded path in order to receive enlightenment for all sentient beings.” Or we should meditate, “I am going to meditate to lead sentient beings into enlightenment, from suffering. Therefore I must purify my negativity and achieve realizations from these meditations for their sake.” If the bodhicitta is strong, the listening or meditation becomes highly beneficial for ourselves and all sentient beings, as the motivation aims.

There is no possibility that the body can stop the sufferings of death or the problems that come after death. The only solution is the practice of Dharma, by the methods shown by the Enlightened One.

Reasoning that there is no continuity of mind before or after this body because we have no personal experience of this or because it has not been explained by scientists is illogical. If we reason in this way, then on the same grounds we should say that there is no evolution of the mind at death or at birth, because none of us fully sees how the mind came into the mother’s womb or how it suffered there. Because it is a completely dark subject, we should say that because we don’t see or remember, the mind didn’t exist in the womb. (We don’t even remember the present life after birth).

What caused us to enter the mother’s womb? Scientists explain the physical level, but there is no scientific explanation of the mental experience, the feelings in the womb at birth or at death. Due to

ignorance, scientists don't fully see the mental experiences of evolution in the womb or at death; they only see the body part, and even this knowledge does not arise from remembering their own experiences. They don't see the mental continuity of life. If we can't fully explain the evolution of mind in this life, how can we explain past and future lives? Based on this reasoning of not remembering, we should say that there was no mind in the womb and there is none at death, because there's no experience of it. We should say "I" don't exist because I don't see "I." We should say that there is no true nature of ourselves because it is not taught in school, and then we become non-existent. If we have to be skeptical of past and future life, we have to be skeptical about mind too, because we don't recognize what mind is. If we are skeptical about mind in this way we must be skeptical of everything we don't see. Every person has to be skeptical of himself.

But check up in the mind—are we skeptical of our existence tomorrow? Usually we will find, if we really check, that we have a strong feeling that we will exist tomorrow and for many years to come. But if we are skeptical of these subjects, of the past and future continuity of mind, similarly we should be skeptical of ourselves, because of not knowing who we are. Then we can be skeptical of whether or not we will die tomorrow. We are skeptical where we shouldn't be, and not skeptical where we should.

Being skeptical of the existence of life in the future really does help to escape from ignorance, suffering, fears of death, and all those subjects. But skepticism of the past and future continuity of life does not help to escape from suffering. Like this we should check up: we don't fully see what we are going to do tomorrow—we can be skeptical of existing—there is no logical reason for our existence tomorrow, and our minds haven't the power to fully see it. Here is something for our minds to be skeptical of, yet we believe in our tomorrow; why aren't skeptical of this belief? Check up.

Without fully seeing mental evolution it is extremely difficult to understand physical evolution. They are not one, but are related to each other. That's why what is explained in science books is incomplete. I'm talking about my own experience. According to science, there is no explanation of the evolution of the original consciousness; the first conscious form started from a special element in the ocean, but the reason that there is no proof beyond that is due to the lack of full knowledge of mental evolution. No matter how much physical evolution is explained, it cannot fully explain the beginnings of the evolution of mind. The explanation of physical evolution is limited. Without recognition of mind, the explanation of evolution is incomplete.

But this mental evolution, the nature of suffering, the sentient beings who don't see with this life, hells, and the other realms and so on have been clearly explained by the enlightened beings with reasons and details as they fully see it. How can we believe it? Because they are perfect. How can we check up that they are perfect beings who can fully see these natures and realms; why are they perfect; how do they have these realizations? Their realizations are perfect and what they see is correct because the methods that they have shown to cease the beginningless sufferings have been proved successful by the many other beings who followed them. As these beings practiced the methods they also saw and proved these things through their experiences, and they also achieved enlightenment—they checked up and proved it. They achieved different level of realizations and powers as numberless buddhas have explained. Numberless followers proved this through experience. Through practice they proved that the methods ceased their sufferings.

There are all kinds of different methods. Many Indian Pandits could see more and more clearly as they achieved different levels. This had nothing to do with machines, but with the mind. This was also clearly proven by a great number of Tibetan yogis—they received the methods from Indian pandits and experienced the same thing. So many beings were enlightened in India as well as in Tibet, such as Milarepa, whose story is of just one being living in the power of realization achieved through Dharma practice, being able to take many forms and so forth. Also, Guru Tsong Khapa and Lama Atisha had fantastic human lives—they could do such things as make the body tiny. They also proved the suffering of different beings that we don't see, such as naraks, on the basis of seeing past and future lives. Also, there were many yogis who dissolved their bodies and attained the vajra body through sutra and tantra practice. These methods prove that the enlightened beings' experience was perfect. The purpose of Dharma practice is to transform the mind from negativity and cause it to experience realizations so that it can become perfectly peaceful.

Also, the Tibetan yogis gave the same explanations that Guru Shakyamuni had given—they greatly emphasized that we must take care in the evolution of karma. Also in Tibet, regarding past and future lives, there are so many highly realized incarnate lamas and yogis who have control of death, rebirth, and suffering, and who have bodhicitta. Whenever they see that they can help sentient beings, they take birth in that place with choice. They are free to do this, being conscious of taking birth. Our births were uncontrolled because we were unconscious—we had feelings at birth but now we don't remember them; nor do we remember the realms we were in before. This is because we are in the uncontrolled cycle of death and rebirth, under the power of delusion and karma.

(Question) Do you personally remember your consciousness in your mother's womb?

(Answer) No, I don't have realizations but many lamas now have this power. His Holiness the Dalai Lama could recognize his past servants and his past religious items.

People who carefully look after karma and practice tantra can die and be reborn freely since they have control of their delusions or are enlightened. In India many lamas passed away—before this they meditated for twenty days or so, and when they died in the lotus position their bodies did not decay for some time after they had left them, and because of the power in the room one could feel good vibrations, and there was a good smell.

Also, there was one aristocratic lady in Tibet who was always meditating and practicing the teachings as they were given to her by her guru. At the time of death she had no fear; she made the correct prayers and sent her servant out, then after some time she passed away into the trip of death in a happy state of mind. She was happy at the time of death. Most of us spend our lives in distraction, having no fear of death—then at the time of death much fear and suffering arise. From the Dharma point of view, if you are free at the death time you are self-supporting, but being self-supporting only in this lifetime it is not a wise way to be. This lady took care of karma, meditated on suffering, and had control over her death. There are all kinds of methods to use at the time of death to attain this result.

Just recently, a year or two ago, there was an ascetic down from our place. He was a very austere lama who had no attachment to samsaric existence, who had realized impermanence and the renounced mind, and lived in the pure mind of Dharma practice. For a year before his death, many times he pretended that he was sick, then if he heard that others were doing good things for Dharma he got well. At the time of death he was perfectly okay. One night he talked to the monk who was his servant, saying, "Don't worry," and at dawn he sent his servants out and poured out some tea,

and then he died. After meditating for a week he reincarnated in that area. Later he was identified by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and by many other lamas on the mountain.

Before death many lamas prophesy where they will take rebirth. Having control after death is not definite, and does not only depend on being a monk. At the time of death, we can become enlightened. Many lay people practiced like this, taking a fearless death on the instructions of their guru.

One Indian lady who was a benefactor observed karma and had deep devotion to her deity was taken care of by her son. They kept animals—donkeys. She often went to the monastery. One day she returned from the monastery, thanked her son for taking care of her life, and passed away with no fear. This kind of experience depends on the power of the teachings of the specific deity.

Those who closely observe their karma and meditate on impermanence are much happier at death time than during their lives because they have the confidence of the path. Most people, however, suffer at the time of death. Even the person who has killed many people will be okay if he practices purifying his karma according to the Dharma, and due to the power of his practice.

There are many instances of reincarnation in the West, such as the soldier who was reborn as the son of the man who killed him. The best way to remember our past lives is through the full power obtained through the practice of meditation.

There are two kinds of incarnation, controlled and uncontrolled. Going through fearless death, going through death with recognition and understanding, and experiencing the method practiced in this lifetime becoming effective at the time of death as the above example shows—this method given by the enlightened one is true. The way to check the enlightened beings is to check their method, to see whether or not it helps as explained. The realizations of the meditations as experienced by other followers should make us practice as explained, so that we can achieve it ourselves. The understanding of karma and the other realms depends on our level of wisdom. Those with high wisdom clearly see it after a brief explanation; for others it takes time and even one hundred pages cannot explain it all. This depends on the person's fortune and level of intelligence. If ten people read the same book they don't have the same understanding. To understand these subjects requires the support of the creation of merits and the purification of negativity; it requires the help of creating merits and purification of negativity. We also need this support to gain realizations and enlightenment. Without such help it is very difficult.

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE ORIGINAL HUMAN BEINGS (Page 55)

The evolution of human beings depends on karma.

Outer existing things such as mountains and trees do not exist in the nature of continuity of mind. They are not like the happiness or suffering that result from this continuity. Happiness and suffering are also mind, inner things.

Existence is something that depends on absolute truth. If something does not depend on absolute truth then it does not exist.

If we plant the seed of a lotus in dirty mud it grows to bring forth a beautiful flower without a single defect. Before the flower grows, its potential exists in the seed, although the flower itself not present. Only the potential exists, and that produces the flower. The seed in the mud is not the expected flower, but it has the power to bring it forth.

The nature of the mind is clear light and exists in every sentient being, making enlightenment possible. This possibility exists in the clear light of mind. It is called clear light because it is not mixed with the obscurations of negative mind. When the obscurations are purified, the nature of the mind becomes clear. At present our mind is not clear, but the nature is the same. If I was a tiger before, the nature of that mind and that of my present mind would be the same, although at the moment it is not the same mind. This mind is a continuity of that one.

A human being is a being not born in a non-human realm from the intermediate stage. Humans are those beings who can communicate and understand meaning and who live in one of the four worlds of the mandala.

The original humans came from the form and formless god realms. Beings in formless realms live only on consciousness, without form, feeling, or cognition. Rebirth in this realm arises from meditating on indifference as a result of boredom with the sense world and boredom with happiness and suffering. These beings pass a long, unconscious life, like deep sleep.

THE EVOLUTION OF DEATH (Page 56)

In India, at the time of death the body must be moved quickly, but if the heart area is touched it may still be warm, even though the heat has left the other parts of the body. This indicates that the person is not yet dead, but has only completed the action of dying.

This body is like the earth, composed of the four elements: fire, water, air, and earth. When the form aggregates decays, it is defined by the experience of the different visions. The chakras open at this time, but this usually occurs in an uncontrolled way. In meditation the chakras can be opened with control, which can help us at the time of death.

Wisdom is the power of the mind to perceive and remember objects, that which can learn things, and the mental power to understand meanings.

Any conditions that do not exist within the aggregates of form, feeling, cognition, and consciousness are considered the aggregate of volitional formations, or volitional compounded phenomena. These include shyness, caution, ignorance, jealousy, pride, words, and wisdom. There are fifty-one mental karmas, both positive and negative, and those that are not feelings and cognition are considered to be part of the category of volitional formations. Volition also involves motivation, will, blood, and bone. It carries impressions. The aggregates are working constituents that create impressions on the mind. They are the link between the mind and the physical body—the conception we have of those properties that make up the self or the “I.” Without them we would have no concept of physical existence. They are not physical themselves, but rather a form of knowledge. While we, as humans, have five aggregates, the gods in the formless realms have only four. Some depend on mind, others on body or form.

As the mind works towards enlightenment so do the aggregates. There is a big war with the aggregates because they are impure, and in order to become wisdom, they must be purified.

Nam par she pa means consciousness, or continual mind in Tibetan. The first syllable, *nam*, literally means aspect, which refers to the appearances that are recognized—such as positing, “This is a flower,” and “This is space.” *She* means knowing, which refers to discrimination of sensation or perception. The Sanskrit translation of consciousness is *vijnana*. *Sem* means heart or mind, which is *citta* in Sanskrit. *Yid* also means thought or mind in Tibetan; the Sanskrit is *manas*.

Consciousness is the mind that recognizes the object. Human consciousness is a property of human rebirth. It continues after the death of the body and is imprinted with karmic impressions. As the rebirth changes, so does the type of consciousness. We are not, at present, aware of our entire consciousness, but we can become so through enlightenment.

The evolution of the visions of death is experienced by animals as well as by humans. What we are discussing here is the evolution of a “natural” death, which means a death not brought about by sudden, instantaneous conditions—such as a trauma, in which case there is no time for the evolution of the various visions, and the mind goes straight to the bardo, or intermediate state.

At the time of death, three visions arise—the white vision, which is followed by the red vision, which is followed in turn by the black vision. After the black vision the clear light mind arises, and then from this state the black vision arises again, followed by the red and the white. From this point the gross superstitions of greed and ignorance as well as the aggregates arise in dependence upon the realm you are to be reborn into. The visions, fears, and suffering that you experience at the time of death are dependent on the rebirth you will take in your next life.

The Absorption of Consciousness (Page 58)

At death, the consciousness is absorbed into the gross mind. Momentarily, the gross mind of subtle superstitions becomes invisible and the subtle mind becomes visible. The seed of these is continuous, and it later becomes gross. The mind that continues possesses buddha nature. In order to attain enlightenment we have to cut off the gross and subtle superstitions.

The subtle mind is a very slight mind that doesn't perceive gross object such as flowers and so forth. These things are perceived by the gross mind. However, the subtle mind can take an object—at the time it arises there is a vision of clear light, the object of the slight mind. Unless we recognize the other visions, this vision is very difficult to perceive. The subtle mind is the impression of delusions on the consciousness.

The astral body is not the subtle mind. Such a body is caused by the vehicle of the mind, the motion of the mind, the *prana* or wind, which is the principal cause of the intermediate body. As we make a chair out of wood, it is called a chair, not wood. Due to karma the person doesn't recognize his own body—he perceives it with great fear and does not desire to enter it.

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The psychic power of the bardo is karmic and has nothing to do with the meditation we practiced in our lifetime. The mind in the bardo can travel anywhere it wishes simply by thinking about it. It is possible to attain enlightenment at the stage of vision of clear light, but this depends on the

attainment of a high level of tantric practices in the lifetime. To bring this about, we need to complete much practice and be able to control our prana, the movement of the mind. We have to completely purify ourselves and see ourselves differently, in the completely purified form of the deity, in order to achieve enlightenment in the bardo state. The yogi Nagpa Togpa, who had very high attainments in tantric practice, could fly through the air surrounded by dakinis. However, as a result of the fact that he broke the orders of his Guru, Naropa, he was unable to receive enlightenment in his lifetime, although he did after death. Having many psychic powers does not mean that we are free from delusions and released from the chain of karma and ignorance. Even some birds have psychic powers, such as vultures who can see a corpse behind a mountain, but this doesn't mean that they are free from the cycle of samsara.

The pure intrinsic nature of mind, which is no-mind, is permanent. It is not the mind that is impermanent. The nature of the subtle mind is impermanent; the subtle mind depends on causes, which means it changes. The cause of change in a flower is the previous flower; plants don't have karma because they don't have mind. The subtle mind possesses a subtle vehicle, the wind. In normal life we possess this subtle mind, but we don't perceive it. We attain enlightenment through the perception of this subtle mind. The very subtle body is the vehicle of the subtle mind.

Gross and subtle minds generally work like this. When the gross mind becomes invisible the subtle mind arises, at which point the person cannot feel or perceive gross objects because there are no gross superstitions perceiving things and enjoying them. This mind has not completely ceased but has, for the time being, become invisible. It has not completely ceased because such cessation depends on different levels of Dharma practice in this lifetime with the purification of the negative mind. At death the gross mind becomes invisible, but doesn't disappear for good—only for as long as the subtle mind is visible. As there are two different types of mind, each has its own vehicle: the gross mind has the gross winds and the subtle has the subtle winds. The achievement of enlightenment is due to the subtle mind and the subtle body prana. The gross winds abide in the two outer channels or *nadis* (right and left), and between them is the main artery. At present, our minds are full of gross superstitions, having no control, and this is because of the gross winds and gross superstitions. Thoughts travel through the right and left nadis only, and do not flow through the central nadi because it is blocked. There is mind in the central nadi, but the other two don't flow through it. This is the main problem that we must purify. The subtle motility is inside the drops in the central nadi.

All this explanation is just to give you an idea, to help you to recognize the visions when you meditate on them, and to make the visions beneficial as a purifying method. The different visions are related to the sperm going up and the blood going down. As the drop is formed the vision of sudden darkness, like a dark room, is experienced, and then the seed opens and as it splits the vision of clear light arises. The vision of clear light is none of the other three visions. The white vision is like snow on the mountains, and clear light is like the vision of early autumn dawn—complete emptiness and very clear, like the sky.

At this time we should take a little time to concentrate on this. This vision is the basic thing, so we have to make it beneficial, purifying ourselves by recognizing it through practice. However, merely concentrating on that complete emptiness doesn't help a great deal. We need many other things as well, just as food can't be cooked by merely boiling the water. This vision can be used to achieve higher realizations and to receive the higher goal of enlightenment. When our minds reach the point of the vision of clear light, we should concentrate on it as being one with our own mind, and think,

“This is the complete emptiness of the self-existent ‘I,’ that which is independent.” This means concentrating on our egolessness. Concentrating on this without any other thought arising causes the clear light vision to become transcendental.

Now we are only training, but at the time of death the mind that does this is the subtle mind. If we have not trained our minds during life, it won’t recognize this. As we get more control on this trip, as our minds become more habituated to doing this, it becomes more and more definite that we will be able to control the mind at the time of death. We experience a similar kind of trip when we fall asleep, but due to our lack of control we don’t recognize it. However, as we gain control we can achieve this recognition. It is very short and quick, but the subtle mind does arise at the time of sleep, although the vision is hard to recognize. If we can control and recognize it at this time, and concentrate on it, it means that at death it will be easier to use the mind. We will have better control and quicker realizations. In sleep we can extend the vision to the whole duration of sleep. From this life, passing to the bardo state is like passing from sleep into a dream state. We have to sleep because we are ignorant. While we are doing this practice we should not allow other thoughts to arise, otherwise at death we will not be able to recognize the visions.

The subtle mind can be pure or impure. It is not the same as the intrinsic nature of mind. The nature of mind is not mind; it is interdependent with the mind, but it is not mind itself. It is the nature of the mind, like a mirror with kaka covering it. There is one mirror that is clear, and another covered with a little kaka. Both mirrors possess the intrinsic nature of mind, the absolute truth. If one is covered by kaka does it possess the intrinsic nature? The mirror is not inseparable from the kaka, and the intrinsic nature of the mirror depends on the mirror itself. The intrinsic nature of the mind is the mirror, and the negative mind is like kaka. The intrinsic nature of mind and the mirror are inseparable, but the kaka of negative mind can be cleaned from the mirror. The mind is the mirror and the intrinsic nature of the mind is the intrinsic nature of the mirror, which is inseparable from the mirror, as formless is inseparable from form.

The subtle mind does not perceive gross objects as being different from the subject. The gross mind, however, perceives objects and differentiates between subject and object, and has likes and dislikes. The gross mind has to be purified, after which the subtle mind, which sees no difference between subject and object, arises. Then the subtle mind has also to be purified, and when it is purified it becomes the omniscient, all-knowing mind.

The actual principal cause of our being kept in suffering is the conception of the self-existent, independent “I.” When we attain buddhahood we have no impulse to think, “I am going to do this and that.” The action is intuitively done.

In the clear light vision we think of the complete emptiness of a self-existent, independent “I.” Then think that this vision of emptiness is one with our mind, and think of the complete emptiness of the self-existent “I.” The vision is dependent on these two things. We should concentrate on these without letting other thoughts arise. Doing this can help a great deal in many ways, especially in tantric practice. If you train your mind in this practice, you will have the ability to use it to help at the time of your death, to protect you from suffering. You will make the trip of death consciously. The concept of the self-existent “I” is a delusion, and such an “I” exists nowhere. Does the “I” that does not depend on body and mind exist? Is there such an “I?” What are the aggregates of the “I?” How does the “I” that does not depend on body and mind exist?

It is the complete emptiness of the self-existent “I” that makes the clear light vision transcendental, so that we can use it in death. As long as there is mind there is subtle mind. There is no such “I” that doesn’t depend on the body and mind. An independent “I” would be one that exists without depending on the creator, on the name—and there is no such “I.”

This is just a simple meditation to practice at the time of death. This practice is just a seed and according to your development, you can decorate this clear light vision with more and more things; you can make it rich.

The subtle mind is the faculty that, after purification, can perceive the pure intrinsic nature of mind. At the time the drop splits the mind leaves, but it has to go to its karmically determined realm. At the moment, we do not have the control necessary to send the winds through the central channel. The purpose of yoga is to open the chakras and let the winds flow. The prana travels up the right and left nadis and down the central nadi. The nadis are tied at the chakras in knots until the visions at the time of death begin. Some meditators can open the central nadi before this, but it is very difficult, requiring great mental equipment derived from meditation. As the winds enter the central nadi the mind follows, as the mind rides the wind like a person rides a horse.

In sexual intercourse you feel ordinary happiness because the sperm touches the outside of the central channel, although it does not enter inside. When the sperm enters the central nadi there is much greater merit. The wisest way to practice yoga is on the basis of bodhicitta and fully renounced mind, and with the realization of absolute truth. You must have this foundation, otherwise the practice becomes poisonous because it doesn’t fit your mind. This is not the fault of the method but of your mind. Even though you practice, it takes much time to achieve results. So without having fully developed bodhicitta, practicing kundalini yoga, for example, does not bring about the cessation of suffering or break the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Even if you have not accomplished the practice of the nadis, heat yoga, and so forth, if you live in the practice of these three realizations it can help a great deal to cease the cycle of suffering, and it is certain that you will never be reborn in the three lower realms. Without bodhicitta, death will be much more difficult, and it is extremely difficult to avoid rebirth in one of the three lower realms.

If you have the basis of bodhicitta, fully renounced mind, and the realization of the absolute true nature, you won’t have much difficulty with the higher tantric practices. They will help you to receive enlightenment sooner, and to quickly purify all obscurations of the negative mind. Tibetan yogis are not surprised to find people who can do heat yoga and open chakras, but they are greatly surprised and pleased to find those who have attained the three realizations.

MEDITATION ONE: A SUMMARY

It is important to note the titles of the outline when meditating. If you do this, the meditation becomes much shorter. The more often you use the subject you will find that the mental action is much more powerful. It is the nature of the mind that it can be developed like this. It is good to remember the quotations, take out the titles, and remember them. Since you remember the meditation you amplify it by yourself and make observations on the subject matter. This is very effective for your mind.

First, meditate that the time of death is indefinite. Second, meditate on the different cooperative causes of death, such as starvation and so forth, and “untimely” death that arises due to machines,

carelessness, and ignorance, as well as death which occurs as the result of the end of karma. The most important thing to remember at this time is to check deep down, thinking, “Can I really see when I will die? It could be tonight, it could be tomorrow.” Put yourself into the subject matter and check up like this.

Also, you should meditate that at the death time possessions become the enemy. Think, “At the time of death my possessions will become my enemy, so I shouldn’t be attached. I have been constantly working to attain these things during my life, yet at death they become the enemy, so why should I put so much energy into working for them since none of them will help me at the time of death?”

Then if you can remember the quotation that states that the future life is more definite than tomorrow, or than the next hour, it will help—that quotation has great power. Just as one single hair cannot be taken from this life into the next one, so our possessions cannot help our minds in the future life.

Thinking in this way is for the sole purpose of training the mind, and especially for eliminating attachment. If you get angry because someone did something, as the anger rises like a pump in your mind, suddenly check up like this, “I’m getting angry because I’m attached to temporal comforts, this life is impermanent and Guru Shakyamuni said that it is uncertain which will come first, tomorrow or the future life. Therefore it is very silly to get angry with this person for such a short time, only creating the cause of suffering that only I will experience in the future life. Why should I be attached to possessions since they only cause me trouble at the time of death? Also, as my time of death is indefinite, why should I be attached to possessions even at this very moment?”

We should try to imagine how the mind will feel at the time of death—all alone, leaving our possessions and so forth. When we die, our bodies will belong to other people.

When a problem like anger, jealousy, or pride arises we should think as outlined above. We should also consider the possibility of accidental death, such as a car accident and so forth.

The meditation on death has to be experienced through practice, not through books. If you experience this meditation through practice, you protect yourself. Then if you are calm in a situation the other person has to stop raising the problem, but if you fight and they fight then it only goes on. This medicine has to be created by your mind—you become your own psychiatrist or psychologist. It’s the same thing if you are attached to something—to food or another person, for example—you will never have peace in your mind. “Peaceful” means free, relaxed—the happiness that this meditation gives is very calm, loose, and relaxed, like a very controlled person who is gentle. Otherwise you will be uptight and never relaxed, which is another form of pain.

If you continuously practice this basic meditation, as you check up and amplify it yourself, you will see the subject more and more clearly, and as that view arises you will have more and more faith in it. Also, if you do the whole practice continuously, as the mind becomes well trained the practice itself becomes shorter and shorter, taking an hour, then half an hour to complete.

To complete the death meditation, after the clear light vision meditate on taking your place in the mother’s womb if you want to consider rebirth in the human realm, or mediate that you are taking

rebirth in some other realm that has been visualized. The cycle of birth and rebirth goes around and around like that. Alternatively, you can stop at the point of meditating on the clear light vision.

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Meditation Two: Introduction (Page 62)

The fully renounced mind is essential to the practice of the path, but there are many other realizations that we must gain before our minds are free from attachment, greed, ignorance, hatred, and delusions. Compassion is the desire to release other beings from suffering. The ordinary compassion that our minds experience is partial and usually directed at friends and those who are close to us, and usually arises in relation to the suffering person's experience of lacking some samsaric pleasure or need. This compassion is limited, and is not compassion in the Dharma sense. When beings are released from this kind of suffering, they only experience more suffering. Great compassion, in opposition to this, is directed for the purpose of releasing every sentient being from the suffering that they experience due to ignorance, greed, and hatred, right now. Great compassion is a pure positive desire. Milarepa and other great yogis themselves looked poor, ugly, and so forth, and people felt compassion towards them, but the yogis themselves felt much greater compassion for those ignorant beings.

The buddhas return as ordinary beings to show the suffering of old age and death, to show the path, and also to show the triviality of the worldly life, and how it is meaningless to live that kind of life. These beings take such a life and then give it up. All of this is done to show the purpose of giving up temporal comforts for the purpose of receiving enlightenment as an example to all sentient beings of how to practice Dharma and experience its results.

It is very important to follow the laws of karma—to create positive karma and avoid negative karma. We will have no fear if we have no greed, ignorance, or hatred. In other words, we will have no fear if we have realized the workings of karma to their fullest extent.

Samsara does not refer to a place or an action, like cutting off your hair and taking the robes of a monk. The mind that is under the control of delusions and karma is in samsara. That ignorant mind is also the creator of samsara. Also, this suffering body is samsara. We practice Dharma with the aim to no longer be under the control of delusions and karma, with the goal of ceasing samsara and avoiding samsaric actions.

Guru Shakyamuni took human form and led the life of a prince; he then married, and then renounced worldly life and practiced strict asceticism for six years. After his enlightenment he gave teachings on the path to beings on various levels of existence. He then manifested passing away in order to teach impermanence to beings. This is the only reason. The actual time of death is indefinite—even though Guru Shakyamuni was born as prince in the highest caste of Indian society, it didn't matter, his life was still lived in the shadow of impermanence. His entire life was only an example for us and for all sentient beings, and his death was also an example meant to demonstrate impermanence to us. Actually, for Guru Shakyamuni there was no reason to take birth as a prince, lead the life of a prince, get married, and then give it all up to seek the truth, make a life of retreat, and pass away. The twelve deeds of Guru Shakyamuni were only an example for us, as was his attainment of enlightenment.

Guru Shakyamuni spent six years doing the practices of an ascetic, and his body became very thin and stiff, like a tree. He passed through many difficulties—including the difficulty of ants making a nest in his ear—all to show us how and why we should practice Dharma, why suffering exists, and what causes it.

As a prince, Shakyamuni ventured outside the palace and saw an aged man, a sick person, a dead person, and an ascetic. As a result of these cooperative conditions coming together he realized what suffering is. He also realized that suffering is continual but that there is a method to eliminate it, and that this method is to control the negative mind through the attainment of the realization of the truth and of the different levels of the path, of which the highest goal is enlightenment. The prince then left home to do retreat. The purpose of all of this was to demonstrate the path to other beings.

Also, before receiving enlightenment, Guru Shakyamuni took the form of the *maras*, or evil beings, of the world, and manifested a violent fight between himself and them. A million maras fought him with various weapons huge as mountains, and all around them there was a thick fog and lightning. Guru Shakyamuni's attainment of enlightenment would lead to his complete control over these forces—they did not want this to occur, therefore one million maras came and attempted to destroy him. However, the maras could not disturb his concentration. They came in the form of beautiful, naked women, tempting him with their physical forms. They tried many different methods to distract him but they were unsuccessful. The arrows and weapons they thrust at him transformed into flowers by the power of his concentrated mind and his infinite love and compassion. Later, these same beings received teachings from Guru Shakyamuni and deeply regretted their previous actions.

By this example, we see that all suffering is only a creation of mind—as it is created by mind so it can be controlled by mind. The maras, which are really the delusions, tempted Guru Shakyamuni to demonstrate this to sentient beings. All suffering can be controlled by the mind without the need for a single movement. All the power of the universe does not equal the power of Buddha Shakyamuni's great love, and the realizations that he achieved as result of controlling his own negative mind. It is not necessary to control the maras by external means, for they cannot disturb us.

Saying that the teachings are Mahayana is not enough. The teachings must be practiced in the mind of the person who has heard them. The mind has to be positive. We should think, “At this second I have received the perfect human rebirth, which is highly meaningful, especially right at this minute, as I have the chance to listen to the teachings on the nature of suffering, the nature of happiness, and the cause of both.”

As we desire happiness—thinking, meditating, writing—then we should desire to use this highly meaningful perfect human rebirth to attain higher realizations. Besides, this perfect human rebirth is very difficult to find. It is also extremely fragile, like a water bubble in the wind.

If your life ended at his moment, it is much more definite that you would be reborn in the tree lower realms of suffering. Even rebirth in the three upper realms is still rebirth in samsara. We should think, “I must release myself from this, but that alone is not enough. As I am exactly equal to all living beings I must work for their sakes, and help them to be free from their sufferings. And while I have a leader to show me the teachings, I have the chance to help other sentient beings to be released from sufferings. But now I have no power, so I must achieve enlightenment to release sentient beings from suffering, as they are the source from which I receive anything that I desire.

Therefore, to bring this about, I must complete the realizations from listening to the teachings, and practice on the graded path.”

In order to realize the three lower realms we must fully see the sufferings that exist there. However, at the moment we have no power to perceive these things directly, and therefore we should try to experience those realms through our practice, using the examples shown in the teachings. In this way we can gain the power to see this suffering clearly in our minds.

Even at this moment most beings are suffering in the three lower realms, especially in the narak realms. Their suffering has not been created by God, or fixed by some other being. It is only a creation of those suffering beings’ minds, just as in a dream we may sometimes suffer in a fire, or from all kinds of fearful persons or demons fighting and frightening us. In the same way that these fearful dreams and visions are the creation of our illusive mind, so are the suffering and the realms of the naraks and so forth the creation of beings’ ignorant minds. However, the narak realms are not the same as dreams, but are karmic creations of the ignorant mind. This is similar to the way that one place can be seen differently by two different people—one may see a clean place while another person may see a dirty place, and a human may see a cup of water while a god may see nectar and a preta may see pus. Although the object is the same, the view varies according to the level of mind, fortune, and the karma the being has created. As the mind reaches higher levels the enjoyments and the visions change, and the transcendental awareness and happiness that we experience increases more and more. Each living beings’ samsara is a creation of that mind; each living being’s enlightenment is also a mental creation. In a dim room lit by a small candle with a flickering flame, a person without acute perception may see a fearful moving animal or demon, become afraid, and perhaps throw something at it. This problem is only the creation of that person’s mind. The person with a calm, relaxed mind, on the other hand, will see what is actually there clearly. All experiences are created by the mind, and similarly the suffering of the narak being is merely the creation of the suffering being’s mind. Therefore the choice to experience suffering, to be in a suffering realm, or to be in the perfect peace of enlightenment depends upon the decision of the mind.

Shantideva said, “Without the creator of suffering—the negative mind—who arranges the red hot ground?”

Guru Shakyamuni said, “No one has arranged the thousands of ways of suffering but one’s own evil mind.”

Firstly, it is important to read page sixty-two to see the reasons for meditating on the suffering realms. If we are afraid of paintings of the three lower realms that depict the subjects suffering in different ways, why shouldn’t we fear the actual suffering? If we are afraid of even the temporal physical sufferings that we sometimes experience, why shouldn’t we fear the greater sufferings that exist? The only reason we are not afraid is because we do not remember the beginningless times we suffered in those realms before, due to the intervention of death and rebirth, and to ignorance. We even forget the sufferings from the earlier parts of this life. We don’t remember the suffering of those past countless lives when we were born as these sentient beings, so that means we haven’t yet achieved the complete cessation of suffering. We need the practice of Dharma to stop the cause of suffering.

The main purpose of meditation on the hells is to give us a clearer idea. In the case of the animal realms, we should put ourselves in their place and check up on their sufferings. Think about pigs

killed in India, for example. They are put in a sack and stuck in the heart with bamboo, and they scream horribly. Animals have much less freedom than we do—we treat them like they are vegetables, but those who have mind have suffering. Fish are sliced up while they are still alive, maggots are fried alive to be used like popped rice as a Chinese delicacy at big parties. These beings are also sentient beings, with mind.

We have to renounce all attachment by seeing the faults of attachment instead of encouraging it, which is what brings samsaric suffering. We have to realize that samsaric happiness is in the nature of suffering. Until we do this it will be absolutely impossible to escape from samsara.

Guru Shakyamuni always tried to show the nature of suffering. He used the example of flowers to show the nature of impermanence, that samsaric happiness is in the nature of suffering, to encourage us not to be attached or deceive ourselves. It is very important to have a deep understanding of suffering. In order to have quick success in Mahayana practice, it is most important that we develop bodhicitta supported by great compassion and great love. Without the understanding of the true nature of suffering that other beings experience, there is no way to generate great love or great compassion, there is no way to generate bodhicitta, and there is no way to become a bodhisattva.

First we should gain a deep understanding of our own experience of samsaric suffering and feel that this suffering is unbearable. Then, as we feel this, we should also consider the suffering of others, and think of that suffering as being equally unbearable. As a result of this we should feel fear, and then we can develop great, true compassion for other beings.

When we realize our own suffering is unbearable, we naturally develop aversion for creating the causes of suffering, such as attachment, greed, and anger. When we feel that another being's suffering is unbearable, however, we should not think, for example, that this person is such a poor, lazy person, not working hard enough. Many people had compassion for Milarepa purely on the basis of seeing his external form—his poor clothes and so forth—and without understanding the level of realizations he had in his mind. Even a king can be a suffering person. Many people practice austerities in order to further develop their Dharma practice and purify their delusions. The compassion that we feel for these people is wrong compassion.

But to feel that another being's suffering is unbearable is not to have the conception that so and so is such a poor, lazy person, not working in the office, no matter if he is Milarepa. Many people had compassion for Milarepa on the basis of seeing his outer form and not realizing his realizations, but just seeing his poor clothes and so forth. Even a king can be a suffering person. Many people undertake the practice of austerities to develop their Dharma practice and purify their delusions. Feeling compassion for them is wrong compassion.

Not only should we feel that the pain of sentient beings is unbearable, but we should also feel that the fact that they possess the negative minds of greed, ignorance, and hatred is unbearable as well. The best result we can have from this practice is to feel that the fact that sentient beings possess negative mind is unbearable.

Again, to develop bodhicitta, we must see and feel that our own negative minds are suffering, that they are unbearable and terrible. Once we feel this, we will find it that much easier to feel the same in relation to the suffering of other sentient beings. Without feeling this first it is impossible to feel

compassion for other sentient beings. The more clearly we are able to ascertain our own suffering, the more clearly in turn we will be able to ascertain the suffering of others, and the more insight we will have. For example, if you eat some food and it gives you trouble, you will stop the next person from experiencing the same trouble by warning him. Because you have experienced it already, you recognize it, and if you see another person doing the same thing you will understand how much the other person could suffer as a result of your own experience.

Seeing other beings' suffering doesn't mean seeing only the gross result. Since we don't remember our own experiences of the lower realms we meditate like this, and in this way we can more clearly see how other beings are suffering. The more we see their suffering, the stronger will be the great love, great compassion, and bodhicitta that we develop.

The main purpose of meditation on suffering is to create energy. When we meditate on suffering we feel fear, although the purpose of the meditation is actually to *stop* the fear of the three lower realms and the fear of death. Having fear at the time of death and having fear in the three lower realms will only cause more suffering and will not help your situation at all. However, experiencing fear now by trying to see the subject matter more and more clearly and as a result trying to achieve control can actually help you to stop future samsaric suffering and to attain enlightenment.

In order to surmount the mental difficulties of attachment, greed, anger, and ignorance, you need the energy-fuel that will help you to pass up all these disturbances and go straight through to practice. We build fear of the lower realms by understanding this practice of the three lower realms. Usually we have negative fear in relation to temporal things, but positive fear is less common. Positive fear is the kind of fear that will lead us out of the ignorant mind and out of future suffering.

Meditating on suffering, and especially meditating on the three lower realms, brings so much knowledge. It helps to purify all the negativity we have created in the past and protect us from creating more in the future, and therefore this meditation helps to stop infinite suffering results from arising.

Continuing to create bad karma has no end. Problems in samsara have no end. But this meditation gives us the understanding of karma and stops the negative mind from arising, which in turn stops the creation of negative actions and suffering results. The purification of past bad karmas and prevention of future ones brings the continuity of ignorance and suffering and the cycle through the six realms of death and rebirth to an end. Therefore we should keep meditating on this until we are out of problems, out of suffering, and until we have reached enlightenment. Then there is no longer any need. It has been proven that this meditation helps a great deal, like the best medicine. We should always keep in mind that we could easily be reborn into one of these lower realms.

When we listen to teachings, we should cultivate a positive impulse as follows, "I am going to listen to the Dharma teachings for the sake of all sentient beings." If we do not listen with such a pure thought it wastes time and creates negative karma.

Shantideva said, "Having received the human rebirth, difficult to receive and as fundamental as the earth itself to all the benefits of knowledge, having the mind with the ability to recognize practice and avoidance, if one again leads oneself to the narak realms in the future, it is like purposely making oneself ignorant. One should check up what it is inside that takes one back to the narak realms."

This quote means that the human mind can see the difference between positive and negative karma, the evolution of actions, and the suffering of the three lower realms, yet still leads us back to the narak realms as if on purpose. We should look inside to try to determine the nature of such a negative mind. This formless thing is much more dangerous than external forms with fearful shapes such as snakes, scorpions, and so on, and causes the most harm. The internal danger is far greater than the external dangers, alive or not. Without this internal thorn we cannot be harmed by external thorns.

Generally speaking, we want to develop full confidence that we won't be reborn in the three lower realms of suffering before our death. However, if we don't understand how bad those sufferings are, we will never develop fear of them and we won't be strongly inspired to pursue actions bringing positive karma. Meditation on these topics shows us how great the suffering of these realms is, gives us confidence in our understanding of the evolution of karma, protects us from creating negative karma, and protects us from rebirth in the suffering realms. And, as we have neither the power to remember our past sufferings nor the power to see those of the future, we must depend on the teachings of the Enlightened Being to show us.

THE THREE LOWER REALMS OF SUFFERING (page 63)

The Narak Realm

Hell is created only by our own negative minds, not by God, our parents, or anyone else. Everything that we perceive is actually a creation of our own minds—this is true for humans, animals, insects, and so forth. For instance, different people may perceive the same painting as good, bad, beautiful, or ugly, yet the object is the same. This is because every person has a different karmic mind that sees things differently. However, this doesn't necessarily apply if the view depends only on the object—colors, for example, are not so dependent. As our negative minds arise, our views change—a friend who is loved may begin to annoy us, we get angry, and then we no longer see that friend as beautiful or desirable.

The bodhisattva has a well-trained, positive mind—he sees even the beings that harm him physically or verbally as beautiful with his great love. He sees these beings as kind, as beneficial, as precious jewels, and with equanimity—the being who harms him is equally as precious to the bodhisattva as the one who helps him, gives him food, and makes offerings. This view is not self-existent or intuitive, it is only a creation of the bodhisattva's holy mind, and has been brought about as a result of thought training through meditation practice. Before such training, the bodhisattva, too, had an ordinary view. But as the mind develops the view changes and the problems between the subject and objects diminish.

In contrast, with our present negative minds, if we have an enemy we hate not only that enemy but also his friends, relatives, possessions, and so forth even though these things have nothing to do with the enemy's body or mind. We see his things as ugly although they are not necessarily so in and of themselves. However, we can do as the bodhisattva does, and through mental work we can bring perfect peace to our own minds.

In the narak realms the mind creates its own form, similar to the way it does in the bardo. The narak being has a huge body covered with skin the texture of balloon rubber that is very sensitive, and

feels the greatest suffering at any touch. This is a karmic result, just as some people's conditions on earth are a karmic result, such as living in uncomfortable, dangerous places.

The Preta Realm (Page 65)

Beings of the preta realm experience three types of obscurations. The first is the inner obscuration, which means that their karma is such that it takes them hundreds of years to find water, although they are very thirsty, and when they do find it they have to sip it through mouths that are as tiny as the eye of a needle. In their mouths the water dries to poison usually before it reaches the stomach. If it does reach the stomach it burns, like drops of petrol on red hot ground. The inner obscuration is such that whenever pretas find something that would ordinarily relieve their suffering, it only brings greater misery.

The second obscuration is the obscuration of food and drink. This means that when a preta sees food and runs towards it, it changes, bringing them great disappointment.

The outer obscuration is such that they are chased away from food and drink by protectors.

When you think about these realms, you should visualize beyond the words. This brings a positive effect to the mind. Understanding the suffering of these realms inspires great energy to avoid negative karma, and will cause your negative minds to arise less easily.

Some places where pretas reside can be seen, but not others. Some Tibetan lamas of the past could see these beings on the roads or in the monasteries, and when they did so they made offerings of food and prayers. In some places in India pretas can be seen in the form of a moving light at night, but no one can ever get close to them. Pretas can see us but most of us can't see them. To the pretas, we look very strong and powerful.

Some pretas have a human shape but suffer a great deal because they have tiny legs and skinny necks. They are so miserly that they fight over piece of spit like dogs over a scrap of food, and hold onto it for eons.

Animals (Page 66)

Now consider the feelings of a being suffering in the animal realm. An animal's place is not definite—he lives all over—in the ocean, on the earth. Animals are dumb and ignorant. These are the general sufferings of the beings in the animal realms, but for each animal there are also specific sufferings. For example, in winter when it is very cold, we keep warm with as many clothes as we like. We have comfortable beds, warm bodies, a room inside a house, doors that close, a fireplace, and hot food and tea. There is so much we can try to keep warm. Most animals, however, have no house; instead they are exposed to the wind without choice, and to rain, hail, and also snow. In addition they have much to fear—a wind can destroy a bird's nest, for example, and for most animals there is a big danger of being killed by others. They are forced to hunt and search for their own food. They can't speak of their suffering, and they have no money to pay to stop it.

We should investigate the details of the specific sufferings that each animal experiences.

In addition to these, animals experience the suffering of having no choice or freedom—think of the animal with the rope tied around its neck, led to slaughter, killed for money. For us, a small amount of skin loss or a slight headache can be problems. But compare these to the things that happen to an animal. Animals can't express their problems, have no medicine, and generally experience great suffering.

There are all sorts of ways that animals are slaughtered. Some are cooked alive in oil, others are pulled from the sea with a hook in their mouths. Others are suffocated or sliced like vegetables while still alive. Maggots are fried alive. In some places, people cut off a piece of a turtle to eat it, wait until it grows back, and then cut it off again.

The human being going off to fight a war can be compared to an animal.

REFUGE (Page 68)

ASKING FOR GUIDANCE; RELYING ON GUIDANCE; GOING FOR REFUGE

Introduction

The topic of refuge is a most profound subject since it includes all the knowledge of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This topic requires deep understanding obtained through practice, which, when attained, can purify all obscurations.

When we recognize a problem incorrectly, it leads to the wrong “solution.” Thinking that any problem is the result of external circumstances is a wrong conception, and trying to solve it by material means ultimately fails. Problems must be seen as arising from within, and must be solved by inner means. For example, a person dying of starvation thinks that lack of food is the main problem. But from the Dharma point of view, this is not the case. Even if the starving person receives food, his problems will continue—the negative actions that caused his suffering have not ceased, and there is still ignorance in his mind. Food is only a temporary relief.

In order to eliminate suffering in future lives, we need to stop creating negative karma. At the moment we feel hungry, yet we've been eating food since beginningless time. We've eaten a greater amount than we could ever imagine—the earth is the size of an atom by comparison—and it isn't helping now. Eating food is not the principal cause of peace and release from feelings of hunger.

Why do we say the three “jewels?” Because each of these three has the power and knowledge to release us from suffering and lead us to enlightenment. The three jewels have the greatest knowledge, greater than that of any worldly existence or of any samsaric being. Therefore they are jewels—precious, rare, and best—they bring enlightenment. The three jewels, in conjunction with the practice of observing the laws of karma, are the method to bring us to this state.

As Milarepa explained, “Now be afraid of the eight restless stages and remember impermanence and samsaric suffering; rely completely on the saviors of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and be careful in the creation of karma.”

If we are afraid of being born into one of the eight stages where there is no freedom, if we are afraid of samsaric suffering and the suffering of the three lower realms, if we are frightened of all of these

things and do not want to experience them, we must rely on the three jewels and be careful in our creation of karma. Our principal future aim should be the attainment of enlightenment and liberation from samsara. In order to achieve these aims we should rely on the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, with full confidence in their knowledge. Our aim should not be the experience of impermanent, worldly pleasures. For example, in order for Tibetans to regain independence and return to their pleasant, happy country, their motherland, they need to depend on the help of another pleasant, happy country, just as a blind person needs the help of one who has eyes and can see or the way a lame person needs the help of one who can walk. In the same way, we are blind without wisdom; we do not see the evolution of karma, nor the difference between cause and effect. Also, we who do not understand Dharma, the graded path that leads from the beginning until enlightenment, are also lame, so cannot tread the path alone. We must rely completely on the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha with full confidence, understanding their knowledge.

However, having faith alone is not enough to lead us to escape from suffering through the attainment of enlightenment—we must also place our actions of body, speech, and mind, in the Dharma. We must place our minds in the path of Dharma practice continuously, and then we will be able to reach the beautiful land of enlightenment.

Also, if we don't fully know, if we are doubtful of the explanations of karma and the path, we will remain in samsara, disturbed. We will be like a person in a hole, suffering—merely having faith that another person with a rope above can pull us out is not enough. We must also grasp tightly to the rope in order to escape from the hole. The rope is like the path, and the person who neither has faith in the rope nor holds onto it tightly will suffer at the bottom of that hole. Therefore, we must not doubt. The essence of Dharma practice, the fundamental practice that brings enlightenment, is the practice of observing karma with full confidence in Buddha's explanations on this subject matter.

Guru Shakyamuni has been infinite beings in his previous lives. An enlightened being is defined as being one whose realizations of mind are fully developed. Buddha can take many forms. Guru Shakyamuni wasn't necessarily born only in India—sometimes his name was “Christ.”

Buddha Shakyamuni is a perfect guide. He has eliminated both of the two types of obscuration. *Nyon drip* means affliction obscuration, which is the obscuration that prevents the lower realization of nirvana, and *she drip* means wisdom obscuration, which is the obscuration to full enlightenment. These are profound subjects requiring a great deal of study in order to be understood.

Buddha Shakyamuni also possesses extensive skill—he has completed his own work and also the work of others. If a being is enlightened, there is never any question about whether he will guide the person who has no belief; the non-believer doesn't have any special effect on the fully enlightened being, rather, that person's disbelief affects only himself. Enlightened beings do not have partial minds; they help all beings, regardless of whether or not those beings have faith in them or not, or like or dislike them. Any being with partial mind is not enlightened—even a very new bodhisattva who has the attainment of bodhicitta never has partial mind—he has great compassion for all beings equally. The partial mind stands in opposition to bodhicitta—these two minds cannot exist together.

Many people think that if you don't have faith you can't be helped, you won't receive the blessings of the holy mind or help from God. This is not the case. Even the noble bodhisattvas who have

attained the full realization of absolute truth perceive the person who cuts them with knives and the person who lovingly caresses them with equal love and compassion.

(Note: There are five bodhisattva paths, the paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation and no more learning. To receive enlightenment it is necessary to complete all five Mahayana paths. Bodhisattvas are on their way to receiving enlightenment; they are in the practice.)

The sole wish of the buddhas is that we be released from the cause of suffering, the negative mind. Therefore, eliminating negative minds and attaining realizations is the best offering we can make to the enlightened beings. Guru Shakyamuni released himself from every single defect of the negative mind, and this is the meaning of “enlightened being;” one who can lead other beings out of suffering, a perfect guide. Guru Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for each of us—only to help sentient beings. Therefore it is impossible that he has partial mind.

Guru Tsong Khapa said, “By thinking that the perfect human rebirth is difficult to receive, fragile, and very impermanent in existence, like lightning in space, one should try to realize that all actions of the temporal life are meaningless. Please grant me blessings to grow the thought wishing to make such a perfect human rebirth highly meaningful without ceasing, all day and all night.”

As the teachings instruct us, the essential method to take the essence of Dharma practice is to turn the actions from negative to positive, in the direction of Dharma practice. Doing this depends on pure motivation. We should think, “As I am responsible for releasing every sentient being, the source of all my past, present, and future happiness and from whom I receive everything, from all their suffering including the suffering they are experiencing this very moment, I must attain enlightenment by purifying my negativity and accomplishing every realization. Therefore, I am going to listen to the explanations of the graded path.”

When we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, we think of the Buddha as the doctor who discovers the medicine, the Dharma as the medicine itself; and the Sangha as the nurse who helps us—the patients—on the path.

Dharma causes mental suffering to cease, but in order for this to occur it must be explained by the Enlightened Being, the Buddha. Taking refuge in the Buddha means correctly following the founder of the Dharma and the guide, who is the guru who imparts the teachings, with understanding and devotion.

Taking refuge in the Dharma means correctly following the teachings as they are explained, trying to avoid creating negative karma as much as possible and making effort to create positive karma and merit as much as possible with understanding, faith, and respect for the evolution of karma.

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Accepting the good influence of the objects of refuge will help us to release ourselves from suffering, to achieve enlightenment and be free from samsara. We rely on the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha to show how to bring this about. According to the instructions of the Enlightened Being, in order for refuge to be present in the mind from our side we must have two causes. The two causes are likened to the presence of a bridge over a river—one side, ours, is not fixed, while the other side, Buddha’s, is always there. It is first necessary to fix our side, and then it is best to get to the other side. To get to the other side we need the two causes. Enlightenment is attained on the basis of

refuge, but first we must have the fundamental connection between the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and ourselves established, as well as the two causes. The two causes are fear—of samsara and suffering—and faith, or full confidence in the knowledge of the Enlightened Being, in his fully realized omniscient mind, his great compassion, and his great power to guide all sentient beings from suffering by whichever method is most appropriate for them. The confidence or faith arises from the fear of the suffering of samsara—for without fear there is no reason to seek out the enlightened beings or to take refuge, no reason to try to understand their knowledge, no reason to develop devotion towards them, and no reason to develop confidence in their abilities. Without fear we cannot escape from samsara.

The topic of refuge is not a simple subject, and it is very powerful. If we talk too much about refuge when the mind is not ready or receptive, it can cause difficulties. To completely understand refuge, we need the basis of the understanding of the complete path to enlightenment. To completely understand Dharma we need the realization of karma—the realization of each and every single, subtle karma, each cause and each result, and each result of each cause. Only fully enlightened beings see karma at this level of subtlety. Therefore, refuge is not an easy subject. It takes much of a lifetime to fully understand it, for doing so depends on attaining the entire path of Dharma up to enlightenment. It also depends upon receiving the knowledge of the Sangha, which depends on the realization of the evolution of karma and the recognition of the three lower realms of samsara, which in turn depends on the understanding that mind is beginningless. Without this understanding, our minds will remain closed.

Refuge is a topic that we can discuss for our entire lifetime and study without stopping until we reach enlightenment, because it contains so many things. The teachings of Guru Shakyamuni and the commentaries by the highly realized Indian pandits are all rooted in this—all the teachings are related to one another and are rooted in the topic of refuge. Even though it is presented here as a simple subject, actually it is neither simple nor easy. In the monasteries there are so many texts. If we talk about the root, refuge, all those other subjects will be included.

This is just the seed of knowledge, on the basis of which we can grow wisdom through our study of the bigger subjects with details, because they are related to one another. If we study for so many years without our minds living in the practice of the meditations, our actions will not become Dharma, and will not become positive or virtuous. Perfect peace does not depend on a large collection of Dharma words in the head—it is not enough to take a big message of words without any feeling—we must practice. Understanding all the knowledge of the enlightened beings depends on our own enlightenment.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF BUDDHA (Page 60)

The Totally Omniscient Buddha's Knowledge

The knowledge of the Buddha is composed of two bodies—the *ngo wo nyid ku* or nature body (Svabhavakaya) and the *chos ku* or truth body (Dharmakaya). The nature body is the wholly purified intrinsic nature of Buddha's holy mind. It is completely purified of obscurations and delusions, and of the impressions of delusions that make up the subtle illusive mind. The nature body is the clear light nature that exists in our minds even at present. The truth body, however, is not present in our minds at the moment. The truth body follows after purification of the mind is complete. The function of the mind at enlightenment is the truth body, while its nature is the nature body.

The continuity of the mind we have now allows for the possibility of its becoming the omniscient mind of Buddha through Dharma practice. Purification of the mind doesn't mean removal of the mind—when we purify the mind it does not mean that there is no mind left. If the mind had to end, it would not be possible for us to each attain our own future truth body, our own future enlightenment. Any living being, anything that possesses mind, also possesses the continuity of mind. When we become enlightened, this becomes our own enlightened truth body. If there were no continuity of mind, there would be no chance to work towards future enlightenment. When the mind is completely purified, enlightened, there is no cause to be a sentient being again, to experience suffering again, because the creator of suffering—the ignorant, illusive negative mind—has gone, and is purified. It is the nature of the mind that without the cause, the result cannot arise. If this were not so, if that negative mind continued, there would be no end to Dharma practice and purification. If there were no end to it, there would be no reason to make effort to practice Dharma. But the knowledge of Dharma opposes this—since it can end, we should make an effort.

When samsaric work and actions end, samsaric happiness ends as well, and more effort is always required. But when Dharma work ends, its happiness is endless—it brings greater and greater happiness until the stage of perfection. Therefore, it is much more meaningful to work for Dharma than for samsara. These works are in complete opposition—like earth and space. The happiness that we experience from working for samsaric ends doesn't last and keeps us forever busy—we have been working like this for all our lives so far, and what has the result been?

The mind has the power to cease ignorance; that is its nature. Many people think that when we cut off the negative minds of greed, ignorance, and hatred the mind ceases completely, but this is wrong. The mind's nature is permanent. The state of full enlightenment is not the cessation of the mind. If when the dirty cup was made clean, the cup necessarily became non-existent, how could there ever be a "clean cup?" In the same way we clean our mind of negativity, and it is in the nature of the mind to become omniscient. When we achieve this state we can help other sentient beings and lead them from suffering. This is the purpose of completely purifying the mind. If there were no omniscient mind there would be no reason to practice Dharma.

What is the purpose of cleaning the cup? If it remained dirty, then when we put delicious food inside, the food would become dirty and smelly due to the unclean cup. We don't desire suffering and the cause of suffering that exist within our minds, therefore we clean them. The way we clean the mind is not with water or by hand, not by external means, but mainly by mental effort. Both gross and subtle negative minds need to be cleaned. Just like the dirty cup, we begin by removing all the rotten food. Once this is gone, still a subtle smell remains, so we use other methods to clean it even more. In the end, the clean cup is left—or the pure mind, which is endless. If the cup or the mind did not remain after it was cleaned, the action of cleaning it would have no purpose.

We clean the mind by using the mind itself, by understanding and developing the wisdom of the mind's nature, by seeing the evolution of the mind and karma, and by achieving the different levels or realizations of the methods such as bodhicitta and the graded path.

A person mistakes a rope for a snake at night and feels afraid. This fear arises as a result of the time, the conditions, and the person's lack of understanding wisdom. When he recognizes that the rope is a rope after all, and not a snake, there is no longer any fear or suffering. This kind of trouble between subject and object arises in a person's mind in a doubly illusive way. The full understanding

of wisdom and the full realization of the true nature of existence cuts off suffering and the cause of suffering in the mind. The understanding of true nature must arise in our own minds; therefore, in order to attain this wisdom we should purify our minds through practice.

The intrinsic nature of the mind is absolute existence, and mind itself is relative existence. Everything that exists is included in the two truths—absolute and relative truth. The object that is true to the absolute mind is an absolute truth, and the object that is true to the ordinary relative mind is a relative truth. Absolute nature and true nature are the same. Absolute mind is so designated because it sees the absolute true nature of existence. This is a very deep and profound subject, and it takes much time to understand. In Tibet the monks in the colleges spend forty years studying this subject matter and still they may not have completed their examination of the two truths, which subsume all existence. To gain a deeper understanding of this subject matter they spend many years studying the commentaries written by highly realized Tibetan yogis and Indian pandits.

Every existent thing exists because of its absolute nature. Without absolute nature, things cannot exist, in the same way that you cannot have the existence of the second and third floors of a building without the existence of the first. The absolute nature of the mind is the opposite of what our ordinary wrong conceptions and limited minds see. In fact, according to our ordinary limited view, the absolute mind doesn't exist. As the mind believes in every existence and from this belief produces many other types of negative mind and its actions, the suffering result arises.

The great yogi Padmasambhava was invited by the Dharma kings to Tibet to tame the negative forces and evil spirits and to establish the Buddhadharmas there. He said, "If a person called 'a meditator' doesn't recognize and fully understand the mystical points of the Dharma mind, then there is the danger of following the wrong path, and also the danger of being reborn in the three lower realms." The principal causes of the negative mind are not recognizing absolute wisdom and the illusive mind, that which is opposed to the absolute truth of existence, which is non-self-existence. This recognition is the most important thing; without the recognition of these two mystical points of the mind there is no way to escape from ignorance, and no other way to stop fear. Any actions that are created as a result of following the illusive mind, or any time the mind sees self-existence, which is the opposite of the nature of existence, more problems are created.

The subtle mind is capable of enjoying the gross object due to the aggregates, or skandhas. The subtle mind is consciousness—it carries positive and negative thoughts, and the future mind. No matter what form of rebirth we take, the consciousness of the subtle mind exists. The aggregates also have continuity; if they did not there would be no continuity of a person. The subtle mind can be categorized into two, pure and impure subtle mind. The impure subtle mind is that which cannot use the state of clear light on the path to enlightenment. The gross mind is the illusive mind, and at the time of death when it is absorbed the gross superstitions also dissolve.

Generally, gross objects can be seen by the absolute true mind, and the absolute true mind may not be subtle. The mind that sees the absolute true nature is not necessarily a subtle mind, but it can be a subtle mind. The ordinary mind is accompanied by an impure subtle mind at the time of death and usually is completely out of control. In order to gain control at death, we need to purify our gross mind through practice in this lifetime.

Sambhogakaya/Enjoyment Body

Because of the intrinsic nature of mind, the present mind has a relationship with the future Sambhogakaya, as a seed has a relationship with the future flower it produces.

The Buddha's body as seen by realized beings is ornamented by thirty-two perfect qualities. His feet and hands are like those of young person, without wrinkles, as result of his practice of charity of food and so forth while he was following the path. The length of his body is seven times the length of his forearm and his body is straight, not curved, due to the karma of avoiding killing other beings. His hairs stand up straight due to the karma of avoiding killing other beings, and also due to creating many merits and helping many people create good karma. His hand reaches down to his knee when he stands and it is long and beautiful as a result of giving to other beings when asked. His skin is clear and very pure and golden as a result of the karma from serving other beings well, such as bringing them cushions, arranging their beds, and so forth. Each hair on his head is curled and untangled as a result of his avoidance of mental distraction and samsaric enjoyment. Between his eyes is a curl like a small fruit, like rubber, which if rolled out would be three times the length of his forearm. This curl is the karmic result of respecting the holy beings and gurus. His double crown protrusion and right-turning blue hairs are the karmic result of the offerings he made at temples, palaces, and to other beings.

The eighty minor marks of the Buddha signify his holy body to other holy beings and serve as an example. His nails are the color of copper as a result of his complete avoidance of greed and every impermanent thing.

His holy body doesn't have nerves, which is due to his avoidance of the ten immoralities. He has no channel knots because he is completely released from all the delusions. He has a perfectly proportioned body as a karmic result of giving teachings that suited each different living being's minds. As he walks each step is equal, meaning that he has equal compassion for each and every sentient being. His lips are transparent and cherry red in color, meaning that he fully realizes living and nonliving existence as a reflection, like that you would see in a piece of shiny fruit.

Nirmanakaya/ Emanation Body

Since the different levels of the sambhogakaya do not appear to ordinary beings, the nirmanakaya or emanation bodies manifest. As Guru Shakyamuni said, "In such poor, degenerate times I shall appear only in the form of letters." The function of the nirmanakaya is to guide sentient beings from suffering, but the form of this manifestation is not definite—many millions of different emanation bodies may appear in different countries. It is not necessary that he be a monk or a Tibetan bhikshu. He appears in different forms as suits the minds of those who live in different countries, and acts in the manner of the other people there. Guru Tsong Khapa made prostrations imagining thirty-five aspects of Guru Shakyamuni, and as a result he saw Buddha on the walls. This occurred in the same cave in which Kedrup Je saw the manifestation of Tsong Khapa; in that cave there are also letters such as the seed syllable of Manjushri that appeared due to the power of the purification of Guru Tsong Khapa. This cave still exists in Tibet—the letters appeared spontaneously. If our minds are purified and we have devotion, it is certain that we will be able to see the different aspects of Buddha. We can also see them in dreams and communications.

The way that the Buddha shows himself is in accordance and varies according to the karma of the observer. Statues of the Buddha may cause the arousal of interest in people who didn't know about

him, causing them to seek the teachings. Also, many families are helped through the income received from making statues.

Knowledge of the Perfected One's Holy Body, Speech and Mind (Page 70)

At present our own body, speech, and mind are not oneness, but the Buddha's Holy Body, Speech and Mind can work together. His holy mind can appear as many trillions of different minds, manifestations through holy mind, of themselves, and each other. The holy mind is not even an object of the mind of the highest bodhisattva who has attained the ten grounds; it is only an object of the mind of the Fully Enlightened One. This is not something we can guess about easily. In Tibet there are many people who are incarnations of the holy body, speech, and mind, who take different forms and take birth in different places.

It is said in a sutra teaching that the appearance of the Buddha does not depend on our recognition. Each form has as its purpose the benefit of sentient beings. The enlightened beings see the way to bring this about—it is very difficult to be the object of our attention. For example, Maitreya appeared before Asanga as a dog with wounds in order to purify Asanga's obscurations and allow Asanga to develop bodhicitta. As Asanga realized bodhicitta, his obscurations were purified. The form of the Buddha is extremely difficult for us to recognize and doesn't depend on a name. It is stressed in the teachings that we must be careful in the karma we create with other people. The limited mind can't tell who is a holy being or what level of realization he has. Getting angry with holy beings brings suffering in the narak realms for one eon: depending on how high the other being's realization is, that number of seconds of anger determines the length of the experience of the suffering result in the lower realms. The higher the level of realization, the worse the bad karma created. Therefore, we have to be very cautious in the karma we create with other sentient beings and we shouldn't criticize anybody.

In order to not create negative karma, we should think, "Perhaps he is an enlightened being and I am too ignorant to see it." The result that arises from watching out for anger and controlling it is patience. We should think, "Maybe Guru Shakyamuni is manifesting as an angry person so I can develop bodhicitta, or manifesting as some other object to develop other virtues in me." Thinking like this stops the negative mind from arising and stops the negative actions of body and speech—it can be most useful. For example, when Atisha was in Tibet, he usually kept one servant who was very bad tempered, and always caused other people to get angry. Asked why he kept him, Atisha explained that he did so in order to practice patience, for without patience one could not be a great yogi. It is very useful to think like this. We should always be cautious, as you never know that it isn't Guru Shakyamuni manifesting to guide us, and if we do negative things it creates the worst karma, bringing suffering for eons.

According to the path we practice we can use the instructions as follows. If other people cause trouble, instead of reacting we should think, "This is extremely helpful, even those highly realized yogis do it like this; so why not us." According to the negative mind that arises, greed, attachment, or anger, or depending on the other object, we should use it like this. Also, we can think this way about material things that cause problems. The practice of remembering that Guru Shakyamuni can manifest in any way always helps to control the negative mind, and stops it from arising in relation to any object by recalling that, if it is him, we are creating great negative karma. Besides this, it also helps us keep Guru Shakyamuni in mind, makes the mind more and more conscious of the object of Guru Shakyamuni, and thus protects the mind from creating the cause of suffering. It is also

especially helpful during the critical time of the death process to remember Guru Shakyamuni. The more familiar the mind becomes with him, having been trained, the easier this will come at the time of death, and the less suffering we will experience. This is the power of Guru Shakyamuni's realizations.

In Tibet when a person dies if he is lucky a monk comes to make a puja, and as the breath stops the monk says the name of that person's guru, or that of Guru Shakyamuni, very sweetly, very lovely. Then he has to shout it loudly and if the person is fortunate enough to hear it, as the gross mind absorbs he remembers to pray. Usually it is very difficult to remember, as in life when one gets a sudden shock the mind goes blank, so at death it is far more difficult, and there is much less control. Therefore, we have to be very fortunate for all this to happen correctly. But such is the power of the Enlightened Being's name.

In life it is also good to frequently remember Guru Shakyamuni—if we are creating bad karma this can help protect us from suffering in the same way that it stops the arising of the negative mind. This is also due to the power of his holy mind and his realizations. Also, recitation of a mantra has so much power. A mantra contains an enlightened being's holy name, so just reciting it helps to purify all past negative karmas that have been created up until now. Through mantra we can receive so many things. Mantra is like the flame that can destroy the negative karmas that have been created, and the negative mind. By reciting mantra we can be reborn in a pure land and released from samsara. Mantra can cease different sicknesses, including those that cannot be cured by medicine. All that is the power of the Holy Being's enlightened mind; just his name protects us that much from suffering. Also, saying mantras helps a great deal to protect a person from outside interference, and can also extend the life. Cataracts can be cleared through mantra recitation. In Tibet a person with cataracts would recite a mantra early in the morning before speaking at all, and wipe his eyes with a soft cloth. Little by little the cataracts would clear. Mantra can also control epidemics, and boils and sores can sometimes be cured. This is all through the knowledge of the great compassion of the enlightened beings. Mantras can also protect us from fearful dreams.

The benefits of the knowledge and the recitation of mantras are vast. Mantra recitation also causes stronger and stronger devotion to arise through the frequent recollection of the Buddha's name, and devotion is the real protection from our suffering. Through meditation on mantra we can make changes in the minds of other people—change their wrong ideas, their negative minds, and make them joyful and happy.

There was a meditator in a cave who had few possessions, but one day a thief put his arms through a crack in the wall, trying to steal his coat. So the meditator grabbed and fastened the thief's arm, and went outside and beat him. With each stroke he taught the thief the refuge prayer. Then the meditator released the thief, by which time it was late and the thief couldn't make it back to the village before nightfall. So he slept under a bridge where spirits held meetings, and, reciting the refuge prayer, was protected from fear. There are a lot of lay people in Tibet who can cure illness by using mantra, this does not necessarily have to be done by a monk. The stronger your devotion, the quicker the purification in your heart.

Shantideva said, "If anyone that suffers in this samsaric prison receives bodhicitta, that one is called the Son of the One Passed, the Transcendental Happiness, the Son of the Enlightened Being, the One Who Has Completed Realization of the Absolute Truth, and becomes the object of the admiration of the universal human beings and gods."

Even if a being is still trapped in the prison of samsara, when he develops bodhicitta he becomes an object of offering and prostration for other realized universal beings, humans, and god. He receives the title “Son of the Enlightened Being.” This is because of the holy mind of bodhicitta. Why “Son?” Because he developed bodhicitta in dependence upon the enlightened beings, just as a son receives his body in dependence upon his parents. The attainment of bodhicitta is not caused by any external thing, but only through the development of the positive mind of bodhicitta. Also, as we have received a perfect human rebirth, we too have the opportunity to develop bodhicitta and become the sons of the enlightened beings, receive enlightenment, and become the fathers of other bodhisattvas. In this way we become the object of universal beings’ offerings and prostrations. Becoming a holy being doesn’t happen instantly; rather it depends greatly on the accumulation of merit and training the mind in bodhicitta. Each time we think about bodhicitta, our minds become more and more trained.

Therefore, if we can listen to Dharma with this kind of beneficial, positive mind, it will bring countless benefits. We should think, “As I am responsible for releasing all sentient beings from suffering, for enlightening every sentient being, in order to repay them—the source of all my past, present and future happiness, and of all my needs up to enlightenment—for their kindness, I must first attain enlightenment, achieving all knowledge and realizations in order to be able to understand and guide them properly, and without which I cannot best help them. Therefore I will listen to the explanation of the graded path.”

If merely saying the Enlightened Being’s name or reciting his mantra has so much power, how much more has the practice of his teachings. The practice has great power to release us from problems. Such powers cannot be the object of our limited minds, so it is impossible for us to conceive of the infinite knowledge of his holy body, speech, and mind. Even the benefits arising from this mantra can be explained without end. The incredible knowledge of his holy body, speech, and mind is not intuitive, it is not eternal, it is not something that exists by itself, and it is not something that happens without a cause. But it can be attained by following the path of his teachings, the teachings that he practiced in gradual stages. Therefore, all of Guru Shakyamuni’s knowledge is not intuitive—it has a cause, and we must create the cause ourselves. It is all in the power of the path he followed, as it was shown by his gurus, other holy beings. In the same way that he experimented with his own mind, not depending on another person’s mind, we must do the same. It is certain that we will attain the same level if we do so.

Putting our mind into the practice of the teachings and path is much more powerful than just mantra, and without putting ourselves into the practice of the teachings shown by him, we cannot attain the power of the knowledge that brings realizations and enlightenment quickly. Just reciting the mantra alone can never bring this about. But the mantra does help due to the power of the path, the teachings, and the Dharma.

Before he was enlightened, Guru Shakyamuni received teachings from other enlightened beings, and in this way depended on the Dharma to attain that state. That is why we take refuge in the Dharma. Without refuge it is impossible to have higher realizations, the power of higher wisdom, or enlightenment. As we discover the knowledge of Dharma, our devotion deepens, and our sense of refuge in the Buddha and Dharma strengthens. The enlightened beings see the mind and actions of every sentient being at every moment—this is the power of the Dharma, for without the Dharma there would be no enlightened beings, bodhisattvas, or arhats.

All past, present, and future happiness is due to the Dharma. The Dharma is the original refuge, but the Dharma has to be shown to us by holy beings on different levels. If we practice Dharma, not just reciting mantras, we can experience so much benefit—we will quickly escape from suffering and attain infinite powers. Actually, Dharma is our best possession, it is something we should care for more than anything else. However, due to ignorance we take more pleasure in and care more for material possessions, which actually arise from Dharma—positive karma—anyway. All the benefits and power of mantra come from the power of the Dharma. Beings who give up Dharma to take care of the body and possessions do so due to ignorance, not understanding the Dharma to be the source of happiness.

The fundamental essence or heart of the Dharma, like the heart of a person, which brings higher knowledge and all the levels of the path, is the power of being careful in the creation of karma—avoiding negative karma and creating positive karma. This is the principal Dharma practice. Therefore, the actual Dharma is the practice of virtuous actions. If we do not pay attention to this, no matter how long we struggle with difficulties, even if we spend our whole lives meditating, living in caves, and fasting, we will not have success in our practice, we will not experience the result of mental peace, and we will not gain control over our negative minds.

If we want to receive the realizations and powers of the enlightened beings, the most important thing of all is to take care in the creation of karma. When this is done properly, it becomes a powerful cause to quickly purify obscurations and quickly bring realizations. How quickly we experience these things depends on how quickly we purify through the creation of positive karma. We can make great progress in this way, even if we don't do tantric meditation and practice.

How does the Dharma cause the past, present, and future happiness of each and every sentient being? The answer is very true and logical—all of the sufferings that we experience, big or small, in this lifetime until death, have a principal cause that is inner, mental, and created in this life, the last life, or a life before, as well as a cooperative cause. And so it is the same in terms of each happiness that we experience with this body—each has a principal and cooperative cause, some created in this life, some in previous lives. What is the principal cause of happiness? Positive actions, such as actions done without concern for the comfort of this life, those done without ignorance of karma, and those done without anger. But we, with our ordinary limited minds, usually think that the present condition (the cooperative cause) is the actual cause of happiness, although this is not so. The principal cause of happiness is creating good karma and so creating good karma is the essential Dharma, the heart of the Dharma. This is how each person's happiness arises from Dharma.

For instance, in a certain place where the weather is hot some people are happy, and others are unhappy. In this situation the heat is the cooperative cause and the mind of the person is the principal cause. If the external circumstance were the main cause, everyone in a hot place would feel the same. This proves that there is some other reason for likes and dislikes. That reason has to be understood with the help of the Dharma and the understanding of the evolution of karma. There are countless examples of this—one food is enjoyed by some people and disgusting to others, and the same with types of clothing, and certain people. Some tourists like one country, and others dislike it. There is some other reason that causes the difference in feeling. This is difficult to understand, but it is internal, and can be understood through knowing the evolution of karma which, as always, comes back to the beginningless mind, without understanding of which there is no way to discover this internal reason. Therefore, we should research these important points.

Some people may think like this: there are differences between people, different feelings, because people have different “personalities,” or different type of mind. Why? Because there are different types of physical conditions, the atoms and so on are not the same—the basis that came from the parents, came from the grandparents, and came from the earlier ancestors is different. But, thinking like this, we go back and back and back—and then we end up with no idea. The problem is that actually the beginning of evolution is not understood.

Each part of Buddha’s holy body is the result of karma, as is ours. There is not one tiny shape of our body that does not depend on karma. Each shade of color of the peacock’s feathers is also the result of karma.

Buddha’s Holy Speech

When other beings hear the Buddha’s holy speech, they feel pleasure and peace in their minds with each sound. Their negative minds, however strong, become automatically pacified and well-subdued. When he gives teachings to great numbers of followers, each word—“impermanence,” for example—is understood by the beings who listen according to their level of mind. They each experience different levels of realizations depending on their levels of intelligence. When some hear “impermanence,” they think, “Ah, this is shunyata.” Others think, “This is suffering,” and so forth. Even if every single sentient being were listening to the Buddha’s holy speech, each would hear the words that suit his intelligence, as his mind is ready. This would also prepare him for the higher subjects. This is the power of the Buddha’s holy speech

If all sentient beings asked questions simultaneously, one word would give the answer that each one needs. This also is the power of the Enlightened One’s holy speech. Also, those whose minds are ready to understand that the mind is beginningless will hear it said, and those who think that the mind has its beginning with this body will hear only that answer. As the Buddha teaches, he can judge the level of mind of the listeners, and see whether or not they are ready to receive higher teachings. Besides having the power to really guide others, he has such incredible compassion, and therefore he acts using his power and understanding to help all sentient beings with methods suitable for their minds.

Generally, the Buddha’s holy speech has knowledge. Because of his great compassion, his only wish is that all sentient beings attain enlightenment, and because of this he teaches according to their level of mind. He doesn’t just throw words. Buddha can see that each being can attain enlightenment by gradually following the Dharma.

There are teachings in Tibetan that explain the creation of machines and things like ships and so forth, but these were not put into action because they were not seen as beneficial for enlightenment. There are many other things not even made in the West explained in these texts. Actually, there is not one single kind of existence that isn’t talked about in the Dharma—even though we think the rocket landing on the moon is new, its creation was not first discovered today. Guru Shakyamuni ... anyway, it doesn’t matter.

Giving up Dharma in order to take care of temporal life means creating bad karma by giving in to the possessions. This is the practice of samsara, the opposite of creating good karma. When we do not have not much understanding of Dharma or of the nature of suffering, we renounce Dharma to take up the temporal life. But on the contrary, as we realize samsaric life more and more deeply, as we understand the nature of suffering and the result of negative mental actions, the more we realize the nature of Dharma, Dharma Knowledge, and that Dharma is the source of all the past, present, and future happiness for every sentient being, and the source of enlightenment. As we realize the value of the Dharma more deeply, we can see that the Dharma is more important and more beneficial than anything else. Therefore, we will be able to give up temporal life for the practice of Dharma, to hold the teachings of the Enlightened Being, to strive for enlightenment, and create good karma to accumulate merit and to purify. For Dharma we can give up our body and possessions.

There are almost an infinite number of beings following the temporal life, living in ignorance, working for samsaric happiness and temporal possessions, while these who renounce the temporal life to take care of the development of the Dharma are so rare.

All of this depends on understanding wisdom in the evolution of karma. The benefits of Dharma are inexpressible, one can never finish explaining them. There are infinite enlightened beings who all attained their infinite knowledge and enlightenment through Dharma practice. Every living being, from the tiniest invisible insect up to enlightened beings receive all their happiness from Dharma. This is too much to explain fully, but generally we can say that the source of all happiness arises from creating good karma.

The actual way to take refuge is from the mind. It is a frame of mind born of understanding what refuge means. Taking refuge in Buddha doesn't mean just saying the prayer. It depends on understanding and fearing samsaric suffering—the cycle of death and rebirth, the suffering realms, ignorance, and negative mind. This depends on the recognition of suffering and the understanding of samsara, and from this full confidence in the noble beings arises. The noble beings are those who have the achievement of the true cessation of suffering and the true path, power, compassion, omniscient mind, and who put it all into practice. We must trust the omniscient mind of Buddha.

With the foundation of these two causes, fear and faith, our minds should rely completely on Buddha, like children depend completely on their parents and follow their orders with full confidence. This is the true way to take refuge. With the mind relying on the Buddha's knowledge, we can take refuge without saying a mantra or a prayer.

The two causes for refuge again, are full confidence in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and fear of samsaric suffering, the cycle of death and rebirth, and so forth. With this foundation, we take refuge. This is likened to the confidence of the patient in his doctor, relying on him, having fear of sickness and death; and the necessity of following the doctor's orders, taking medicine, and observing diet. As the patient's health improves, his confidence grows. The actual cure of the sickness depends on the patient following the instructions given by the doctor. This is the main thing. A doctor needs to receive the methods to cure the patient, and then it is up to the patient to follow the instructions. Relying on the doctor is not enough, we must follow the instructions we were given as they were shown to us. When we take refuge in Buddha, we should not follow prohibited practices, and we should not follow practices that present wrong views, such as those say there is no absolute truth, no karma, or no existence. If we follow such practices our realizations of Dharma will be cut. Following

practices that encourage wrong views pushes one further and further into samsara, and believing wrong things, such as believing that samsara is not suffering (which is like sitting in a fire burning up and saying it's not a fire) or that greed is good and necessary, which is also a wrong conception.

In Dharma there are many types of discipline. Taking refuge is something to be done with feeling and not with words alone, to be taken from heart. No matter how much one says Jesus' name but lives creating bad karma, and then prays to God asking for forgiveness and help, one can never escape from suffering. This is like a person continuously taking poison and asking for help to get better all the time. We must also help ourselves. Taking refuge depends on us, and the actual refuge taken the best and most correct way, is in accordance with karma. We must create refuge ourselves, in our own minds. The method to do so was shown by the Enlightened Being. This practice will guide us, will take us away from suffering.

Because of lack of understanding this method, most of us desire and choose the cause of suffering instead of the cause of perfect peace and happiness as it was shown by the Enlightened Being in his teachings. If we deeply check up, our heart's desire does, in fact, lead to this choice. So it is important to follow the correct path, and in refuge we should not harm other beings with negative mind. This should really be avoided as much as possible, because Dharma is the method to bring happiness to each and every sentient being; and harming others is its complete opposite. The Enlightened Being showed us the Dharma to stop sentient beings' suffering, and to stop the creation of bad karma.

Dharma methods help to free the mind from greed, ignorance, and hatred. Impulse or motivation is so important because if we are aware of the evolution of karma, we take care in the actions we create and we have pure motivation to try to make the effect of our actions bring happiness to other beings. To fully know Dharma, we must see each and every subtle karma. Once an old cripple that nobody liked or wanted tried to become a monk. An arhat monk checked up using his powers (arhats can do some checking) and could find no evidence of even the tiniest previous merit. But Guru Shakyamuni checked up and found a very subtle merit in the cripple's mind that was hidden from the arhat. In a previous life the old man was a fly, and around a stupa was animal feces. The fly flew around the stupa following the feces and this was the tiny merit that he had accumulated that allowed him to become a monk. Every color on a butterfly or on a peacock's feather is the result of subtle karma, beyond the view of the arhat. To fully know karma depends on attaining enlightenment. It is a lifetime's study. The knowledge of the evolution of karma is a profound subject.

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The Dharma object of refuge includes every realization of the enlightened and noble beings, as well as the belief that the Dharma is the true cessation of suffering and the true path. True path means the wisdom that sees the absolute true nature. True cessation of suffering and its cause, ignorance, comes about when we have achieved the true path, the realization of absolute truth. Following the Dharma stops us from following the negative mind—we cannot follow both things at the same time. Doing so would be like wanting the milk and the meat from the same cow.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SANGHA

The noble bodhisattvas who have attained the pure realization of absolute truth are the Sangha. The more we realize the knowledge of the Sangha, the more our devotion will arise.

Instructions in the Practice of Refuge (Page 72)

1. All statues, no matter what the quality or even if made of kaka, should always be kept with respect in a clean, high place since they are the form of the figure of Buddha. We should remember the knowledge that Buddha attained and treat these things as if they were Guru Shakyamuni himself. It is not necessary to think of them merely as statues.

Each statue or tangka symbolizes so much knowledge. Each tiny hair of the holy body of Buddha contains incredible knowledge, infinitely greater than all samsaric knowledge put together. Even a single hair of Buddha is the result of many eons of purification and many merits. For us, even the lowest realization of the bodhisattva path, the realization of bodhicitta, is extremely difficult to realize and maintain—even for an hour. Even a single atom of Buddha's body is incredible—all the knowledge in the world cannot compare. Therefore, a statue or a tangka is a symbol of such great knowledge, and must be respected, although our respect will vary according to our level of understanding of his knowledge.

We can also visualize a statue as a real, living person. Practitioners in India and Tibet make offerings to the statues or to the holy texts. Depending on the level of practice and the level of realization of the practitioner, the value of the offering is determined. The serious offering to the statue is the offering that is made by the mind, and does not depend on the material substance that is offered. The best offering is the offering that is made with the mind free of the eight temporal desires, or at least with the mind free of greed for the temporal life. If you do not have this latter motivation at the very least, the offering doesn't make sense. Even if you don't have material substances to offer, you can still make offerings. A small or big offering is designated so by the mind. The size of the offering depends on the mental decision you make. The more certain you are that your mind is making the offering free from negativity, the bigger the offering will be. You must make offerings with a pure mind. If you have not completely renounced greed in your mind, your offering is made that much smaller. Clean offering, dirty offering—these things are determined by the mind.

Once there was a Tibetan meditator, an ascetic Geshe, who lived in a hermit's cave. One day he heard his benefactor coming with food, and he jumped up to offer clean water in the offering bowls on his altar. As he did this he checked up, and found that it was his negative mind and his wish for a good reputation, wanting the benefactor to respect and think highly of him, that was motivating his action. He recognized his enemy, the negative mind of greed. So he made the clean water in the bowls dirty. The first offering of clean water was a black offering because his mind was so attached to reputation, and therefore the action of offering clean water created negative karma. The second offering of dirty water was a white offering, because it represented the renunciation of the comfort of this life, the mind opposed to greed, and the real Dharma. Therefore the second action was purer. When other yogis heard about this, they admired and respected the meditator very much, because of his success in recognizing the actual Dharma and practicing it in opposition to the negative mind.

The purpose of making offerings to the enlightened beings is to purify our negativity. Prostrations to the enlightened beings can also help to do this. How do these actions have this power? The power is not only dependent on the action performed, but also on the knowledge of the objects of offering.

This knowledge is complete, pure, limitless compassion. When we make offerings we remember this holy knowledge and increase our faith in it. Every tiny Buddha figure symbolizes this knowledge. Offerings and prostrations are not done merely as customs, but in order to purify negativity. If they are done with full understanding they can bring rapid purification of negativity. Another action that can bring this result is cleaning holy places. We can also purify by meditating on the figure of Buddha and on his infinite knowledge. It is helpful to do this at the time of death.

The holy statue and the holy text do not depend on the quality of the material. We should not place gold statues up high and clay statues down low. It creates great negative karma to pay more respect to an expensive statue than to a cheap one. This applies in the same way for tangkas.

It is definitely possible to contact the enlightened beings through the form of statues. They do exist—this is not just some theory. Many statues in India, Nepal, and Tibet have given teachings in the past to realized beings. If we have great devotion and our minds are purified, no matter what the quality of the statue, it is possible to receive teachings, instructions, prophesies, and so forth. I have no idea if this is still the case in Tibet or not.

2. Dharma books can contain many pictures and words of enlightened beings. Sometimes we use these holy texts as cushions, sitting on them to keep our clothes clean, and sometimes we put them on the floor. Such actions show extreme ignorance of the laws of karmic cause and effect. If we disrespect the texts, it becomes very difficult to meditate, or to even comprehend the subject matter. Even simple Dharma explanations become hard to understand. In meditation the mind will be distracted and difficult to control; it will be hard to visualize and difficult to achieve realizations no matter how much we meditate. Nor respecting the holy texts, statues, and figures can bring these results.

Why are these things holy? Because of the realizations of the enlightened beings, which is an example for us to follow. These things represent Buddha's holy mind and so they themselves are holy; it has nothing to do with the quality of the material. Also, each statue makes it possible for us to attain the Enlightened Being's holy mind. His mind is holy because it is free from every single defect. He sees each and every sentient being's thoughts every second, simultaneously—all past, present, and future existence; he has great compassion towards all sentient beings with no discrimination.

If we do not pay respect to the figures and teachings of the holy beings, no realizations can be attained; we should pay much more attention to holy objects than we do to money, which we recognize as important. Disrespect creates much bad karma. Using books as a pillow or a cushion is not respectful. Books are holy because they explain the Dharma, and by meditating on this we can attain realizations that make us holy. The Enlightened Being is holy and becomes enlightened through Dharma practice; so Dharma texts are holy and make us holy, perfect, and help us to escape from suffering.

Since many enlightened beings have received their realizations from the holy texts, the texts are priceless and invaluable. All the realizations from the beginning of the path—the basic knowledge of karma and the continuity of mind—up until enlightenment come from the holy texts. The basic meditations such as bodhicitta and the other steps on the path depend upon receiving the explanations that are taught in the holy texts. We should think, "This text is the transformation of the speech of the holy beings." Disrespecting such texts causes us to lose wisdom and forget easily.

Holy books should be kept clean, and we should make offerings to them—not because the book wants respect, or claims it, but for ourselves, to create good karma and purify. We should not step over books. In monasteries, Dharma books are kept in a high, clean place, and in lay people's homes in Tibet they are as well.

Respecting Dharma

Realizations, the knowledge of the enlightened beings, eliminate suffering and are highly respected by practitioners of the teachings. Dharma books should never be placed on the floor or in impure places. They are very precious, and in the same way that we respect the enlightened beings, we should also respect these books. They are holy and can make ignorant beings wise. Those born human have the responsibility to recognize the holiness of the teachings, and should not treat the texts in a way that will create negative reactions—like using them as cushions or as newspaper. Negative actions done now cause problems to arise in the future. But then, when problems arise in the future, we don't recognize the cause of suffering. In this way, the suffering situation becomes cyclic.

We make prostrations and offerings in front of and to figures of enlightened beings not merely as a custom, but also out of respect and with understanding of the great purpose.

3. Junior monks can prostrate to senior monks.

The Benefits of Taking Refuge (page 73)

The benefits of refuge practice could never be counted. They are innumerable, beyond what our minds can perceive.

1. The first benefit of taking refuge is that you become a Buddhist. In Tibetan we say *nang pa*, which means *inner being*—a person who completely relies on the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha with the support of the two causes of refuge in his mind. The two causes, again, are (i) fear of the samsaric suffering realms and (ii) full confidence that you can be guided from this state of suffering by the Enlightened One.

Relating to the first cause, even if you don't fear all of cyclic existence, at the very least you should fear the three lower realms. Relating to the second cause, in order for you to have full confidence in the Enlightened One, you should understand the knowledge of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha fully, and also must completely comprehend and fear samsaric suffering and the suffering nature of samsaric beings' minds. This also depends on understanding and believing in the evolution of karma, which in turn depends on understanding and believing in past and future lives. This doesn't depend on robes, beads, or prayer wheels, but only on what is in the mind—not on saying prayers or playing cymbals. To become an inner being is not easy—it is a question of mental understanding and takes time. It does not depend on the clothes or the way a person acts. Refuge is in the mind.

If you think, "Who cares about becoming an inner being?" you should know that without depending on refuge in the mind you cannot attain realizations or enlightenment. Achieving the higher path depends on the achievement of the lower path, which depends on the fully renounced mind, which in turn depends on fully understanding the nature of samsaric suffering and so forth. The internal

equipment of refuge comes at the very beginning, before you even receive the path. It is the beginning of the development of the positive mind. This is the foundation. There is no way to follow the high path without refuge, and the stronger the two causes for refuge, the quicker the realizations will come. With refuge, every action you do becomes an inner action, higher, more powerful, more beneficial, more positive, and purer than those of the person who does not have refuge in the mind.

Again, having pure refuge means having fear of samsaric suffering—at least the fear of suffering of the three lower realms through the understanding of the evolution of karma and having full confidence in it—and having full confidence in their three perfect, pure guides, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, relying on them completely to lead you and all sentient beings from suffering and its cause for your entire life. Your fear depends on the understanding of the nature of samsara and suffering—if there is no understanding, there is no fear, then no renunciation, and no enlightenment. If you have no knowledge of beginningless mind or the evolution of karma, there is no understanding. Thus, the mind of refuge requires the total knowledge and understanding of the total subject.

Meditation on Refuge

1. To begin your meditation on refuge, you should try to remember what refuge means, and what the purpose of taking refuge is.
2. Next, you should check up—who is the perfect refuge? The Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.
3. Then you should think about the knowledge of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind. Where does all that knowledge come from? It comes from the Dharma, it is the power of Dharma knowledge.
4. Then you should meditate that not only is this the case, it is also the power of the Dharma and Sangha.
5. Next you should think that although the objects of refuge have so much power, is that enough for me? What is missing? What is missing is the two needs, the causes from your own side. Check up to see whether you have the two causes in your mind or not. If you don't, then think, "In order to have refuge, I must have fear and devotion. I must create these two causes in my mind."
 - (i) Think that fear should arise because you understand that mind is beginningless and that it has traveled through past lives and will travel through future lives, that based on your understanding of the evolution of negative and positive karma, you have definitely created more negative karma in the past, and that therefore you will definitely suffer in the three lower realms if you don't begin to eliminate your ignorance. At the moment you are in an upper realm rebirth, but you are still suffering, and still under the control of delusions and karma. Think, "Why aren't I released from all these problems yet?" It is your own fault, your own ignorance—you believe that samsaric happiness is happiness, but it doesn't continue, it is trivial. All samsaric happiness is exactly the same as pain and suffering. The most important thing to realize is that all samsaric happiness changes to suffering—this, in turn, brings fear and gives cause to find a path.

(2) Now you should think that on this path it is necessary to rely on someone—to rely on the objects of refuge, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

[This talk was given to students taking Refuge, November 1972]
TAKING REFUGE

Taking refuge is passing through the gate of the path leading to enlightenment. When we take refuge, we take a vow, make a promise—this is not the same as attaining the realization of refuge. The vow is made with the understanding of the purpose of taking refuge. The essential meaning is complete reliance on the Guru Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha with full confidence—knowing that they have the supreme power to guide us from the suffering of the three lower realms, samsaric suffering, and from every illusive mind—and with fear of suffering in the three lower realms and of all samsaric suffering.

The motivation for taking refuge should be at least to release ourselves from being reborn in the three lower realms. A higher motivation would be to release ourselves from the three sufferings of cyclic existence—pervasive suffering, changing suffering, and the suffering of suffering. The third motivation is the highest motivation, the motivation of a Mahayana practitioner of refuge. With this motivation, we think that in the same way that we are suffering, so also are many other sentient beings suffering in samsara, therefore I take refuge in order to attain enlightenment to rescue other sentient beings from the cause of suffering.

Before taking refuge, we should have pure impulse or motivation, especially, if possible, the great Mahayana motivation. It is not enough to have the motivation not to reborn in the three suffering realms, nor is it enough to wish to be reborn in the upper realms. We have been born in both places countless times, and still we keep on going on. Even now, born in the human realms we have many problems, confusion, suffering, and dissatisfaction. We do not recognize the causes of suffering and happiness, or the results of these causes. We constantly make mistakes in our actions—no matter how much we try to have happiness, we create the causes for suffering, which is opposite to the result we expect. Most of the actions we create are disturbing causes, destroying the happiness we desire. We lack the knowledge of the difference between positive and negative karma.

In the six samsaric realms, especially in the three upper realms, wherever we are born is like escaping from one red-hot burning iron house to another, from one blaze to another, always bringing burning suffering. This is like escaping from one pit of thorns to another. Wherever we are born, everything is trivial, nothing lasts forever, and is in the nature of suffering. From beginningless samsaric lifetimes until the present, there is not one tiny suffering that we have not experienced, not one tiny samsaric happiness. In the same way that we have experienced every great samsaric happiness, we have experienced every great suffering—and ordinary happiness and suffering, too. There is no single place in which we haven't been born, no being that we haven't been, no food that we have not eaten before.

No experience is new, our comfortable samsaric life and enjoyment of material things is old. Even though we believe it's new, all this is beginningless.

If we think deeply about any samsaric happiness or pleasure and understand that it has no beginning, our minds will become tired and bored, understanding that we have done these things for such a long time. We will have no interest in samsara, as many of us in the West have lost interest.

Just as having old belongings is boring, so we can feel tired of samsara very strongly, due to deeply understanding its suffering nature. Every experience of happiness or suffering—our spouse, our parents, materials, places—nothing is new. Clothes of all kinds, colors, and countries—we think it's all new, and interest and greed arise. We think we've never enjoyed it before, but it is lack of remembering that we have enjoyed these things in countless previous times in numberless lives. No samsaric experience is new. Nothing at all is new—all actions that seek samsaric experiences are beginningless.

By understanding the suffering nature of samsara deeply, or by thinking about it, we will no longer feel any interest in samsaric experiences or activities, and all of this will be seen with pessimism. This view develops clearly through meditation—we see through logic. We find no interest in non-existent “new” samsaric experiences of pleasure or suffering. We are tired of living in these realms, have no interest in being reborn in them, and lose attachment to their enjoyments. We can attain the state of nirvana more quickly through this pessimistic view of the suffering nature of samsara and samsaric existence. There is nothing to trust, even samsaric existence itself. For example, we see beautiful clothes in a shop and buy them, or we see a motor car and buy it. As these things get older, we lose interest in them—day by day they lose their beauty like a dying flower. After a short time, our interest ceases completely. Then we buy better, newer things and the same thing happens again and again—we repeat this without end until death. At death the same thing occurs with the body—the samsaric actions that we have created with this body end, just as the actions we do with our belongings end. This is why existence is trivial. Usually, however, we don't see our existence in the same way that we see our material belongings. But as we see an attractive, beautiful object decaying and breaking each day, so too does the body decay and break. Then the object is seen in the opposite way that we first perceived it—the object cheats and betrays me and my trust. If we check up we will find that when we first see a beautiful object, we believe in our hearts that it will remain attractive forever. But this belief is betrayed. It's the same thing with trust in the permanent deliciousness of a certain food—actually we can't live on that food for any significant amount of time, it soon will bore us. Therefore, all the great yogis, great Indian pandits and enlightened beings emphasized that we should never trust material possessions; if we trust samsaric existence as it is seen at that time, our own trust, our own ignorance, betrays us. One of the purposes of taking refuge is to destroy this ignorance, the source of attachment, the wrong beliefs in permanence and samsaric existence.

That is the nature of samsaric existence—things change from the way we think they are. Our beliefs in changeable objects are blind. It is the same thing with friends. However, although such things are so old we haven't yet discovered them, and we don't discover them until we are told—we ourselves fail to realize the relationship between our minds and objects. Therefore another purpose of taking refuge is to cut off problems by helping us to recognize the negative mind and the nature of objects and people and so forth. Refuge helps us to understand how we take the object as a fact, as true, and see it with the wrong conception of “I—” attached to non-existent things, causing greed, anger and so forth. We think, “I see this object as beautiful and this enemy as ugly, so it must be true.” We take the view of material existence that is created by our own negative minds as true, and believe in our own ignorance, and in greed and hatred.

Another main problem is that ignorance doesn't see past or future lives, or many other deep objects of inner knowledge. Believing our ignorance, which doesn't see these things, we come to the conclusion that these things don't exist. As the Enlightened Being explains everything logically, with his experiences, with his holy mind that sees and understands everything, so do we do explain and

see things with ignorance, limited mind, insisting that there are no past or future lives, no karma, and so forth. We believe this to be true. Believing in ignorance creates negative karma and leads us to have no belief in the realizations of meditative experience.

All samsaric experiences are of a suffering nature, old without beginning, and hold no interest; this includes the experience of making the temporal life comfortable by harming other beings, making expenses, and so forth. But once we are enlightened we stay enlightened, we don't need to make any actions for happiness, and there is no further work to create Perfect Peace. We are just working for all sentient beings' release from suffering.

Our minds are selfish—there is no reason for us to think of ourselves as more important than any other sentient being; all of our desires are exactly equal. We should think as follows. “Since every sentient being has each been my friend, enemy, and stranger, so they are all related. All have been my mother. I must help them all, as all have helped me countless times and will continue to until I reach enlightenment. However, the wisdom of most sentient beings is blind; through ignorance they usually make mistakes, and their actions create an unhappy, suffering result. They have done this from beginningless lifetimes until now, and so have I. Therefore, I am responsible for leading them to enlightenment by leading them to attain the cause of enlightenment. Many of their sufferings are caused by me—I take rebirth from their bodies in the form that was created by my bad karma and ignorance. They as mother created many bad karmas that led to the result that they must look after me, help me, and these bad karmas left deep impressions in their minds from which they are still suffering. As I see my present sufferings as unbearable, so much greater are their sufferings, which they also experience without choice. Therefore, sentient beings should reach enlightenment right away, by creating good karmas to cut the cause of suffering. In order to bring this about, I am going to take refuge in the presence of Guru Shakyamuni and countless other buddhas.”

KARMA (Page 74)

Introduction

Karma is a mental action; it can be negative, positive, or neutral.

1. Meritorious Karma

Meritorious karma is a direct perfect action for that cuts samsara. There are other kinds of positive karma, such as charity, that are created without concentration on the nature of the subject, object, and action. Creating these kinds of karmas is an indirect method, but can still cause release from samsara. These are still good karmas, but not so strong. The virtuous actions done with meditation—with concentration on subject, object, and action—is a very powerful method to cut off samsara and always causes rebirth in the upper realms. This kind of karma is the most powerful and is recognized as the perfect positive action.

Shunyata means non self-existence, seeing the true natures of the subject, object, and action. For instance, if I offer one stick of incense to cut off samsara, I should think, “I make this offering to release all sentient beings from samsara.” I must have this motivation. Also, I should try to think, “I am of a non self-existent nature, my action is non self-existent, the offering is non self-existent, and so is Buddha.” This is the most powerful way to make an offering, the most perfect way to cut off samsara. Any positive karma done with shunyata becomes a direct method by which to do this.

Without shunyata, an action can still be positive and cause you to take rebirth in the upper realms, but it is not nearly as direct as positive karma created with shunyata.

“Self-existent” is the opposite of “non self-existent.” I am devoid, completely empty of a self-existent I. When you think this “self-existent I,” it means that the “I” exists in such a way that I am completely my mind and body, yet the whole thing is completely empty of the self-existent “I” that exists by itself, without depending on the aggregates and also without even the name “I.” That “I” exists by itself without depending on anything, exists without depending even on a name. So you see that “I” does not exist anywhere. The whole thing is completely empty of the self-existent “I,” that which depends on nothing. Also the action and object, Buddha, are of a non self-existent nature. Similarly when prostrating, meditating, or when any other good karma is created, you should think, “I, my mind and form, are of a non self-existent nature and Buddha himself is of a non self-existent nature.” Always think like this.

The same thing is true in terms of my self, body, and action. The mind acts through the speech and body. This aggregate is completely empty of self-existent action, of any action that exists by itself without depending on the function of body, speech, or mind. It is the same thing with name, and the same with Buddha. This is how to create positive karma that is direct action with shunyata.

Karma created with the realization of the absolute true nature, shunyata, is the principal force that destroys negativity. Meditate on this—subject, object, and action—because it is the opposite of karma created by ignorance. Good karma that is created without an understanding of shunyata, without checking its nature, without meditating on the absolute true nature is still positive karma, but because these actions are done with wrong conceptions, with wrong views that assume that I am self-existent and that the object is self-existent, the good karma we create is ignorant good karma of ignorance. This kind of wrong conception is the principal ignorance, like parents who give birth to many children. This wrong conception thinking, “I am self-existent,” and, “this object is self-existent,” is the main ignorance that we are talking about. Also, always saying suffering is created by ignorance is not correct either, because suffering is created by karmic delusions of which ignorance is but one.

Good karma created without shunyata can help us to attain enlightenment, but it is not a powerful method to fight ignorance. Therefore, the motivation can be good, but it is an indirect method to liberation. A very sharp axe cuts a tree easily and quickly, but the tree can also be broken by hitting it with an iron bar, although it takes a very long time. There is the same difference between good karma created with an understanding of shunyata and good karma created with ignorance. Shunyata is the direct method, like the axe, the other method is like the heavy unsharpened bar—it will break the tree but it will take a long time. Understanding this, however, is not an instantaneous process, it takes time. Creating good karma with shunyata practice is completely opposed to merely creating good karma. Like this: the mind is ignorant and the object is viewed with ignorant mind. This is in opposition to the mind that has the understanding of shunyata and the object that is viewed with that mind. Image that person A’s mind sees person B as a tiger, and person C sees person B as a person. Person A seeing the tiger is seeing a tiger that does not exist. But C sees B as a person. **The object of these two minds, person B, is different.**

Ignorance, seeing oneself with the wrong conception, is different from the mind understanding the shunyata of the “I.” The ignorant object “I” that is held by ignorance does not exist anywhere. The object viewed by the mind understanding shunyata does exist. One exists, the other doesn’t.

Ignorance never views the object in the same way as the mind understanding shunyata views the object. As the mind that is freed from samsara never sees the body as a person, so the ignorant mind never sees the mind in the right view, absolutely, in its nature. But the mind understanding shunyata sees the mind in its absolute true nature. There is big difference between these two; they are completely opposite. Understanding shunyata is like the axe cutting a tree.

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In one way, karma is not definite. The more we research the subject of karma, the more our wisdom grows, and the more we become aware of the evolution of ourselves and others. The best medicine for the suffering mind is the understanding of karma. Karma is not definite—all beings are different, no face is the same—some are fat, some thin, some have big heads, big hands, short legs, and so forth. Animals bodies are also all different.

In Tibet when there is no water, a lama makes prayers and says mantras as shown by Guru Shakyamuni. They offer a puja for the nagas in a special place, and after one or two days the water increases. This is very common in Tibet; you are not considered to possess some high power if you are able to do this. It is not always a monk who performs in the ceremony; sometimes lay people can do it as well. Still today, in Darjeeling, India, they do pujas to protect the crops. There are beings in this world that we don't see. Due to the power of the method shown by the Enlightened One, these prayers can have a positive effect. The prayers are relative to the karma of the people—if the nagas are not happy with the people, if they are distracted by the people, they keep the place dry and don't allow rain. This is rooted in karma.

Collective karma is working when, for example, one hundred people die under a bomb, or one hundred people die during a meditation course. The Chinese have the collective karma to control Tibet, the Tibetans have the collective karma to lose it. A heavy storm is not only the elements at work, but it is also related to spirits. Basically, it is rooted in people's karma—the storm is the cooperative cause. In the same way, when a person beats me with a stick, he and the stick are the cooperative causes. The principal cause of suffering is our own minds.

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Meditating on karma is one of the most important meditations we can do. Just consider what we don't understand about "life," forgetting all about those complicated matters of rebirth, absolute truth, psychic powers and so on that we find so confusing. What is the meaning of life, the meaning of the evolution of mind? What is the creator of suffering, the creator of happiness? We are completely blind in our understanding of these things; we have created so much confusion, not finding a solution to the temporal problems. All of these things are caused by not understanding the evolution of karma. Also, all the negativities of body, speech, and mind that we have created up until now have been caused by not understanding and not believing in karma, which in turn is caused by the complete ignorance of mind. As a result of not having faith and true understanding in karma, the true law, we have all of these problems on earth now—fighting, disease, famine, and so forth are all caused by not having a full understanding of karmic evolution. Rich people and poor people are all suffering due to not understanding the evolution of karma.

This meditation is a checking meditation involving research with understanding, not ignorance. The kind of research it involves is the kind in which the understanding of one thing (karma) means the

understanding of all, the whole thing. It is very useful to study about karma, and to meditate on this subject. It is like a mirror—we can see all objects reflected without physically being there ourselves, changing positions. By understanding karma we can understand the evolution of every single existence, we can realize every single nature, we can fully see each and every existence with the achievement of omniscient mind. Every subject matter in this world is all included within this subject. Finally, understanding karma, we can fully achieve all the knowledge of the enlightened beings, as well as that of ordinary beings that received through study. As well, it brings the realization of every meditation much more quickly, including the realizations of higher Tantric practices and the yogic development of psychic powers. To achieve full understanding we should do this checking meditation on the evolution of karma. It will not make you ignorant, and it will lead you to control your negative mind and take care in the creation of karma, which is essential for the attainment of perfect peace. This is the nature of the Buddha's teaching.

3. Neutral Karma (Page 74)

Neutral karma is, for example, a movement without any reason, such as a movement you make in your sleep. A neutral action has no principal, specific impulse.

Energy is mind. Pure intrinsic nature of mind does not have to be energy. The energy we need for Dharma practice has no form. To create Dharma actions does not mean that the mind has to be "free" from the Dharma point of view. From the Dharma point of view "free" means free of greed, ignorance, and hatred, such that it is impossible for these things to ever arise again. But what we mean by "free" in terms of the ordinary mind is different than that—not that our mind is not free of greed, ignorance, and hatred, but that we practice Dharma. Dharma action has to be without ignorance in evolution of karma; for positive action the mind should be free of those negative minds at the time of creation.

KARMA IS DEFINITE (Page 76)

The whole universe can one day become completely empty but karma is so definite. As long as there are different methods, the result can be stopped, but as long as we don't know the method, the path, we can never stop karma. Karma was created hundreds of eons ago—it is more definite than the existence of this whole planet or solar system. For instance, if we plant a seed in a field, since it is in a perfect element, it is definite that it will bring a stem and seeds unless we stop the conditions for it to grow with different methods. Karma is like the seed and the elements are also definite—the method has to be done before the result arises, while there is a chance; if we are already experiencing the result it is extremely difficult to stop.

Karma is definite because it definitely brings its own result in time. All the results that we have not yet experienced, created by beginningless karma, will definitely be experienced unless we try to prevent them by following the different methods that stop the results from arising. Also, karma is expandable. We should always think about the fact that there are so many other karmas that we created many eons ago that still haven't brought their result, and yet we think only about karmas of this lifetime, or maybe the lifetime before. There are so many horrible negative actions that we have done that we have yet to experience the result of—such as the five extreme negative actions of heresy, killing our parents, destroying the teachings, and harming holy beings. We shouldn't think that because we have not created any really gross negativities in this lifetime that we've never done

them. There is not even one bad karma, one negative action, that we have not created in samsara—there is no new bad karma left to create. We should not be complacent due to bad memory.

Why are we so ignorant, not understanding Dharma, finding difficulty with meditation, unable to visualize holy beings and so on? Because the mind finds it far easier and is closer to creating bad karma. Creating positive karma is difficult, like crossing over a mountain. Usually we create good karma for a few minutes, and then for the rest of the day we create negative karma. Such is the personality of the mind. Much negative karma has been created in all our past previous lives, and all the present problems that we are experiencing are the result of the problem of ignorance, not having realizations, finding it difficult to develop wisdom, not clearly remembering the past, not seeing the future, and even not understanding what will be going on tomorrow. All this is due to negative karma.

Therefore, the development of wisdom and understanding in Dharma is most difficult because it is a method that works in exact opposition and totally against the negative mind that is the cause of suffering. It is obvious that if we follow the negative mind to suffering, it is harder to see the Dharma, which brings happiness.

We should think that all this confusion that we now have—difficulty in meditation, not even understanding what the mind is or knowing where it exists—all this is due to the negative karma that we created in past lifetimes, and other than this there is no reason or cause for ignorance to exist. It cannot be eliminated by any being other than ourselves—not by God, not by our parents, and not by anyone else. It is created only by previous mind. Parents are not the principal cause of our sufferings; in fact they are the cause of all of our past, present, and future happiness. If they were the cause of our ignorance we should hate them as enemies, the cause of our suffering. But it is never like this. Parents can be ignorant and their children not ignorant; parents can be free from ignorance, enlightened, or bodhisattvas, yet their children may be ignorant. Take for example the parents of the Tibetan generation, Chenrezig and Drolma. Most children are born without control over their rebirth, so their ignorance has nothing to do with their parents. Parents are the source of past, present, and future happiness, and are not our enemy.

Ignorance is not created by God. If it were created by God then God should be the creator and cause of suffering. If God is the creator of all negative mind, then the creator of all suffering should be God, then the whole of the world's problems are His fault and He becomes the enemy. This is not possible, it is the opposite action of God. Such an enlightened being acts only to enlighten all sentient beings. His only desire is to release all sentient beings from suffering. He can never be the creator of suffering or else it makes no sense, and the word God loses all meaning. In this case, our ignorance becomes our God.

We should never think, "I have created very few negative karmas," considering only this life. Since beginningless lives we have created far more negative karmas than positive; even since we got up this morning, if we check up on body, speech, and mind we can see this. To create negative karma doesn't mean to go outside, or to talk, it can happen when we are meditating, sitting cross-legged in lotus position, looking beautiful as if we are receiving realizations. We should check up on the mystical karma of the mind—bad karma comes from action of mind as well as from body and speech. As we start to meditate we have no control over our mind—it wanders, it spends more time on distractions than on meditation. In this situation it is definitely possible to create much negative karma. Also, past memories come into the mind, we think about what we did before. We also think

a great deal about what we are going to do in the future. All these things come into the mind during meditation.

Due to your past experiences in your country, greed comes along, the door opened by memory (we usually forget the bad experiences): greed also arises in respect to the future plans. Anger can also arise in meditation when we think of the enemies who disturbed us in the past and present, and especially when we check their personalities as we see them. These are just a few examples of how we can create negative karma even when meditating. To create positive karma is so difficult.

Why is it that the mind finds it so difficult to create positive karma, the opposite of attachment and greed, and so easy to be negative? It is because the mind has become very well trained and habituated to negative actions. If there were no ignorance in the previous lifetimes, no past karma, then the mind would not find it so difficult to renounce attachment. The reason that the mind follows negative actions is because it is easy and intuitive. Creating positive karma, however, is very difficult, requiring great effort.

These must be a reason for the mind's present personality, a reason why a person is shocked and frightened to give up attachment. We must check up on this, why it is so difficult for us to give up attachment? If there is no recognition of life how can we recognize death? We have passed so much time since birth and still we don't know what mind is. Ignorance is beginningless, it is hard to give up. If ignorance has a beginning what makes the mind intuitively follow negativity, naturally follow the action of attachment? What causes this? Try to discover why the mind becomes frightened at the idea of giving up attachment, what causes the difficulty in renouncing attachment, why the mind follows attachment, how greed starts, why it is so easy to follow attachment even though there may be many physical problems to overcome to do this? The mind doesn't care about any difficulties created—a person can even give up his life to follow attachment. The earth is full of examples of this. You can see it in movies, or in people who travel the world not caring about expenses, or those who commit suicide from situational problems and problems of human relationships that arise from attachment.

Take a couple, for instance. The wife always worries about the husband going after someone else. She experiences much worry and suffering. If he is indeed with someone else, then she will have a big problem, cry so much, even though she has no material difficulties and the needs of hunger, thirst, and possessions are met. Because of this she may even commit suicide. This action does not help her situation at all, but only causes her greater suffering and makes her life shorter. This is all done for attachment. The mind is so afraid to give up attachment. Besides this, she may experience great jealousy, again despite having adequate material possessions. She may be jealous of the other woman, and complain so much. The negative mind arises, thinking how to disturb the other directly or indirectly, wishing some danger befall her rival, or wishing for her death. Men also experience these things. Men fight with others over their wives, disregarding their own life—very brave! They might also let their friends fight for them at the risk of their lives. All of this, again, is only for the sake of attachment. It is no surprise that the mind follows attachment so easily.

KARMA IS EXPANDABLE (Page 76)

Negative and positive karma are both expandable. In the same way that one rice seed can bring so many results, so many more seeds, so can the results of positive and negative karma expand like grain. Good karmic results can be experienced in many other future lives; bad karmic suffering

results may be experienced for many lifetimes for eons. This is the reason that it is so important to understand karma—because one action created in a short time can bring results over such a great time.

The evolution of one universe, from beginning to end, empty space to empty space, takes one great eon. This includes the realms of the gods. One great eon has four parts.

1. The first part is the eon of the evolution of the universe and universal beings; the universe includes this southern world, the other worlds, and Mt. Meru.
2. The second part is the eon of existence.
3. The third is the eon of degeneration.
4. The fourth part is the eon of complete emptiness.

Each of these eons consists of twenty eons that are not short, but very long, and eighty of these make one great eon.

The human life starts off with an incredibly long lifespan, getting longer and longer until it reaches eighty thousand years. Then the evolution of humans ends. From there the lifespan gets shorter and shorter, down to ten years, then it gets longer again, to eighty thousand, and then down to ten once more. One small eon is the time it takes to degenerate from eighty thousand to ten years. In one of the eighty eons there are twenty such ups and downs. At the present time our lifespan is less than one hundred years and degenerating on its way to ten. This is all based on karmic evolution. Thinking about this will lead to greater understanding of positive and negative karma.

One created karma can bring one result or many. Many karmas can bring one result or many. One karma can bring its result in one life or in many. Many karmas collected in many lives can bring one result. For example, when we feel hot we get attached to cold. If this happens many times, these cravings collect and can cause rebirth in the cold narak realms.

How does one tiny karma bring many results? Once, in a previous time, a man made an offering to Buddha with devotion. This small karma caused him to receive many future lives rich in enjoyments and possessions, and also realizations and nirvana. Guru Shakyamuni explained how that person received so many good results from such a small karma to someone who didn't believe it. Guru Shakyamuni asked this person, "Have you seen any big result on earth that came from a small cause?" The other replied that a certain large tree was the result of a small cause and Guru Shakyamuni said that it wasn't possible. "But it is my experience," said the doubter, "I've seen it." So Guru Shakyamuni said, "Then the object of karma I explained is also my experience, I have seen it." The subject that he explained was the clear object of his transcendental wisdom.

Guru Shakyamuni explained something similar to a brahmin—that if with devotional mind a person offers food for a day to the Buddha, that karma can cause him to be rich in possessions for many future lives and cause him to be reborn in the upper realms, although the cause occurred for only one day. But the brahmin said, "Who knows this; how can it be known that this offering can create such karma?" Guru Shakyamuni asked him, "Have you seen any big result on earth that came from a small cause?" "Yes, I have seen this," replied the brahmin, "One seed of wheat can bring many." Guru Shakyamuni said, "That small cause brought many results?" The brahmin replied, "Yes, I have clearly seen it. This is my experience." Guru Shakyamuni said, "Well the first is my experience, I have seen it."

It can be the same with some negative karmas—they have expandable results. In the time of one Buddha a king built a monastery that had all the necessities inside, and offered it to the Sangha. His son, through true renunciation, became celibate and lived there; but despite the monastery being full of things, this king had such great envy that he couldn't give any of these possessions to any other living beings. His karma caused him to suffer in the narak realms for thirty-one eons. After that he was born as a naga called Temetong—whatever touched this naga's body burnt it, and flames came from it causing much suffering.

Guru Shakyamuni told these stories about karma to instruct living beings, to make them careful in creating karma.

In another Buddha's time there was a monastery on the steps of which a girl once slept with some bhikshus. The karma created by this caused her to be reborn in the lower realms for many eons. She suffered in the naraks for all of the eons remaining in the great eon that the karma was created, and at its end was reborn in the narak realm of another universe. After that she was reborn as a blind naga who had a rotten body oozing with pus and insects that ate it. This also lasted for a long time.

As the universe is destroyed, our sun increases into seven suns, getting hotter and hotter until everything burns up. The golden hills melt, the oceans dry up, iron mountains burn, the earth disintegrates, and eventually the sun itself disappears. When this time comes, the minds of beings who are suffering in the narak realms and who still have left some time to experience are transferred to the narak realm of another universe, where they continue to suffer until their time is up. Other beings who have expanded their karmic result can be reborn as humans, gods, and so forth. The place of the narak realms is not definite—it is in many places, it can be on this earth. There are many beings suffering beneath the earth. Some beings are human in the daytime and at night suffer greatly.

Once a person was once asked by a noble being to keep precepts. He agreed to do so only in the daytime but not at night. The result of this was he took a rebirth in which in the daytime he lived in a very attractive place, with five women, enjoying himself very much, but at night they became dogs that devoured all parts of his body without control, barking, and eating his heart. At sunrise he would become the human enjoying himself again; at dusk, he was eaten with much suffering. This kind of rebirth is a type of narak rebirth but not quite so bad, and occurred because the person didn't follow the precepts at night, only during the day. Having a perfect human rebirth now, it is extremely difficult to receive again. After this universe ends the minds of the beings who inhabit it take form in another universe. Minds can do this. Universes cannot be exactly the same but there are many of them.

Once the sangha of a particular place deposited a jewel with the manager of that place. When they asked for it back, he said that it was his and asked them if they would like to eat kaka. Due to this he was reborn in the worst suffering stages for ninety one eons, and each time during those eons that there was a different founder of the teachings on earth, he was born as a snake in that place near a very dirty lake where people threw their kaka and rubbish. He experienced much suffering. Six of those buddhas used this snake as an example of karma for their followers. After the snake rebirth, he returned to the narak realms until the next buddha came into the world. Altogether, there will be one thousand buddhas; Guru Shakyamuni is the fourth, and all of them have prophesied about the karma of this being who was once the manager.

There are many other stories that are told about expandable karma, especially about bad rebirths due to negative actions or speech towards holy objects, such as monks and temples. The rebirth often suits the action—for example, if you call someone a dog you yourself may be born as a dog. Positive actions, such as offering to holy beings, may even be rewarded the same way, especially if the offerings are from a beggar or a poor person who has little.

Further Examples of Karma

In a previous time, in Benares, one being tried to stop his mother from giving charity. He locked her up in a house and at meal times made her eat dust for six days, after which she died. The son wasn't the least upset. Some time later, an arhat came to beg from this man, and the man took the food from inside the arhat's bowl and trampled on it. Due to these karmas he was reborn in the lowest narak realm. After many eons he was reborn as a very ugly son to an Indian family. At birth his mother's milk dried up; whenever they found a wet nurse, her milk dried up too. When he grew up he always had trouble finding food. After some time he became celibate and a bhikshu, begging food. He asked a particular sangha if he could sweep their monastery and they fed him. The first day they were all invited to a benefactor's house but there was a quarrel there and he missed out. The next day they were again invited, but his food was forgotten and so again he missed out. The next day Guru Shakyamuni's disciple Kungawo forgot food for him. The next day he tried very hard to remember the food, but it was taken by a dog. The next day Mongalpu brought food for him but it was taken by a Garuda and dropped in the ocean. The next day an arhat brought him food and left the bowl at the door but it was absorbed into the earth. So the arhat, who had great psychic powers and could see the past, present, and future, went under the earth with his power and tried to get the bowl that had been absorbed. But when he returned his mouth was closed by karma. That made up the six days without food. Then he ate dust mixed with water, and died. In this process, all those three karmic actions were repaid. We must remember never to stop someone from giving charity or creating other good karma. This creates very bad karma for us.

In a previous time a member of the sangha jumped into a stream, and another one complained, saying that he was quick, jumping like a monkey. The second was reborn as a monkey. Another monk criticized someone else's voice, saying, "Your chanting sounds like a dog barking." He was reborn as a dog. Just calling people names, or telling them they are blind, and so forth, can bring a similar result. You don't even need anger to create great bad karma and the necessity of experiencing a suffering result.

In a previous time a king made an offering of five hundred dancing ladies who played music to bodhisattvas, and this action was criticized by one girl to ten people who were talking about Dharma. The result was ninety thousand rebirths in the narak realms and five hundred lifetimes reborn as a barbarian and heretic, because of her judgment of the action of offering. For six lives she was born blind and without a tongue.

In the narak realms some beings are born as walls or pillars—the narak being is not of definite form, it can be any shape according to the living being's karma. Such a rebirth can arise as a result of actions such as spitting in or dirtying a holy place. In the narak realms one can also be born as a tree or leaf or road or broom. This kind of karma can be created by using the possessions of the sangha, such as trees and so forth, for one's own use, without permission or Dharma reason. Any bad karma created with the possessions of the sangha is extremely difficult to purify.

In the time of a previous buddha the child of a caste devoted to buddha threw a handful of beans to him. Only four of them dropped into his bowl, and one dropped on his head. The result of this was that the child became the king of the universe, extremely rich, with full control of the four great worlds and the realms of the gods of the senses. All this arose from the bean that dropped on the enlightened being's head. A member of the sangha offered a coin to another buddha and vowed never to kill—as a result, in many future lives he lived a long time, feeling no danger, with few distractions.

Rejoicing can also create negative karma, such as rejoicing over someone's death. Some Tibetans, for example, rejoiced over the death of Chinese soldiers. Thirty-two people once stole and killed an ox and an old woman rejoiced. After a long time that ox, in the time of a buddha, became a king, and the mother was reborn as a woman with thirty-two sons. The king killed all thirty-two sons.

Rejoicing can also create great positive karma, if we rejoice over positive deeds.

The only war is against ignorance. With Dharma, we cannot harm any other sentient being, rather Dharma is a method to bring perfect peace to ourselves and to others. Buddha's sole wish is for the cessation of ignorance for all sentient beings right now. If we hurt even the tiniest insect it hurts all enlightened beings, as it hurts the parents if the child is harmed. The best offering to the enlightened beings is to help sentient beings, for their holy minds are strongly bound by limitless compassion.

When Guru Shakyamuni was crossing the Ganges at Varanasi, there were five hundred pretas nearby. They asked him for water, with which he satisfied them. They developed such strong faith that they were reborn in the sura realm, where they again saw him, received teachings and reached enlightenment. Someone asked Guru Shakyamuni about this story and he explained that in a previous Buddha's time they had been ordained with the five precepts, and once some fully ordained monks had taken some of their food. They had remarked that those monks begged like pretas, and the result was rebirth as pretas for five lifetimes, until they met Guru Shakyamuni, as above.

There was a very poor place in India through which Guru Shakyamuni once passed, and he was seen by five hundred dirty, ragged farmers who were plowing wheat with a thousand cows. The farmers and cows felt strong devotion for the power of his holy body, and received teachings. They were reborn in the asura realms where they met him again and fully realized absolute truth. (It is possible to see the Noble Being and get teachings in the god realm but extremely difficult—like seeing the stars in the daytime is difficult due to brightness of the sun). The explanation of this story is that the five hundred farmers had been monks in the time of a past Buddha, but had been so lazy that they were reborn as poor, suffering farmers. The one thousand cows had once been monks but paid no attention or respect to the secondary precepts, and so were reborn as cows.

Ignorance brings wrong view via greed or the eight temporal desires and hatred or anger. Many negative minds arise from greed for possessions and comfort, which leads to anger, destroying ourselves and others. The bad karma thus created causes rebirth in the suffering realms by way of the three results—the fullness of the sin, or maturation result, the result similar to the cause, and the possessed or environmental cause. This only makes ignorance stronger, anger returns in future lives, and so on. An hour's anger brings eons of suffering. The growth of ignorance takes us further from the cause of perfect peace and from the realization of absolute truth. Until we stop to purify our ignorance we go in the opposite direction.

Examples are good, since we can remember them when we are about to create negative karma. They will make us afraid of doing so and thus give us protection from creating suffering by following the negative mind.

It Is Impossible to Experience the Result Without Creating the Karma (Page 77)

We cannot experience any pleasure or enjoyment unless we have created some previous good karma. Without planting the seed we cannot grow grain, no matter how strongly we wish to enjoy it, no matter how strongly we expect it. This applies to both good and bad karma, and to happiness and suffering. But neither can we expect a potato seed to bring corn, or an orange tree to grow bananas. The result has to arise from a similar cause.

Karma that is created with ignorance cannot be expected to bring the result of happiness. For example, take the ten immoralities done with a negative mind, such as killing a beast for a sacrifice and expecting a happy result. A happy result is not possible because the original action creates suffering. If we understand these evolutions we will not make a mistake. Sacrificing animals for God is an ignorant action—that mind doesn't know the evolution of karma, and believes that God will be pleased by an action that is completely opposite to its wishes. Sacrificing other living beings leads to the conclusion that God is selfish, has no compassion, and doesn't care about living beings happiness. Only such a God could be pleased by sacrifice. This is a wrong conception.

Most people have no idea of God—they think he will be pleased by sacrifice; some people think that temporal evil spirits are gods. They have a different conception of God, one that leads to suffering. But the one who really is God cannot be pleased by this action. He does not want the animal to suffer or the person to make the sacrifice. The nature of God, or holy mind, is something that is living in the nature of complete compassion and love, wishing happiness for all sentient beings, and wishing them to be free from suffering. This is the wish of the Holy One, God, or whatever it is called.

This mind, ignorant of karma, expects rebirth in heaven and a long, happy, and successful life. These people think that if they don't make a sacrifice God will punish them. Some people don't think much about God, but they sacrifice because other families do it or it is a family custom—if the family doesn't do it they will lose their reputation—it is done for greed, temporal desire. The ignorant impulse makes the mind ignorant of karma, even if it is thought that the impulse is a good one.

The Result of the Created Karma is Never Lost (Page 77)

We do not know which past karmic result we have experienced already, so we have to do much purification as well as not create any new karma. An eon is a very long time, and karma is beginningless.

We are so fortunate to be able to practice Dharma at this time. During the eons of complete emptiness, evolution, most of existence, and of involution there are no teachings. In the eon of existence the teachings only begin when life has come from declined from eighty thousand years to one thousand, and as life gets shorter there are fewer teachings. In the eon of existence, the teachings begin only when life has declined from eighty thousand years to one hundred, and as life gets shorter there are fewer teachings. At Guru Shakyamuni's time the human lifespan was about

one hundred, which is when the founder of Dharma manifests on this earth. The great yogis and lamas recognize the present people who practice Dharma as very fortunate to be alive and receiving the teachings at this point in time because the mind now is ready. When humans live for eighty thousand years their minds are not ready for teachings due to the fact that their minds do not experience or see suffering. As the lifespan gets shorter, the minds become ready. Therefore teachings are very rare, so now we are in the time in which we have to be careful.

Having wrong trust in the negative karmas we have created is our worst enemy. Such ignorant belief is worse than any possible external enemy. We are now human due to past karmas created over billions of eons. The suffering result of created negative karmas doesn't occur straight away so we tend to think it doesn't matter. Such a view is very limited, deeply ignorant of the evolution of karma and of the teachings of enlightened beings, and is especially ignorant of the person's own past history. We think, "The result comes in a future life which maybe exists, but maybe it doesn't, so it doesn't matter." This is also ignorant.

In China, the astrological method of determining past and future developed from Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom. But proper karmic teaching tells us that we have experienced all lives and actions, all samsaric experiences—they are beginningless. The astrological teachings only refer to this rebirth and to immediate past and future lives—thus they are limited and selfish. It is better to have confidence in karmic teachings—we may not meet the astrologer in our next life. Also, karma shows us how to stop the cycle of rebirth, which is the best practice.

The main thing that we should remember is not to create negative actions. We must recognize what negative mind is. Then we can recognize positive actions and positive mind, which are the opposite. From beginningless life up until now the whole problem has been our own ignorance of ignorance, our failure to recognize the negative mind. Recognizing this is the end of the problem. Destroy all this by practicing Dharma, saying prayers. When we recognize the ignorance in our minds we can more easily see the ignorant view, and it is much easier to check outside ourselves and solve external problems. Perfect peace depends on internal change—to try only to change the exterior only creates more problems and will never end. To the ignorant mind the teachings themselves, created to dispel ignorance, become a bothersome object. This mind is taking the best care of ignorance.

THE FOUR POWERFUL REMEDIES (Page 77)

1. The first of the four powerful remedies is the faculty of the object.
2. The second is feeling strong repentance as a result of thinking of the suffering results of negativity.
3. The third is doing penance to purify the bad karma that you have created—such as doing retreat, prostrations, building stupas and statues, reciting mantras, especially the Vajrasattva mantra, confessional prayers, reading books, making pujas, and making offerings to the sangha.
4. The fourth of the four is making the strong resolution not to repeat the action in this lifetime—you can't make a promise for the future lifetimes.

The stronger the repentance, the greater the purification. Repentance is the most important of the four. It makes the penance and the resolution stronger, as these depend on the degree of repentance felt.

Confession is made to avoid the suffering result before it comes. We should remember all the sins we committed during meditation and confess them. Then we should build up positive karma through pure Dharma practice, which is the other means of building merits. We can also pay off karmic debts by suffering illness in this life.

What Causes Karma to Ripen at Different Times? (Page 77)

We have created so many negative karmas in beginningless past lives, and yet we are enjoying the result of the one that brought this life. We could have been born anywhere else as anything. How so? The karma that brought this rebirth must have been heavier than the others, or if it was the same weight it must have been closer to ripening, or if this was the same it must have been more habitual, or if this is even the same then we must have committed this karma first.

KARMA

As long as we are ignorant of the evolution of karma, we are ignorant of the suffering of samsara. To stop it with method we should know how it starts. The understanding of the evolution of karma is a most profound subject, and gaining this understanding depends on meditation. We must live in the practice to discover its evolution within our own experience. But we must gain full confidence before we can live in the practice of creating good karma and avoiding bad karma. We create our own suffering—bad karma—and keep doing so until we develop full confidence coming from deep understanding. Before we can start to live it we need explanations, which come from the teachings of the enlightened one. We should check up on the explanations, live, understand, and believe them. Failure to recognize karma doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.

Karmic Result

The results of karma differ for various reasons. A thought, such as greed, for example, arises and we may suppress it as a result of our conscience or fear of reprisal, or we may act it out. This can occur with or without the knowledge of karma. In all cases the karmic result will vary. There are also different results that arise from small actions done with different motivations. Also, if you tell a lie with a pure motivation, such as the motivation to really help someone, and without expecting something in return, it is a positive action. It is not positive if it is done to help yourself, for example, with the mind that expects a reward.

We can create great negative karma in our lives, but if we then learn about Dharma practice and practice very purely we will be able to purify it.

Shantideva said, "By depending on the human boat one can cross over the wide ocean of suffering."

The very deep, wide ocean is suffering and the boat that we depend on to cross over is like our present human rebirth. How is this possible? In the same way that a boat is needed to cross a deep and wide ocean, by depending on the temporal boat of the human rebirth, we can escape from suffering. But why is depending on this human rebirth alone not enough to cross over the suffering? Because most human beings die and are then reborn in the three lower realms as a result of the negative karma they have created.

Therefore, just having a human rebirth is not enough to cross over the wide suffering ocean. What is missing? What causes the suffering in the three lower realms is only the inability to correctly follow karma. Lack of faith and understanding of the evolution of karma cause the mind to be reborn in the lower realms. Also, in our lifetimes we create more negative than positive karma and so after death are much more certain to take a lower rebirth, unless we practice more good karma and try to purify past bad karma before its result is experienced.

The only way to practice this teaching by the great yogi Shantideva, this very famous teaching from the *Bodhicaryavatara*, the only way to cross over the wide ocean of suffering is to observe karma as best we can. In order to do this we need faith and understanding in the evolution of karma, and in order to develop this we need fear. However, it is easy to misunderstand what fear means. Even insects and animals live in fear of death and take great care of their lives, always working to avoid it. However, that fear is not enough for practicing Dharma. Most of us have fear anyway—that's why we plan for the future, support ourselves, and so forth.

The fear that the religious person needs in order to practice Dharma correctly is the fear that death will come without his having created any good karma, the fear that he will be reborn in the three lower realms not having created the merits to be reborn in the upper realms so that there will be no chance to practice Dharma in the next life, and the fear of dying without making any preparation for enlightenment, before purifying negativity. Such fear is very useful, it keeps the person away from the negative minds of anger, hatred, and attachment. As much fear as a person has, it is that much easier for that person to lose attachment. This fear also makes the person's Dharma practice pure and sincere—the person who has such strong fear has the mental power to use anything, any enjoyments such as food, clothing, or sleep, in a Dharma way.

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Just as in the example of the two nephews of Kungawo, with such strong fear, a person cannot become lazy or sleepy, has much energy for meditation or for any positive action, wanting to continue despite any difficulty, keeping precepts until death. He handles any problems without care, even hunger and so forth, seeing them as unimportant, small things. Those who don't have this fear have great difficulty even in keeping ordination precepts—taking them only causes suffering.

People who are worried by no smoking, by hunger, by feeling tired when taking precepts have different levels of understanding of the evolution of karma and different levels of understanding of the fear of death due to their different past experiences. The person who has the knowledge of karma and faith and fear as well has the continual will to follow karma properly—to keep precepts, to create merit—never worrying about the comfort of the temporal life. He works to achieve realizations, thinking of death, and so doesn't concern himself with momentary troubles, which actually are not troubles for him, but would be for the person who doesn't fear death and feels that the present temporal comfort is the most important. Even if this person tries to practice Dharma he doesn't continue, he is not successful, he easily breaks precepts, feels tortured, doesn't find much interest in the subjects, and gets bored with Dharma. This is like the Tibetans under the Chinese—they cannot even get tea with butter and there is sand in the tsampa. Some Sherpa monks from Tashilunpo monastery said that they worked as laborers and got only dirty tsampa, had to work more, and had very little food to fill their stomachs. They had so much suffering.

There is a big difference between one who understands karma and one who doesn't—it can make a big change in a person. Even if someone was very cruel and negative earlier in life, if he then gained some understanding of karma and death, he could become completely the opposite of the way he was before—he could become holy, a bodhisattva. And those two people—the one he was before and the one he is now—have completely different personalities, actions, and lives. Therefore, the main purpose of this human life, then, is to be careful in the creation of karma, and to have faith and understanding in it.

The tantric path is the short path to enlightenment. It is very powerful. The person who correctly follows the general mental disciplines, the three levels of the Hinayanist, the bodhisattva, and the Vajrayanist, can definitely attain enlightenment after sixteen lifetimes without tantric meditation. The short path of tantra, however, makes enlightenment possible within one lifetime.

There are many mental disciplines practiced by bodhisattvas to control the wrong conceptual negative mind in order to attain enlightenment. Ordination, for example, includes many mental disciplines—just shaving the hair and wearing robes doesn't equal mental discipline. Also, there are many other holy beings practicing mental discipline without robes or shaved heads. These beings are not involved in the creation of negative mental actions, therefore they are not creating negative karma, and they keep their minds pure. What is the bodhisattva's mental discipline? It is to always be unattached to the actions of body, speech, and mind or to other possessions, and always to work for the happiness of sentient beings. This never depends on external changes, painting the body, or wearing rosaries and so forth. It is a mental discipline. If the mind is not involved in that discipline, however a bodhisattva appears it is difficult for him to really be a bodhisattva. Tantric discipline, however, is much higher and more profound.

Which is more important, the comfort of this life or the future life? Is trying to receive peace in this lifetime through meditation positive or negative? It is not negative, because the desire to receive peace in this lifetime is attained through meditation, by following the path, and the purpose of the path is not for this life. Check up and try to see clearly, this question is something you have to realize the answer to—is this desire attached to the comfort of this temporal life? There is something underneath this—it is very important to understand what is following Dharma. Can it be negative? Yes, it can be—try to explain it. How can you attain the path without renouncing the eight temporal comforts? The one who runs after peace never gets it.

You see, we have desire to experience peace in this lifetime by following the path, but this is not negative because it leads to higher realizations. This peace can be developed into perfect everlasting peace. This desire to experience peace in this lifetime is always very useful. The other desire, which does not renounce the attachment and comfort of this life, is negative—it is not attained through the path, it is attained through samsaric actions, through temporal methods, and it is attached to temporal comforts. Its peace and happiness is also temporal and doesn't last. The result of this desire is trivial, nothing to do with future lives, bringing no peace in future lives, only bringing suffering. This action is meaningless and trivial because it never had a beginning and has no end. Therefore, there is no reason to do it again. If it had no beginning, this kind of action would also waste the perfect human rebirth and would be something that could never be ended, no matter how many human rebirths were taken.

The action of trying to attain peace through meditation on samsara and suffering on the path is meaningful because the purpose of this action is to fight the negative mind, and it brings everlasting

happiness. This meditation causes the meditator to renounce attachment and actions that arise from the negative mind of ignorance. The meditator experiences realizations on the path and everlasting peace. This method is perfect because it has an end. The more this action is done through Dharma practice, the more positive it is; the more it is done, the end, enlightenment, is that much closer. Enlightenment is the highest, most perfect everlasting happiness.

The desire to destroy ignorance is positive. The desire for the temporal comfort of this life is negative, mostly causing us to be reborn in the three lower realms. Desiring any samsaric rebirth, samsaric enjoyment in future lifetimes, or human rebirth again for its enjoyments is still negative because it causes us to be reborn in samsara and keeps us there. The positive desire is the desire for freedom from samsara, the wish to be free from greed, ignorance, and hatred. But the desire to be free from samsara is negative when compared to the non-selfish desire to attain enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings. The desire to be free from samsara for the sake of personal peace is positive when compared with the wish for an upper realm rebirth and experience of samsaric pleasures. However, that desire, which is concerned more for the future life than the present life, is positive when compared to the desire for the temporal life. Therefore, the worst desire is working only for the comfort of the temporal life—the person who has this kind of mind is more likely to experience suffering in the three lower realms.

All of this has to do with the amount of good karma a person creates. Any action that is done for the future life by the mind that is not ignorant of the evolution of karma is a Dharma action. If an action is done for the temporal comfort of the future life, it is the lowest kind of Dharma action. Any action done for the temporal comfort of this life is not Dharma.

A person who dies with belief, full confidence, and faith in the evolution of karma has a much different rebirth than the one who doesn't. Most of those who don't are reborn in the narak realms, but usually the lower realm for a believer in karma is the animal realm, especially for one who breaks precepts. We ourselves don't have the mental power to see the evolution of karma, so the examples shown by the enlightened being are extremely useful to help us understand. It is especially important to follow the laws of karma, particularly at times like these when there are so many international, social, political, and racial conflicts, and problems also between teachers and students, parents and children—all harming one another with actions of body and speech, and with the mental action of ill will.

Following karma is the only way to keep each other in peace, from creating negativities. Peace is impossible without this. Why is there so much trouble on earth without choice? Countries keep changing political parties but no matter what they try it never suits everyone. The changes are to prevent suffering but never succeed because the method is not perfect. Therefore, problems arise and get bigger. Again the situation is changed, and again it fails. So many leaders come and go, groups form and dissolve, and so on. At the beginning humans didn't need a king, leader, or guru because the negative mind was greatly subdued, not strong, not violent as it is now. The present problems were not there: crops grew easily, bodies produced their own light, there was no need for work, enjoyments and happiness were much greater. There was no such action as miserliness, although the seeds were there. People didn't collect things or make arrangements for the future.

Slowly, however, the negative mind became stronger, growing more and more violent, and so the behavior deteriorated—jealousy, stronger desire, and miserliness arose. As it degenerated more and

more, problems came and so a king was needed to look after them. Having social structure doesn't mean things are better, it means they're getting worse.

The actual method to bring peace is to follow karma, the fundamental method—no other method can possibly work. In order for all people on earth to receive peace depends on every person on earth following karma, not just some people working for enlightenment and practicing Dharma and then their giving peace and enlightenment to others through their mental control. This would be like three people working for money and filling their stomachs with food and expecting millions of others to not be hungry. But those others didn't work, didn't get money, and didn't get food, unlike the three who did these things. It's the same thing for three people who practice Dharma and purify, attain realizations, and achieve perfect peace—they can't give their peace to those who don't practice the method. Perfect peace is mental control, and those three minds are completely separate from the other millions of minds, and have different karmic evolutions. This doesn't mean that the purified one can't influence others, but each being must work for his own mental control; such control can't be divided and shared like a loaf of bread. This is impossible.

If two people had the same mind then it should be exactly the same—if one is hungry, the other is hungry, if one is happy, so is the other—the physical appearance should be completely the same, too, because to having the same mind means having exactly the same karmic impressions. Each being's peace requires each being controlling his mind. To think it can be shared like bread is a big mistake. Mental experiences cannot be shared, the mind cannot be shared—if this were possible we all would have attained enlightenment by now: Since there are infinite numbers of enlightened beings with great unbearable compassion they wouldn't leave even one sentient being in suffering for even a split second. If there were such a thing, there would be no existence or evolution of karma, and people wouldn't have to be careful about it. If there were no karma there would be no such thing as different lives, or things like uncontrolled rebirth and death, or sickness and old age. It wouldn't be possible for all these evolutions to exist, for beings to have to lead such lives without choice.

Also, without karma, coming from the West and taking a meditation course wouldn't be possible. Everything would be self-existent, evolution would be done by itself—there are only two possibilities if there is no karma. Everything is self-existent, or everything is non-existent. Actually, if this line of reasoning is followed everything becomes non-existent—no enlightened beings, no sentient beings, no enlightened mind, no ignorant mind—because the enlightened mind comes from the purification of the ignorant mind. The enlightened mind is not eternal, it didn't always exist, but once achieved it is permanent. If the enlightened mind was eternal there would be no such person as Gautama Buddha, beginningless suffering could not be ended, and it would not be possible to make the mind omniscient. Then there wouldn't be any mind or any existence, because every existence depends on the word; this depends on the creator of the word, mental action—karma. Children practicing Dharma and parents creating negative karma yet expecting enlightenment from the children is impossible. Mental effect in following karma is necessary, and without it no other method works.

Talk is old—realizations are new.

THE TEN IMMORALITIES OF BODY, SPEECH AND MIND.

The result of negative action is rebirth in the suffering realms. This is the close or principal result, the result of the fullness of the sin. An action has object, motivation, action, and completion of action—if this whole thing is not complete we may not experience fullness but go straight to the experience of the result that is similar to the cause. After a lower realm rebirth there may still be some effect of the result of the principal karma to be experienced. The result that is similar to the cause causes the person to himself to experience the suffering of the negative action he did—it comes back on him. The possessed result is living in a horrible or suffering place as a result of that negative action.

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THE GENERAL SUFFERINGS OF SAMBARA (Page 82)

Shantideva's quotation.

Samsaric pleasures betray us, as grass betrays the animal. We shouldn't trust these things, but this experience doesn't come intuitively, it only arises through understanding. The best way to cease our trust in these things is to realise the shortcomings of greed. Thus, we come to see greed as an enemy. We can't be skilled in using method if we don't recognize the wrong view—we need full recognition of the negative mind. The best way to check up is to use examples from our own life. We create and live the example, but we don't recognize it. From the Dharma point of view, we do many childish and pointless things that we think are important. Sometimes we are so blind that we need to be shown examples of the examples, such as the example of having a wound, in which we see that scratching it brings one problem and not scratching it brings another, or the example of being unsatisfied when we don't have enough to eat and having an upset stomach when we eat too much, or the example of having many possessions and thus many enemies, or having few possessions, and then desiring more.

Despite the fact that we are full of such living examples, our wisdom is so small, our minds are so limited, that we have to depend on someone to show them to us. But it's not enough to listen to examples, we must know them, understand their nature, and find a solution to the whole situation. Samsaric method provides this solution through the process of recognizing the negative mind and changing it. This must be done through deep recognition, not just by reading the book. The lack of the desire to attain enlightenment is the greatest obstacle to the goal. This desire gives us the energy to live in the essential practice of Dharma. If the body didn't exist there would be no samsaric problems such as discomfort, hunger, thirst, or problems with possessions—we depend on this body because of greed, ignorance, and hatred. If we eliminate these three negative minds we will no longer depend on the body, but we have depended on these three mental states since beginningless time. If we cut these out, the suffering body will no longer exist. Changing the negative mind depends on meditation and practice of the teachings.

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Meditation three shows the suffering nature of all the realms of samsara. Without realizing this meditation there is no way to fully and clearly understand suffering. As long as we don't recognize samsaric happiness to be suffering, we are always deluded, thinking that it is true happiness, and this wrong conception will keep us in suffering. It is extremely important to understand these things beyond the level of mere words. What we must do is receive the experience of this knowledge—the

clear and deep feeling that samsara is a blazing fire. Without this there is no way to attain the fully renounced mind, however much we may talk about it. If the mind has not fully realized this point, we cannot renounce samsara. It is blocked, nowhere—Dharma practice is difficult, meditation is difficult, and there is no way to attain enlightenment. This meditation is so useful to protect us from suffering through discovering the suffering nature of samsara. Meditating from result to cause and from cause to result are both useful.

Renunciation

If you enjoy samsaric pleasures without greed and with the renounced mind, you will not experience the suffering result. Greed betrays us, as the animal is betrayed by attachment to the pleasures of eating grass and suffers. When we follow greed we don't think that we'll be cheated—we think that there will be a pleasant result; but in fact, we are making arrangements for a suffering result to arise. In this way we are cheated by greed. If we understand the evolution of karma and suffering results, however, then no matter how much we enjoy or how many friends and relatives we have, we have no interest in following greed. We see it as our enemy—we think of all the past suffering that greed has caused and of all the future suffering it will bring, and therefore we will not engage in greedy actions. If we enjoy these things, our mind is free from greed and we are capable of changing enjoyments into Dharma actions, using our possessions in a positive way. Then our daily life becomes pure and controlled. We can always experience the happiness of our positive actions, and will never be cheated by greed.

When any living being is attached to an object, he is being cheated by his greedy mind, because that person trusts that samsaric happiness is real happiness, which is a wrong conception. An example of the way the negative mind cheats is like a person who leads others to his death by enticing him with gifts and money, pretending to be a friend so that the victim trusts him. Only when the victim arrives at the place of slaughter does he realize that his trust has been betrayed due to his greed, and the wrong conception arising from it. The person whose mind is well trained in the nature of samsara and has achieved effortless renunciation sees the whole of samsara as a blazing fire. He does not experience even a split second of desire for samsara, wanting only to escape from it.

We are interested in attaining nirvana but the wish alone is not enough. Nor is it enough to think, "Samsara is a suffering place." We must develop strong aversion to bring about effortless renunciation. This person with this kind of mind sees all samsaric enjoyments as burning to the touch.

In northern Tibet where it is very cold, one boy felt hungry and wanted tsampa very much—he was from a nomadic family. His mother gave him cooked radish instead, and he cried because he didn't like it. She gave him raw radish, partly cooked radish, sliced radish—she prepared it many different ways, but the boy always thought, "This is radish," whatever the form, and saw it as ugly. This is the feeling the fully renounced mind has for samsaric enjoyments—no interest, no matter how high the enjoyment, how expensive the possessions, how nice and numerous the relatives and friends—he sees all this as suffering by nature, with a pessimistic view.

Of course the person who is poor in material possessions due to karma is not renounced—this position has to be a choice made freely in order to be renunciation. The wealthy man who lives poorly in the jungle just looking like a yogi is not renounced either. The realization of renunciation depends on the mental decision, and is not something that comes merely by getting rid of

possessions, nor can it be judged by external appearances. A king can have fully renounced samsara, and a beggar can be extremely greedy. Without trying to destroy the negative mind through living in mental discipline, we cannot be renounced no matter how much we separate ourselves from materials. It only causes conflict. We must renounce the negative mind and live in the practice. We must know what true renunciation really is. If we have destroyed the negative mind, no possession can cause suffering—we can use any enjoyments, including the body, to help attain enlightenment. The principal cause of suffering is the negative mind, possessions are only the cooperative cause. Therefore, we must destroy the negative mind.

The understanding of suffering is basic to the knowledge of the evolution of samsara. Once we have it we don't get attached to these realms, we develop stronger renunciation, and we get out of samsara more quickly. If we don't have the desire to get out we get lazy. Why recognize suffering? The mind not recognizing the suffering of samsaric life is an ignorant mind. By recognizing suffering we eliminate ignorance. Without this recognition we cannot renounce samsara to reach enlightenment. It is the same as if one is suffering from poison—we must recognize it as the cause before we can alleviate the suffering.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS (Page 85)

The four noble truths give an idea of the content of Dharma and what we can experience through practice. To completely purify every single defect of negative mind we should fully realize every single absolute and relative truth, which includes all existence, through omniscient mind. We should attain the two results of the two holy bodies. We can only do this through Dharma practice, following the Dharma path of wisdom and method. All vehicles—the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—include the paths of wisdom and method. The Vajrayana method is greater than the Mahayana, which is greater than the Hinayana, and the greater methods are quicker. The wisdom is the same. The Mahayana uses the methods of bodhicitta, great love, great compassion, and the six paramitas. The Hinayana does not. The tantric path uses other methods such as the method of practicing the result, which means practicing what will become, as well as many others.

Dharma explains everything that exists through the two truths. All three vehicles lead to the two kayas, therefore they are not opposed to each other, just as sometimes a sick person has to take poison and sometimes take non-poisonous substances. But both the poisonous and the non-poisonous substances are used as medicine to cure sickness. In previous times big business people went to the Atlantic to buy jewels from big ships—it took a long time and they would stop at the islands for a rest before going on. Their island rests were also for the purpose of buying jewels, this was their ultimate aim.

There are sixteen wrong conceptions, and the four noble truths counteract them. It takes a very long time to realize these subjects.

1. TRUE SUFFERING

True suffering was shown first by Buddha, before the cause of suffering, because the cause of suffering is very hard to recognize. We haven't recognized it since beginningless time and so we continue to suffer. Living beings are too ignorant to recognize the cause easily, and so if it were shown first they would lose interest and think that there was no reason to practice. Therefore, true suffering is shown first so that we will recognize it.

Why do we travel to the East? If we check up in the depths of our minds, the reason is that we are seeking pleasure because we are suffering. No matter what we say our reason is—to learn, to experience, and so forth—the real reason is because we don't want suffering. This is the same reason we study Dharma. Certainly nobody expected to experience suffering at this meditation course. If we don't recognize suffering there is no reason to put effort into finding its cause or into following the method of Dharma.

(1) We should also remember that perfect peace is not in the nature of suffering—it never changes.

(2) The whole of samsaric suffering is included in the three sufferings. One sentient being's suffering is beginningless—we could never finish explaining the suffering of even one sentient being, so how could we do so in terms of all sentient beings? Yet all suffering is included in these three. We must meditate to realize these before we can gain a true understanding of samsara.

(a) The suffering of feelings—happiness, indifference, unhappiness—are also called the suffering of suffering. Temporal problems such as worry and sickness, which we commonly recognize and define as suffering, are easy to recognize.

(b) Samsaric happiness is also called changeable suffering, or the suffering of change. The suffering of change is experienced when we eat delicious food, enjoy the sun, and so forth. Enjoyment itself is in the nature of suffering—if we like eating a certain food and we eat a lot of it, we get tired of it. If we get cold and sit in the sun it feels good at first but then we get burnt. If an enjoyment is not in the nature of suffering, such as meditation, whose pleasure increases, developing perfect peace until enlightenment, it cannot be decreased by repetition. No samsaric pleasure can do this: ignorance and greed only lead to continued desire, leading to repeated action which brings suffering in the end.

Changeable suffering is difficult to recognize since we are attached to it, since we see samsaric happiness as real happiness. We spend everything for the sake of it—body, work, mind—our whole life is spent in this negative way, due to ignorance and not understanding this happiness to be suffering. If we don't clearly see this we do not understand the nature of suffering or of samsara. Even if we have great psychic powers—flying, going beneath the Earth—it doesn't help. If we don't recognize suffering and renounce samsara we are still suffering. There is no way to escape from suffering without fighting, controlling, and renouncing the negative mind. To renounce samsara we must see it only as suffering, not as happiness at all. We must see it as a razor blade. With the mind living in the avoidance of the eight temporal desires we can enjoy the honey, but the effect on the mind licking the honey of those desires is actually far worse than a cut tongue, because unlike the wound it can never be cured, let alone cured in three or four days. This is because it leads to greater attachment to samsara, which obscures the nature of attachment and of samsaric happiness and causes the negative mind to continually exist.

(c) Acting uncontrolled because of delusions and karma is pervasive suffering, ignorance of one's true nature, which pervades the whole body. Wrong conceptions always exist in this samsaric life. The suffering body is uncontrolled because of delusion and karma.

(3) Connections—there are the principal (creator) and the cooperative causes, conditions, parts, aggregates, word. Suffering, as well as all existence, is void of not having any connection. Many have the wrong conception that suffering is self-existent, independent. Also, that their body is void.

(4) Follows from (3)—depends on the aggregates.

II. THE TRUE CAUSE OF SUFFERING

(1) Ignorance is the cause of suffering because it is delusions and karma. It is wrong to think that there is no reason for suffering.

(2) Sentient beings are always suffering, meeting new problems. It is wrong to think that there is only one cause—actually there are many different delusions and karmas.

(3) Our own true cause of suffering is delusions and karma. Our suffering arises strongly from them and not from someone else's delusions and karma. Each creates his own suffering—if it were created by some other being such as God, then our ignorance should be God, but this doesn't make sense.

III. THE TRUE CESSATION OF SUFFERING (Page 86)

This is the result of the true path (IV), but it is mentioned first in order to show the existence of nirvana, and give reason for following the path. Nirvana is perfect peace, the cessation of all suffering—when we see this, we ask how do we attain it? The answer is through the path.

(1) If anyone's mind and body are tied (Tib: *ching wa*, means tied in samsara) by delusion and karma. It means the mind is not liberated (Tib: *tar pa*, release) and the body is out of control. There is such a thing as liberation because there is such a mind, completely.

(2) The mind tied by delusion is the opposite of peaceful. It is suffering, like thinking that sexual happiness arising from the delusion of greed is peace. Such happiness is not peace because the mind is tied by delusion, uncontrolled. This only makes the mind more deluded.

(3) Delusions are not perfect because they are in the nature of suffering.

(4) If the suffering arises again, it has not been definitely removed, because when it is definitely removed it is permanently removed. When temporal methods are used to remove samsaric suffering, it is removed, it arises again, it is removed, and again it arises. Dharma method brings permanent removal—if it didn't, then Dharma practice would be meaningless and there would be no reason to practice and to receive peace, as suffering would recur. Then there would be no Enlightened Being, he who has the highest purified mind and complete mental control. That knowledge can never change, and can never be lost. Also, in that case the enlightened being's showing the teachings would be nonsensical work.

For example, a child doesn't know science, writing, and so forth, so then he studies at school and starts to understand the different subjects better and better, in a more and more varied way, and knowledge develops. A child can learn all these things, increasing his knowledge gradually. Similarly, through Dharma practice and mental purification, we can achieve all knowledge—we can become perfect, with nothing missing—omniscient. We can definitely achieve the holy mind that sees every part of each sentient being, every tiny karma ever created, and clearly remembers each second of each day of each sentient being simultaneously.

We are not like this now, thinking of things only one at a time. For example, we hear a nice sound and listen attentively, not hearing someone talking at that time, or vice versa. When we read a book the mind is thinking about something else. We have such an incapable mind and limited senses. The omniscient mind is never like this, and has no such obstacles. How can we comprehend this? It makes our mind confused to imagine. What is in the enlightened mind is never like this and has no such obstacles. How can we comprehend this? It makes our mind confused to imagine what is in the enlightened being's mind. And as this mind sees all past existence, the same is true for all future lives. Consider the number of sentient beings in existence, even on this earth. The number of humans is nothing, and animals are everywhere—in trees, in houses, outside houses, in oceans, in the stomach, some visible, some invisible—numberless sentient beings. Yet omniscient mind is permanently aware of each split second of all this existence. Besides this, it is also permanently aware of each atom of all non-living matter, every tiny change. It is permanently aware of each split second of mind of all sentient beings.

If it were not possible to enlighten the ignorant mind, it wouldn't be possible to educate the child. This shows that the ignorant mind is not eternal and that neither is the enlightened mind. For example, the mind of the being who invented the rocket didn't always possess knowledge of that technique—he could learn how to do it, eliminating ignorance of the technique. So can we remove all ignorance from the mind, including the ignorance of enlightenment. Through Dharma practice, purification, and realizations this can be our experience, as ordinary education is already our experience.

Once ignorance is removed, suffering cannot return as there is no cause—ignorance—left. Cessation of suffering cannot give rise to ignorance. Ignorance can cause ignorance. The cure for the sickness doesn't cause sickness. To say contrary things is very unconnected talk. Ignorance and cessation of ignorance (or void of ignorance) are complete opposites. This is like saying the farmer took all the corn from the field, not leaving even a tiny seed, didn't plant anymore, and next year expected corn to grow. No farmer thinks like this. Rocks in the field cannot bring corn—only the seed can do this. So for the cessation of ignorance to cause ignorance is impossible. Suffering cannot return because there is nothing to create it in that holy being's mind. The creator, negative mind, is not permanent. Cessation of suffering means the cessation of the creator.

IV. THE TRUE PATH OF CESSATION

(2) Wisdom is the true path—if it doesn't go against delusions it isn't the true path, since liberation is against delusions.

(3) Some beings don't want to renounce negative mind attachments because they are afraid of losing samsaric happiness.

A. THE EIGHT CAUSES OF SUFFERING (Page 81)

1. THE SUFFERING OF REBIRTH

Even at the time of rebirth there is great suffering, beginning with conception in the mother's womb. We don't remember these sufferings, nor have they been scientifically explained—they are beyond the object of scientists' minds, otherwise they would be in books. But there are such feelings

at birth and death and because they have forgotten their own experiences scientists do not investigate them. The “size” of the mind is independent of the size of the body. The main reason we don’t think that the fetus or baby has mind is that we don’t remember our own experiences. It is extremely difficult for us to see others’ sufferings because mental states are so much harder to check up on than physical states.

Meditation three is very useful. Usually we don’t see others’ sufferings and we think that they are very happy, like the gods—to our view theirs looks a very happy life and we get attached to it. Or the poor look at the rich and see them only as happy, and craving arises, the seed of existence in samsara. But if we work on meditation three continuously we will see suffering more clearly, and then we can discover that they are all suffering—rich and poor, famous and unknown, and gods who have bodies of light, palaces, many women, beautiful parks, music, delicious and rich food. If we could see their lives we would be so attached to them because compared to these beings, the richest man on Earth would be a beggar. We can see our own life also in suffering. Then as we see all this, interest in any of it is lost, even in being a god or being the richest man on Earth, because we see that none of it is real happiness and understand it all as suffering. So there is no attachment and no craving for samsaric enjoyments, and so no negative friend or evil possessions can cheat us because the main evil is within our minds, and therefore these cooperative causes are ineffective. If the mind is not free from evil, these things can cheat because they find a relationship between themselves and us—evil friends living in a negative way, having wrong realizations and so forth. Even if someone wants us to create samsaric actions we can see the suffering result that will come in many future lives and we are afraid of creating negative karma, and so we do not follow the negative influence.

When we discover the smiling friend who flatters and gives gifts to be a spy, wanting to betray us, we lose interest knowing that in time he will cause us trouble. We become skeptical and afraid of him, no matter what he gives—the mind is so careful not to get into any problems with him. If we discover the suffering nature, the results of the causes, from meditation three, we will have no interest in being like this. We will think, “If I am born in this condition it is still suffering.” This understanding doesn’t allow us to be reborn like this, as we do not create the cause. We should follow Milarepa who said, “The samsaric enjoyment of the desires is the tying rope (leash) of evil and it is definite that we will be bound by it, so renounce attachment. The riding friend is an evil girl and it is definite that we will be betrayed by her, therefore be skeptical (cautious). The food and possessions are the spices of evil, the homeland (and family) the prisons of evils; if left right now it is meaningful.”

(a) We always think that beings in the womb or egg are happier in there than they would be outside. It is so happy and pleasant there, we think. This is because we don’t understand the experience, and forget our own.

(b) To use our birth for negative mind, delusions, and creating bad karma is easy. But this builds more delusions. It is difficult to create good karma. We always use such a rebirth for ignorance. If our rebirth does not arise out of delusion and karma, we won’t use it to increase delusion, and it is not in suffering; it won’t be used for ignorance, for negative mind.

Taking care of this body as ignorance thinks is taking care of it for the negative mind. Why is it difficult to use our rebirth for virtuous work? Because we took the wrong kind of rebirth, a suffering rebirth, not a perfect rebirth. This is our fault for taking a rebirth created by delusions and karma.

That's why this body is always in the nature of suffering. Even after thirty minutes of meditation it gets tired, exhausted, itching, bitten by insects, thirsty, hungry, and feels pain and so forth. This is all our fault and shows how hard it is to concentrate on virtuous work.

Why is a person always concerned about his troubles and how to stop them? If there are no troubles at present he's always concerned about future troubles. He collects possessions—clothes, money, and so forth—and then worries that they will be stolen, broken, or lost. All this is also the fault of the suffering rebirth. It makes the person worry about arrangements, and brings greed, attachment, and anger, always increasing ignorance in this manner. It's difficult to practice Dharma with such a negative mind that is attached to possessions; it's too strong. The person has to give up Dharma work. No matter how much he wants to practice, he finds it so difficult. To stop future troubles, to not lack material possessions, to not feel hunger, thirst, heat, or cold—even if the person wants to follow Dharma, even if he knows there is a perfect method to Perfect Peace, he doesn't have time, he spends it in other work. All this is the fault of the suffering rebirth. If the rebirth were not in the nature of suffering there would be no need to build houses or to make any other constructions.

(c) Although in the form and formless worlds they don't have sickness as we do in the world of sense, they do have death. They also have changeable suffering and pervasive suffering.

(d) The beautiful object is the object of the poisonous mind of greed, and results in the elusive feeling of happiness. The ugly object is the object of hatred and results in suffering. The neutral object is the object of ignorance and results in indifference (taking it for granted by not checking and believing in its permanence and self-existence). The object, a person, for example, that is not the object of greed or hatred is indifferent or neutral, so we don't check on it or believe in our hearts that it is permanent and so forth, and thus we have an ignorant conception of it, one that is opposite to the way it exists. This is not necessarily a conscious thought, especially since we are not checking. We must check to see its true nature.

These three negative, poisonous minds, which bring the three elusive feelings, make us see objects with the wrong view, opposite to the fact of their nature. Whenever we use the senses we interact with objects with our greed, hatred, and ignorance, and create negative actions. Until we see objects in their true nature, with positive mind, this will continue. Now we can see how easily we create negative actions, making ourselves more ignorant. The whole problem is not knowing how we are using objects with the six senses. We don't use them in a positive way.

Even just here in this room all this is happening as we look at each other. We look at an object we like, and greed and attachment arise. We look at one we don't like and hatred arises. Then we look with ignorance at a neutral object. All of this is also due to the suffering rebirth. It's always like this when we go to town, as we see many different objects. We look at them as permanent, not truly seeing them as impermanent. In the depths of our hearts we think they are permanent—it is difficult to recognize the negative mind; even to understand that it is negative takes much time. Then to recognize each type takes much meditation, study, and practice. It's not like differentiating external objects such as wheat and rice by shape and color and so forth.

We also see people as permanent, as always the same person, in the same way that we see inanimate objects such as the earth, the sky, and so forth with indifference. Seeing objects in this way, with the wrong conception of permanence, increases ignorance. And the worst wrong conception is seeing the person and the object as independent, self-existent. This definitely causes ignorance to increase:

this is the personality of the principal ignorance. And then due to this wrong conception we totally believe that it is true that this object or person is definitely self-existent. If we search for the object of this belief it can never be found; if we make a really deep search it can be found nowhere—not on the head, not on the leg, not on the body, not anywhere. Without going through observation with logic we momentarily, suddenly believe in it as seen. But if we use positive wisdom, the opposite of ignorance, we can never find the object of the belief of ignorance on any persons, atoms, objects—or anything.

That's why the negative mind is not a true mind. It is wrong, illusive, because to the true mind the object of ignorance doesn't exist anywhere. Therefore, the wrong object is created by the wrong mind—that object doesn't exist. On the basis of complete belief, in the view of the object as it is seen by ignorance, every other negative mind arises from this wrong view, and so come the different problems—pride, jealousy, greed, anger, and envy. Having complete belief in the object viewed by ignorance, by the wrong conception of the self-existence of impermanent beings and things, and even permanent things, definitely increases ignorance. How? Because viewing this object, looking at it as it is seen by the ignorant mind, doesn't make us realize or see that this object is false, that it doesn't exist, that it is untrue. It doesn't make us discover the nature of the object. Besides this, it also causes us not to discover the ignorance, the nature and personality of ignorance. It doesn't see the faults of ignorance, that ignorance is a false mind. We go on to view the object as permanent. In the same way we don't soon discover ignorance, and so continue to develop it. We develop it because this belief makes us again see the object, further causes the mind to view the object in the wrong way, and causes us to have ignorance. Just as this wrong belief leads to longer ignorance, seeing the object in the wrong way leads to another wrong belief, and on and on. Just as the mind gets more and more used to viewing objects as independent and ignorance as good, not false, as the mind gets accustomed and familiar with this, in the same way it can be turned to view objects in the right way. It can be trained to see that the object is non self-existent, completely empty, nowhere on any of the atoms of the object, it can see ignorance as completely the wrong conception, more and more clearly, more and more deeply as the practice continues, changing the view into the opposite.

Without discovering ignorance as the black, false mind, we can never make our views faultless and clean. That's why recognition of the negative mind is very important—crucial. It is not an easy subject. Even the explanation is very deep, difficult to understand. We can never change the wrong creation from untrue without discovering the wrong creator and fighting it. To see the object without mistake in views and actions, to see its nature, we must discover the creator. So without changing the wrong creator and destroying it, we cannot correct mistakes in our views and actions. This is because viewing the object is in itself a wrong action. Because of the unsubdued minds, the actions of the body are also unsubdued, uncontrolled. Such a person's aspect becomes ugly, not peaceful—even a smiling person who becomes angry turns ugly. Fighting and violence arise from the unsubdued mind and its object. Similarly, the beautiful object is the cooperative cause for greed arising.

(e) With each split second life moves towards death, out of control, with no choice. As soon as we are born we face death. This is another suffering of rebirth.

Rebirth From the Womb (Page 87-88)

We think that the mother's womb is wide and spacious, and that the baby inside is relaxed and comfortable. But imagine animal meat and intestines, and then imagining living inside of it, like

sleeping in a toilet. We all came through this but we don't remember it. As the fetus grows, although the sense of smell is not fully developed, there is much suffering, even when it's just a shapeless mass of cells.

If the mother is near a fire, she doesn't feel hot but the baby does as a karmic creation of its own mind. This is not in the mother's mind, so she doesn't see it as the baby does. The principal cause of the baby's suffering is created by its own mind. The mother doesn't experience the baby's suffering as the baby doesn't suffer the mother's—each mind creates its own. Therefore the suffering the mother experiences as a result of the baby is created by her own mind, her own karma. It's the same for the baby. Even though the baby is in the mother's womb she can't feel its mind, its sensations, or its feelings. The mother does not have the power to prevent the baby's suffering, as the principal cause of the karma of each is different.

For example, some people, even when with others, see some type of person or animal and feel afraid on sight, but others don't. This is also a karmic thing, the reason why one gets shocked and another doesn't. Because the karma of each differs, the creator is different. Thus one object has many different effects—different karmas since there are different creators. It is the same thing with the baby inside the womb.

During each month of life in the womb there is a different evolution for the baby. When it is small, even the element of air pushes the body into shapes—it becomes round, then sort of square when the limbs develop, and the baby feels suffering as if it is being pulled and stretched. The principal cause of this experience is the negative mind, and the cooperative cause is the air.

The baby's skin is so fragile, a karmic creation that gives it much suffering—it is very, very thin. At first the baby cries a lot but this generally decreases, although occasionally it can increase. There is a reason for the small baby crying so much, but we don't see the baby as suffering since it's kept in warm clothes, comfortable, and so forth. We see it as not suffering since we don't see what the baby's experience is. There is actually much suffering from the baby's side but this can only be experienced by the baby—it has its own visions and feelings that bring stronger suffering.

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3. Some people have to go through painful and difficult operations that endanger their lives. Even if the person lives, the body is not as strong as a body that has never had an operation. Some always feel pain when they walk quickly and so forth.

We should remember all horrible sicknesses and imagine ourselves in that situation. For example we can think about epilepsy—it is difficult to cure, has a sudden onset, gives us no chance to use our possessions as we desire, or to receive enjoyments.

5. Separation—of parents, children, and spouse. Also from objects—they become broken, and money, clothes, and food run out. We miss them and suffer. For example, in Tibet one person who had never eaten fish found it so delicious when he tried it for the first time that he ate and ate, became very full, and started to vomit. But he felt great avarice and suffered because he was losing the fish through vomiting, so he tied a rope around his neck. He couldn't bear to lose the fish he had only ever eaten once.

We should check up our own experiences from rebirth until now. When we do this we will find that we have always been living in suffering.

6. As long as attachment is not renounced there is always this problem. When we hear ugly words about a relative, we suffer. When there are dangers and problems, we suffer. When we are in a horrible place with poor conditions, we suffer, as we do when we see ugly objects such as fire, rough objects, or undelicious food. Depending on each sense there are so many ugly objects.

7. Even if we find the things we desire, there is always dissatisfaction and suffering. Our lives are full of examples of these problems.

Within the three elusive feelings, the neutral object and ignorance lead to indifference. This creates karma, as do anger and hatred. The problem is not viewing objects with equanimity and this keeps us in samsara.

In order for my actions to cause enlightenment I must be possessed by bodhicitta, fully renounced mind, and realization of shunyata. I should think, "I am going to take teachings from the graded path for the sake of sentient beings."

8. (a) Even in the upper realms the body is suffering and deluded. This comes from the present body that is uncontrolled and deluded, and creates much negative karma. It creates the karma to experience suffering in the lower realms in many future lives. If we can cease this deluded body in this time, if we can cease the continuity of the karma that makes us experience this deluded body, the karma that brings this result, and then there will no longer be the continuity of the deluded body in future lives. Therefore, we must stop delusions and karma in this lifetime.

If the continuity of taking this deluded body is the result of past delusions and karma, then no matter how many karmas have been created in previous lives to bring future suffering bodies, they can all be stopped. As the cause, delusion, is ceased, so are the continual results. The whole of this life, all its energy, should be put to work to eradicate the cause, delusion. This is a very beneficial, powerful action because this one action, the eradication of delusion and karma, can stop all future sufferings already caused in past lives and that will otherwise have to be experienced. Many negative results can be stopped by one work, a very wise work, Dharma work—cutting the delusions, even though they were caused in previous lives and the results come in many future lives.

Any samsaric actions cannot compare to Dharma work—they have no power. To cure even temporal problems and the suffering that even ordinary people can recognize—the gross suffering that can be stopped by samsaric methods—we need many different samsaric methods. But there is no samsaric action that can stop all suffering for all beings. Each different momentary problem has a different solution, but no matter how long we do it, it never ends. There is a method for one problem of mind or body and as we are working with this, another problem comes. So it is never completed and as long as we depend on these methods alone it can never end. For example, the suffering of hunger and thirst is cured by food and water. When we feel cold, we put on warm clothes, and when we feel too hot there's another method. But even if all those things are there and there are no physical, material problems, we get a bodily disorder and have to use chemicals and medicines.

Taking this deluded body causes suffering in future lives based on the continuity of the deluded body because we don't try to stop the principal cause, delusion, and the cause that makes us take the body, karma. It is important that we understand the evolution of karma and not be attached to our own body, and also not be attached to taking another such samsaric body in future lifetimes.

It is so clear that on earth and in different countries there are so many problems—problems between rich and poor, workers and capitalists, governments and the poor, servants and employers, and one political party and another. The whole thing is based on money. If there were not this suffering, deluded body that we had to take without choice, uncontrolled, there would be no need for money; but this body makes that need. All such conflicts—killings, demonstrations, and protests—are based on money, which is caused by this body. As long as we have craving for this body, thus creating the cause for it, we get the problems that it brings. Protests, demonstrations, and so forth are not new. If we really check up it is not the fault of the employer or the government, but the fault of each person who followed ignorance, worked as the ignorant personality, and created delusions and karma and so is continually under their control, taking this deluded body without choice. Each of these suffering people created the cause of his body that caused those problems and makes us create so much negative karma. Any problem coming from the body is caused by having the body, coming from the person's ignorance, the cause of the suffering—it's inevitable. It is our own fault, due to not trying to cut off ignorance. If there is no body, no money is needed, also no visas and so forth.

Practicing Dharma to cut off ignorance is so profitable. It can stop every single problem that exists in samsara for everyone. Therefore, not spending your time in Dharma when you have the chance is very foolish from the Dharma point of view, but not from the ignorant point of view. From the ignorant point of view, actions opposed to Dharma are wise, following samsaric methods, not trying to cut off ignorance but trying different samsaric methods. The ordinary being thinks that this renouncing of samsaric enjoyments is very foolish, exhausting oneself, destroying oneself. The ignorant and Dharma views are complete opposite. The ignorant mind and the truly understanding mind see completely differently. Why does the ignorant mind think that renunciation is foolish? Because it is an ignorant, unknowing mind, and has no understanding.

(b) All this life's sufferings, those from rebirth to death, are due to the existence of this body.

(c,d) There is no need to experience these two sufferings if the body is completely free of delusions and karma.

(e) Pervasive suffering causes the other two, (c) and (d). Being in the nature of suffering, the body decays and perishes. The body is like a flag, it rarely stays still, it is always experiencing different problems, one on top of the other. It is very fragile and so easily runs into suffering.

HOW TO STOP THE THREE NEGATIVE FEELINGS (Page 90)

Why should we stop these three negative feelings? Because the whole problem between subject, creator, and object arises through feelings. But there is a solution to stop problems, to make them non-existent—a remedy. Use these methods when problems arise.

Palden Chodag's Quotation

Attachment to “I” leads to attachment to desirable things and that obscures the faults (suffering results) of ignorance (attachment). We see a beautiful thing and greed is attached. This attachment obscures the faults of the negative mind of attachment. As the attachment is attached to an object or person and thinks it is good, it doesn’t check up. It is never seen as a wrong mind, that causes suffering.

(1) Searching for “I” when there is a problem in the mind is the opposite action of the negative mind, because the negative mind never tries to discover the “I,” never seeks its object “I.” To do so is an opposing action and when there is a problem this takes the mind from negativity—from anger, greed, or ignorance. When the mind is out of this, the problem disappears. Seeking “I” when there is a problem is like trying to find out what the negative mind is, a method to find out the object as it is viewed by the negative mind. When this method is done the negative mind goes away, escapes, and hides, because as we seek the object “I” we cannot find it, and as we get deeper and deeper into the “I” it goes away, becomes invisible. So as the object of the negative mind has gone, the negative mind also goes, just as the person who shows a false object and gets shy when another looks at it, and hides it away.

As we proceed along the path, realizations increase and negative mind can be completely removed from the mind, made non-existent. The person who believes that the way the negative mind sees the object is completely true gets more attached and the negative mind gets stronger. Then all others become unimportant as the self gets most important, “I am the only one—” so strong that one breaks and kills. Both object and “I” are seen completely by the negative mind. So when there’s a problem, suddenly check up on the “I,” anger, greed, and ignorance. This makes the mind cheat the negative mind, brings the mind out of strong arising negativity, and keeps the mind quiet and cool.

What is written must be read, understood and practiced in the mind. The longer the practice, the clearer the effect will become.

Try to discover how the negative mind feels, how it views the “I”. Usually the object “I,” the way we see it, is much more clear and visible when the negative mind is strong, for example when anger or fear are great, or greed strong. The wrong object “I” is easy to see and check up. How do I see “I?” Usually the negative mind sees “I” as the body but we don’t really recognize how we see it, we can’t tell or describe this feeling. It is too subtle and the mind is too ignorant, so we can’t explain it. Ignorance never explains its object of wrong view. The whole negative mind is in the mind all the time, not always strong—it is difficult to say how we view it. As the negative mind gets stronger the “I” gets stronger, the object of the wrong view also gets stronger and clearer to see. At that time we view the “I” as the self-entity, I.

Continuous practice shows the absolute nature of the “I” more clearly; we can see it as a non-self entity and the viewed objects as non-self entities in their non-self existent natures. If we start this method as soon as we see a problem arising, the problem is stopped right away—greed, ignorance, and hatred. Samsaric happiness puts the mind into confusion and so does suffering. Any feelings put the mind into confusion—the mind is never in peace, and always has greed, hatred, and ignorance, seeing objects as permanent and so forth.

How quickly these methods work depends on how strongly and deeply we understand them. Problems can be stopped more and more quickly—one minute a big hassle, the next minute the problem dissolves, existing nowhere, we have complete peace, and we see no reason for the problem

to have arisen. It's like a very active person taking a rest. Even if there's "no problem" we can always practice and remember this method, because the mind is always in confusion—even when happy in samsaric attachment it is very confused.

So when a big problem arises the mind is well trained in and familiar with this method. Usually, when there is an actual problem the negative mind is very strong, and the method is difficult to use. The negative mind doesn't have interest in it, thinking, "There is something like this method but I don't care, what does it matter?" Even if it's some method like bodhicitta, the negative mind is as strong as Mt. Meru if not well trained in this method, and the negative mind stops any interest in using it.

Sometimes it's difficult to recognize feelings in the depths of the heart. It's so hard to see that the object viewed doesn't exist anywhere. For example we look at a person. (i) In the depth of the heart we have the feeling that the person is not changing every split second, that the person is not finishing, decaying. In the depth of the heart we have the wrong conception that he is permanent, always self-existent. We should check up to confirm if we see things like this or not. We see the person as one, never changing from year to year—the continuity of the person is the same and because the shape seems the same we believe the person is permanent. Even if we feel indifferent to the person, the ignorant conception arises that he is permanent. We don't clearly see or fully realize that the person is changing each split second, and that he is of an impermanent nature.

(ii) Also, we always see the person as a stranger, whatever his name is, as if he were the whole thing. His name is "Dorje" but we see his whole body as "Dorje," as if his body were the self-entity, the self-existent Dorje. Viewing him as self-existent is the action of ignorance functioning through the neutral feeling. The more we do this, the more we develop ignorance, making it stronger, as it is opposite to absolute nature. So ignorance develops and is thus harder to undo, becomes more continual, and we always see things as permanent and self-existent. What does "self-entity" mean? Think of, for example "Nepalese King." We think his total body is King. That person now King has not always been King, physically or mentally, as we believe. Before, when there was no Nepalese population, no His Majesty's Government, there was no King. Before he received the title "King" he was the same as another person. In dependence upon the population, the title "King" was given to the one worthy of the title. In the same way, by vote one becomes "President—" it all depends on the population. So by this dependence the title was given. Where is the title? The name, the title, was given to him in dependence upon the population and the existence of his mind and body. But our wrong conception always feels as if the King is a self-entity. If we deeply check our own feelings in the depth of the heart, our conception is to think of the King as a self-entity, that he himself, his whole body, is "King," that he doesn't depend on the population, that he exists by himself, from himself. In the depth of our hearts we think that each person exists by himself and is permanent.

For example, a porter is one who carries luggage, he is dependent on luggage, yet we say, "He is a porter," as if he exists by himself. There is the strong wrong conception that a self-entity, "he," is the porter, without thinking that "porter," or the title given, exists is due to his carrying luggage, without realizing that the title is dependent on luggage.

It is the same thing with the "I." The feeling of a self-entity—"I"—that exists without depending on any of those aggregates, exists by itself, from myself, without clearly seeing that it depends on the aggregates, the skandhas. Because of this wrong view of "I" existing as self, the opposite of "I" existing in dependence on the skandhas, the negative minds arise. It is like the door that the negative

minds can come through—if it's open they come. Then we think, "I am so important—" as anger arises we strongly feel "I" am self-existent, not dependent on the aggregates. When there is such strong anger there is such a strong feeling, seeing oneself as so important, the biggest most important thing, more than any other being. There is a strong feeling of the body as "I." This is also the fundamental feeling of pride.

Anyway, there is no such "I," King, or porter that exists independently of the aggregates, population, or luggage, no such self-existent entity. It's the same thing with a house. It cannot exist without depending on the aggregates: when the cement, wood, and so forth are in town, the sand in the ground, the bricks somewhere else, there is no house. Each item is not "house." Nor is one wall "house." Nor is the person building it the "house." Yet our view of the house is of a "house." "This whole thing is a house," we think, as if it always exists by itself. We think "house" is oneness with everything in the nature of a self-entity, without depending on components or construction.

Non-self entity (*Rang gyi thup pe dze yō tong pa*) and voidness of self-existence (*Rang shin kyi tong pa*) are slightly different—the latter is more subtle and harder to realize.

In Buddhism there are four different doctrines and each presents a different view. Voidness is the subject matter of the Madhyamaka philosophy and was fully realized by Guru Shakyamuni, Manjushri, Nagarjuna, and Guru Tsong Khapa. Their realizations of voidness and non-self entity were as it is in fact, and not like others' conceptions, which were nonfactual. To fully realize, to clearly see the positive view, non-self entity, and voidness of self-existence, it is so important to recognize the wrong conceptions of self-entity and self-existence, and the views of the wrong conception, such as the conception "I am self-existent." As much as we identify the negative mind and its wrong view, that much more clearly we see and prove the right conception and right view. Therefore we should study the wrong conceptions and wrong views first. For instance, if we don't recognize the wrong conception that brings all problems, bad karma, and much suffering, the principal cause of all this, it is very difficult to completely cut off all problems and all branches of the negative mind. Without recognizing the principal cause and without relying on the right method, realization, or on the mind clearly seeing the right object, using other methods only makes other negative minds arise, takes much time, and is far more difficult. Also, it is very dangerous to follow other methods to stop suffering if we have not clearly recognized the principal ignorance that is the cause of suffering—the wrong conception of the true nature of objects. It is dangerous because we can cause more problems by using samsaric (ordinary) methods depending on external things.

For instance, if there's a person stealing things from this room, killing all the people in the room to stop the problem is a mistake, an unwise method that causes more dangers. Therefore, before shooting it is important to recognize the real thief or we may mistake the object and shoot the real friend. We must recognize who really is the thief, who really causes things to be stolen and who really loses—if we check this in the wrong way and find the wrong object, we can kill the wrong person, and, having used the wrong method, leave the thief in the room. It's the same thing in terms of checking the mind—by correctly checking we can find the real thief there and thereby cause no danger to another person who is not the real thief.

The worst thing is the wrong conception, the principal cause. He really steals all our pleasures and is the most dangerous thief. Why is this so and why should we destroy it? Because he steals enlightenment, our everlasting happiness, and also other realizations and high powers of the mind, such as seeing all past, present, and future. This wrong conception is the main thief that steals the

realization of absolute true nature. This ignorance also steals past, present, and future happiness. How? It produces ignorance of karmic evolution, because without the principal cause, the wrong conception of absolute true nature, of self-existence, there cannot be ignorance of karma—this comes from ignorance of absolute true nature. This causes the person to create bad karma with negative mind so the person doesn't have the chance to enjoy happiness. It brings suffering in the five lower realms and not even the enjoyments of the three upper realms. We have been suffering in countless times as the result of bad karma produced by ignorance of absolute true nature and the evolution of karma. As time is beginningless, that much we have suffered, not receiving pleasure and happiness—it was stolen by the principal ignorance, that of not realizing true nature. We still create bad karma, which brings a suffering result that we will have to experience in the six samsaric realms. Such a suffering result, the suffering of suffering, prevents continual pleasures and happiness, therefore the principal ignorance, the ignorance of the absolute true nature, steals the happiness of many future lives. This is the worst thing and it is always worth our while to destroy it, to make it non-existent.

If there were no inner, principal thief of ignorance, then there would be no outer thief, and there would be no relationship between them. But there is a relationship—when there is the inner thief, there is the outer thief. Losing things depends on the person's karma and is created by his ignorance, and this ignorance is created by not realizing the absolute true nature. So this inner thief brings the relationship to the outer. The actual thief is the person himself, and it all started from his principal ignorance of not realizing absolute true nature. He himself is the main thief—because his mind steals, he steals. As his ignorance stole his many good results in past times, so it will steal in the future. As his ignorance steals, so does he. If the action of the person didn't depend on the action of the mind then the person should exist without depending on the mind. For example, when there is action of speech, talking, arising from the person's mind, this is defined as the person speaking. As the person's mind thinks something, we say the person is thinking this or that, making plans and so on. It is the same thing—the person's ignorance steals, not realizing absolute true nature steals—it steals past and future happiness, so we say the person himself steals past and future happiness and enjoyments. As his ignorance is the worst principal thief, so is the person the worst principal thief.

Why do we say, "This person is negative?" Because his mind is negative (or cruel or generous or so forth according to the quality of mind)—there is no peaceful and humble mind separate from the person. If there were then that person should exist without depending on that mind, without having a relationship with that mind. That mind that we define as peaceful, humble, and generous cannot be the person's mind. But if that person's qualities are not defined by depending on the mind, then there's no way to explain how the person is generous, humble, cruel, and so forth. There is no way for a person to exist without depending on the mind. The mind should not be the mind of the person and the person shouldn't have any mind. If the person hasn't mind we can't discover how he can be cruel, because cruelty is a function of mind, and so are generosity and peacefulness. Without depending on the mind there is no way to define the person as this. As the person is defined by the actions of body, speech, and mind and as this person's ignorance of absolute true nature is the principal thief, he is the principal thief from himself. He destroys himself with his ignorance as he has done in numberless past times and will do in the future, as long as he follows ignorance. In that case no one else outside is the enemy, no external or outer being can be the real thief or the real enemy.

This is why the very highly realized pandits said in their teachings, "Oneself is oneself's enemy, and oneself is oneself's perfect guide." This is not an easy quotation, means many things, and includes

much. Receiving enlightenment has to be created by oneself, as the principal cause of suffering, ignorance, is created by oneself. As one creates one's own, one is an enemy to oneself. The control of the mind gives perfect peace and everlasting happiness, is created by oneself, and so one is one's own perfect guide.

Therefore, this person's ignorance of the absolute true nature of the object makes him the worst thief. To whom? To himself. For instance, without destroying the inner thief that is in our own mind, removing and cleaning, no matter how we try to get rid of the outer thief, animals or people, even out of the country, he can still return after some time. Even though we kill the outer thief it still doesn't help—killing that one thief doesn't mean the end to disturbance by thieves. Since the person has karma he has reason to experience the trouble of things being stolen—other thieves can come, people or animals. Killing one thief cannot kill all thieves and cannot stop all people from becoming thieves because it is not a change in mind, it only kills the body of the thief. Therefore, destroying this thief doesn't prevent all remaining people from becoming thieves, because it doesn't protect the rest of the people from negative mind—it doesn't help anything. So it is no good to kill the outer thief. Even if he was killed in this life, it doesn't even mean that this is the end of my experience of him as a thief. The thief's body may be finished but there is still the continuity of the negative mind of the thief, and as long as we are both in samsara it is sure that he will steal from me again sometime, it is definite. Killing him only creates much more bad karma for me and the suffering of death for him. So killing doesn't help, as his mind continues and anyway, others steal, even though they kill or imprison each thief. It is also definite that he will steal from me again, as long as we are both living in ignorance. If I kick the thief out of the country he can still return. And this is the same with any enemy.

So the person who is stolen from has reason to lose. Who created the cause, the reason? He himself did that. Actually the whole evolution is created by him—starting from the principal cause, ignorance, to the result, theft, it is all only created by the self. He should think, "The whole thing is my own fault, I started the whole thing by following ignorance. The whole evolution, including the suffering result, is the fault of the ignorance, my mind, and therefore, my fault. If it's the fault of my body, it's my fault. It cannot be my fault without depending on my body and mind; without depending on mind, speech and body, how can "my fault" exist? It is all created by my mind."

This evolution is really important. By understanding it we discover ourselves, how I am. Every time I suffer I can discover who I am and become aware of my evolution, my own personality. This understanding really brings peace, never allows the person to get angry as he understands things as the fault of his own ignorance. He thinks, "It's my fault, I can't exist without depending on body and mind." The person who understands this evolution sees it clearly and finds no reason for anger with others, however much he may be disturbed and experience suffering from others. But another person who doesn't clearly see this evolution gets very angry and wants to kill anyone who disturbs him right away, wants to make him non-existent. This person's mind is very confused, causes others to suffer, breaks things, makes more people cruel, and brings more and more suffering.

There's a big difference between the two: the person with this understanding is always relaxed. He discovers the results of his own ignorance more and more and gets that much more energy to destroy it by following the path—if he gets depressed, this gives him the energy to destroy ignorance. If he is happy with ignorance there is no energy. If he doesn't understand karma, started from ignorance, instead of decreasing his suffering he increases it and makes it stronger, causing problems and suffering for many others. Because of his problems many come to kill or to help him.

So following the principal cause, ignorance, as it instructs him, he only builds it stronger. He is happy, he who doesn't recognize his ignorance, if he can destroy the other. He feels happy because his mind is attached to that peace and pleasure for which he could kill the other, happy because that mind doesn't allow him to practice Dharma, to break the cause of suffering—ignorance. This is derived from his negative mind that is attached to peace. He has no energy for Dharma practice, to create good karma, to stop creating bad karma, because the negative mind is attached to the happiness that comes from killing other beings, and attached to that peace that comes from making them non-existent. So this happiness disturbs him.

Anyway, totally it's this—without destroying the main, principal, inner thief within our mind, no matter how much we clean, destroy, and kill the outer thief we can never bring the action to an end or stop the thief; there will always be outer problems. But not caring about the outer problems, paying more attention to the inner, the worst thief, and trying to destroy it by following the holy path shown by the holy beings is the wisest way to end outer enemies and inner problems, the thief of ignorance. Destroying the inner thief is one action. Since by following the path we completely destroy the inner thief, ignorance, there is no reason for the existence of the outer thief or enemy of that person, and no reason to experience the suffering result. Without creating the cause we cannot experience the result. There is no such evolution that can make this happen, the result cannot come without cause—such a thing is not possible.

If we want to cease the temporal outer problems, the quick way, the complete way, the only way is to destroy ignorance. The only method that will bring this about is the method of Dharma practice and mental control—no outer method can do so. Mental control requires practice, it doesn't suddenly happen and cannot be attained through chemicals, wearing beautiful clothes, or eating delicious food. The way to attain mental control is to practice, and that practice has to be the opposite of the action that is only done for the temporal comforts. Besides this, it should be against and the opposite of the samsaric action. Complete mental control depends on practice. What practice? The practice of training in mental control, trying to control the mind and transform it from negativity. Controlling the negative mind depends on method. We ourselves don't have the understanding of the method. We are not born with it. Rather, the method has to be explained, and depends on the teachings as they were taught by the holy beings who went through it.

Generally, there are 84,000 teachings that were shown by Guru Shakyamuni, but these can be made fewer through the presentation of the Graded Path or these meditations. Even if we are not concerned about enlightenment, nirvana, and so forth, it is necessary to practice these meditations since we want to avoid temporal suffering such as theft and so forth. Even people who don't care about past and future lives at the very least don't want to have their pleasures stolen and so on, so they too must practice these meditations. There is no method other than Dharma to stop suffering completely. Within Dharma there are so many methods of practice dependent upon the person's skill and understanding. If the skill and understanding is limited, however, he finds it difficult to control the negative mind when there is a problem, and due to his lack of skill and understanding the problem he only creates new and bigger problems.

All ignorant sentient beings have the conception of "I," always thinking of "self" and "I" as the most important. This is the object of all feelings. We have a strong feeling from the heart combined with a view of self-existence, independence, not depending on anything. From this conception comes attachment. This "I" sees other objects as desirable or not desirable for self comfort and sees objects on the basis of independent self-existence. The attachment to objects causes us to ignore the

shortcomings of greed and of attachment itself. The function of greed is to ignore the attachment, and the attachment is self-perpetuating. Meditate on greed—how it sees objects in the wrong view and causes us to discriminate. When we see objects as dependent on mind we are closer to knowing the mind.

If we are not attached there is no attachment, and all the negative parts diminish. But by destroying the negative mind we do not cease the whole mind, as the cup still remains after we have cleaned the dirt from it. Understand that greed causes anger and many other negative minds by discriminating—we view the one who disturbs our comfort as an enemy, we get jealous, and we fight. The “I” only makes us more ignorant.

See the object in dependence and yourself in dependence—without mind they cannot exist. Think, “Without my mind the flower in my view cannot exist.” Without the seed, stem, petals, and without the elements, it cannot exist. What I call a flower is just a word—the seed isn’t called “a flower,” nor is the stem, the leaf, or the petal. The flower came from the seed. “Flower” is an English word, it is not what we see before us, it depends on many things. This is just one example. Another is, say, “bread.” Before made into its shape the bread doesn’t exist—it is dependent on ground wheat, flour, water, and so forth. We thought of making it, we thought of the word—it depends on the mind, it also is dependent.

(2) Think of the shortcomings of feeling—when we see the negative mind in action we should react in the same way as we do when we see a fire and know it burns. Doing so depends on the deep understanding of the early meditations, but even if we have this it’s difficult. However, our practice must be strong—if it is not it won’t shake the negative mind, for this too is very strong. The negative mind says, “It doesn’t matter, do it,” or “forget the method.”

Remembering the past and future faults of negative mind is in accordance with the person’s understanding of the Dharma. The seed shown here can be greatly amplified. Anytime we have a problem we should think of it in these terms.

(3) Changing the aspect. What we should renounce is the mind, not the object, so we should play with the mind in order to not cause ourselves problems. Cheating and playing tricks on the negative mind is a very useful practice so problems don’t arise. For example, greed arises since it sees the object as beautiful and gets attached or wants to enjoy it. If we make the object look ugly to the mind we can overcome greed—such as changing food to kaka. This is a method to keep the mind in peace, away from the senses, and to stop negative mind.

(5) This is not nearly such a high method as the above and is best to apply to the momentary problems of anger and greed. Stone or wood can’t have such feelings. It is the lowest method but it stops the problems between two people. However it is also a bodhisattva’s practice to cheat the negative mind and give the person with whom one is in conflict time to relax. We cheat the negative mind as we cheat a dangerous tiger that will destroy us—and yet the tiger is not as dangerous as the negative mind, because it can only eat the body, not the mind. The negative mind, however, destroys this life and many future lives; it is much more dangerous than anything else because all outer dangers arise due to negative mind. Therefore the best way to protect ourselves is to protect from negative mind. Protection from outside dangers is not wise if it is the only method, because such actions can never end.

(6) As shown, this method is not really necessary and generally is the same as number three. There are not enough details given and it is possible to make mistake.

USING THESE METHODS

Keeping the medicine in the box doesn't cure the sickness—you must take the medicine in order to have this result. In the same way you must practice these methods to find out how they solve problems, to gain the experience of their help. It is no good to just read the words—this is like listening to music. You should make your own experiments to see what effect they have on the mind, what they bring into the mind, and how they solve problems without harming a single sentient being. It is a method that is only within your own mind and destroys the creator of your own mind. This has nothing to do with physical actions. So many other methods are made to bring peace on earth but they harm many insects or people. For perfect peace to arise, however, you need not harm a single being. You have the Enlightened Being's method, the method of the omniscient mind, the perfect guide—all practiced within the mind. If an action harms another being it is not the way to enlightenment and in fact is opposite to the Enlightened Being's method. He himself achieved perfect peace and showed the method to bring it about without harming any single sentient being.

These methods are not something that can be learnt in just one month. The purpose of the meditations is to get us out of suffering and help us gradually through continuous practice. The methods should be used whenever problems arise, to stop problems, find solutions, and to keep our mind and the minds of others in peace, not creating more bad karma. As our problems cannot be ceased in a month or a day, so we have to depend on methods for as long as problems continue to arise if we do not desire suffering. So these meditations are something for which we are working, something that helps until we finish receiving enlightenment, until we are completely out of suffering. These meditations are very useful, effective, and beneficial to ourselves and to other beings, and are to be practiced until we cease our problems. To complete the practice of these meditations in a month, you should have achieved mental control within one month, and be completely out of problems. That depends on the experience of these meditations, which in turn depends on understanding, which in turn depends on practice and training. To train, you should know the subject matter. It is very difficult to know the entire subject matter in one month. Therefore, there is no way to complete the whole experience in a month.

B. THE DELUSIONS (Page 92)

I. THE SIX PRINCIPAL DELUSIONS

2. Greed (*do chag*: attached to a desirable object)

“Self-nature beauty” means that we see an object as beautiful based on the belief of self-existence and the greed that arises, in turn, on the basis of that.

The being with the controlled mind also sees beauty as we do but is not attached—we, however, are out of control, possessed by greed. We see the object as beautiful and problems arise from our greed—if there is no greed, there are no problems. In the same way, if there is no hatred, there are no problems from ugly objects. Therefore, renunciation of negative mind brings perfect peace, which doesn't depend on objects. For the fully renounced mind there are no problems with any object. Although two people may be in one place, the being with the uncontrolled mind sees it as a

hot, burning suffering place whereas the holy being with the well-controlled mind does not, and has no suffering or problems. For the Enlightened Being, objects that appear to the ordinary being as undelicious, filthy, and ugly become delicious, sweet, and beautiful. The experience of objects for the ordinary being includes so many sufferings and pleasures, but for the Enlightened Being there is not one tiny suffering, it is always the same. If we offer him even the most delicious nectar, which gives much pleasure, he experiences its taste and the taste of water as equal. All of the experiences of the Enlightened Being are in the nature of transcendental happiness, infinite happiness, and are never the experience of our view. For the holy being any ordinary place is seen as one with him, as a pure land, a completely purified realm, that which can also become the mandala without differentiation. The Enlightened Being always experiences the different objects, different foods, and different views that we experience in such unbalanced, unequal ways as beauty, with transcendental happiness. This is due only to mental change, complete purification, and having all realizations. He always sees in beauty, and there is no greed.

4. (d) Pride of my consciousness—for example, when we are angry, we feel that “I” am more important than anyone. We also feel that the body and the “I” are one, and that the five aggregates are “me.” We have a strong view of the self-existent “I,” that the body is “I,” or an entity. One destroys, the other subsides. We can feel the “I” pump up and down from the heart. There is a similar reaction when we feel fear, but it’s hard to remember all this since we are unconscious with our own experiences.

5. Doubt is usually based on one of two points, “it is” or “it is not.” For example, we may have doubt whether the “I” exists or not, whether it is permanent or not. Or we may think that maybe this is the path to liberation or maybe it isn’t. We think maybe or maybe not about anything. Being skeptical, the person doesn’t practice, and therefore doesn’t receive realizations. This is the greatest disturbance because it doesn’t allow us to follow the path to nirvana. Doubt stops us from creating good karma, thinking, “Is there?” or “Isn’t there?” all the time.

6. In meditation we should always check up on our delusions. For example we should think, “Do I have this belief or that belief?” and “Who am ‘I’?” The “I” we talk about here is just the relative name, the “I” we usually talk about, the “self-I,” the negative mind. The other “I” is purified away from this, cleaned of all negativity.

(a) As atoms of metal make up the bell, this life’s physical existence depends on the five skandhas.

(b) At death the mind involuntarily separates from body, but it doesn’t mean “I” cease. Life is the relationship between body and mind. The mind has to have a possessor, the person, so as ignorance ceases the “I” doesn’t cease—it cannot since the mind is continual. Even if we reach enlightenment, the mind is completely continual. Even if we reach enlightenment, completely purifying every single negative mind, the pure mind remains. Some think that the mind won’t continue after death, like a burnt out candle—that no physical body means no mind. This is a wrong conception.

II. THE TWENTY SECONDARY DELUSIONS (Page 93)

These arise from the six root delusions, and the twenty delusions are all mental, not physical. The term *sem chung* means a mind mainly analyzing the quality or essence of the object.” These twenty are different aspects of the six root delusions and there are fifty-one *sem chung* or secondary mental

factors. We should recognize these different types of negative mind, checking while reading to see, “Do I have each one?”

8. Shame

We use “shame” in association with oneself, although we are never really alone as the enlightened beings are able to see all, and “shy” when we are associated with other people. Shame is very important in Dharma practice, and is based on fear, which is based on understanding. It may be positive or negative.

(i) For example, someone who doesn’t have shame may do funny things when alone since there’s nobody around, and is not ashamed of performing negative actions in the presence of enlightened beings. He is not concerned about creating bad karma and he has lack of fear of the suffering result. Being afraid of breaking vows is positive shame.

(ii) Negative shame increases the negative mind because it causes us only to care for the eight temporal desires, working for them shamelessly (i.e. without positive shame). For example, someone goes to a party and dresses in the best way, different from other people, so that others will notice and admire him or her. Such an action is done with negative shame for those desires, and the motive is for one’s own comfort and reputation, thinking, “If I’m not dressed well, people will think I’m this or that.” He or she feels shy of not dressing well because people will think the opposite of that which is desired. All this is negative shame.

We should feel shame in performing actions against the wishes of the enlightened beings and should check up if an act is the result of negative mind. If there is no shame, we always create negative karma. We must keep the mind conscious all the time because negative actions are usually created by the unconscious mind. If we have a negative thought and realize that it’s negative and that it can cause bad karma with a suffering result, this can decrease the power of the karma according to the strength of the thought and the strength of repentance. Also, the stronger the upset (shock) from the thought (or act), the less likely is it to recur. But if there is no deep understanding of the suffering result we will keep on doing it even though we feel it’s a bad thing. Continued meditation helps by keeping the mind conscious of negative karma and stopping evil actions, and also allows stronger repentance.

So, positive shame, which works to destroy greed, is completely opposite to samsaric (negative) shame, which works only for greed, and cares only for the temporal comfort. The happiness or unhappiness in any situation is only one’s mental conception. Usually it’s a result of negative shame, feeling shy about positive actions—for example for giving up desires in contrast to positive shame, which makes one shy of creating negative actions.

III. THE FOUR CHANGEABLE MENTAL ACTIONS (Page 95)

1. Sleep can be virtuous or non-virtuous—if we sleep having meditated on Guru Shakyamuni beforehand, with bodhicitta, the rest of the sleep is virtuous, following this impulse. But if we go to sleep with some kind of greed arising, our sleep becomes non-virtuous. Also, if we have sexual intercourse before sleep, or goes to sleep feeling angry with someone, it’s non-virtuous. Such negativities may recur during sleep as dreams, and continue upon awakening.

2. Negatively, this is repenting positive actions. For example, you attend the meditation course but cancel out the good karma of this good act by feeling sorry that you didn't stay in Katmandu smoking hashish, eating good food, and listening to music.

4. Negatively, the object to which we are attached is assessed as good or bad based on the details. For a car, for example, we will think of the whitewall tires or the color. For a person we will think of their face, hair, skin color, and so forth. Positively, we check the details, of a flower for example, with respect to its impermanence and so on.

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C. THE WHEEL OF LIFE (Page 96)

(KHOR WA, CIRCLE)

This is an explanation of what we are experiencing and not something that is happening only to others. The drawing of the wheel of life explains the sufferings of the different realms of samsara. Here we meditate from cause to result. The creator of samsara and suffering is ignorance and each being's suffering is created by each being's experience, so we meditate from ignorance to death. Suffering is ignorance and cessation brings peace. Each samsaric rebirth has its twelve links but enlightenment severs them.

1. Ignorance

To get out of samsara we must destroy ignorance of absolute truth and ignorance of karma. Knowing the evolution of karma stops us from creating negative karma.

(b) The ignorant mind creating negative karma is ignorant of the absolute true nature, which causes the suffering of the three lower realms. Ignorance of karma leads to the creation of evil actions, the ten immoralities, which brings the different suffering, ignorant rebirths that lack the chance to practice or understand Dharma. In these rebirths, we continuously create more bad karma since we are still ignorant of the absolute true nature, and as still more negative karma is created we develop greater ignorance of the absolute true nature of ignorance. Without fully seeing the faults of ignorance, we only build more ignorance. Creating negative karma obscures the mind more and more and makes it harder and harder to see the absolute true nature, and makes us more and more ignorant of the absolute true nature. Therefore we create more and more negative karma. That is how ignorance is the principal cause of all suffering.

Therefore, the main method, the principal direct method to quickly get out of samsara is to realize the absolute true nature of reality. Therefore, we see how understanding shunyata quickly releases us from samsara and is so important. All suffering is rooted in the ignorance of the absolute true nature and as the understanding of shunyata is the complete opposite of this, it directly helps to remove ignorance. The person who understands the absolute true nature never creates bad karma, because no ignorance of the absolute true nature means no ignorance of karma. It is definite that such a person will not be reborn in the three lower realms of suffering.

Ignorance of the absolute true nature is like the poison that threatens life, and understanding of the absolute true nature is like an antidote to the poison. Not taking the antidote and just eating food

doesn't help lengthen the life, although neither can we live on the antidote alone without depending on food. So the effect of poison is like the effect of ignorance of the absolute true nature, creating good karma is like eating food, and understanding shunyata is like the antidote. Again: poison (ignorance), food (good karma), and antidote (understanding shunyata). Good karma helps but is not a direct method. The person who takes the antidote should know that food is the most important thing that supports life, so continuously taking the antidote and completely forgetting the food is a big mistake—the life can be neither long nor happy. The person who realizes the absolute true nature always sees the importance of following karma, that creating positive karma and not creating negative karma is the most important thing. The person not careful of karma who says, "I can see shunyata," proves that he has no understanding of the absolute true nature at all. If he has carelessness in terms of karma it means that he has no realization of the absolute true nature, despite anything he says. The person who fully realizes the absolute true nature of person, mind, existence, and karma also has full belief and confidence in the evolution of karma at the same time, and therefore cares very much about creating positive karma and avoiding the creation of negative karma. For instance, the person who has realized the absolute truth of karma realizes that cause and effect (karma) is dependent, and has knowledge that the absolute truth of karma never betrays cause and effect.

Thinking that karma doesn't exist is the wrong realization of the absolute true nature. This knowledge of shunyata is wrong. The right realization of shunyata sees definitely that karma exists and is dependent, and sees the relative truth of cause and effect clearly. Such realization of the absolute true nature seeing dependent cause and effect as more true definitely exists. The right view of shunyata is that the relative truth, karma, cause and effect, definitely exists—it sees the absolute true nature of karma. If we do not see this then our realization of shunyata is imperfect. And it's the same thing—as the realization and understanding that dependent, causative karma is definite deepens, confidence greatly increases. We will develop full confidence as we see this more clearly, identifying its evolution as causative, understanding that positive karma brings a positive result and negative karma brings a negative result. This helps a great deal to develop the realization of the absolute true nature.

Just as a bird needs both wings to fly and can't fly with only one, in the same way both realizations are so important to escape from suffering. We must have full confidence in the evolution of karma—in causative, dependent karma, and the realization of the absolute true nature. Without both we cannot escape from samsara. Both are very necessary—the understanding that the relative truth is dependent and existent, and the realization of its absolute true nature, the voidness of the absolute true nature of the relative truth. Therefore, as much as we can study the subject of karma, that much it will help us to realise the absolute true nature.

Understanding of the evolution of karma is very helpful for understanding shunyata. Why do these two help each other? By proving factual existence and how it is correlated with the object. For example, if the absolute true nature of the table (voidness) is the absolute true nature of the book (relative truth) and vice versa, then we cannot understand either. But the absolute true nature of each is interrelated. Therefore, receiving the wrong realization of shunyata or exposure to incorrect teachings, study, or meditation from the wrong person makes it possible that we may negate karma, and see karma as non-existent. This is due to the wrong realization of the absolute true nature, the opposite of the absolute true nature. Therefore the person who sees that karma doesn't exist no longer cares about karma and thus creates negative karma. That person is recognized by the great yogis as having not fully realized shunyata. That person finds the wrong nature, and believes

that karma, the relative truth, doesn't exist and so creates much bad karma such as heresy by saying that nothing exists—me, him, Buddhadharmā. Believing that everything is non-existent, that there is no karma, no nirvana, and no samsara will cause him to create much bad karma, and that wrong realization will make him much more ignorant, which makes him create even more bad karma. Therefore it is important to always talk about karma, but it is not an easy subject; it helps in so many ways and it is always important to meditate on karma also.

Also, at this moment we are all here at Kopan, together, from different places, talking about a subject new for most of us, Dharma, that we've never heard about before in the earlier part of this life, or even in dreams. A subject that is opposite to before. There is something which has brought about this arrangement—our karma. Why do things happen like this without us having any idea of it before, not even the impulse, coming from the West? The reason is karma.

Without fully realizing the suffering of samsara, we cannot escape from it, because to do this we must have the fully renounced mind. To not get hurt by a fire we must recognize its nature—that it's hot and that it burns—and in the same way we must recognize the nature of samsara. As we renounce touching fire, so we must renounce samsara. It is very useful to meditate on samsara both ways as shown, although these notes are a very condensed version. Meditation stops the arising of the wrong conception that samsaric happiness is true happiness.

2. Karmic Formation

(*Du che* means by gathering delusions; *lā* has to be a mental thing). *Lā*, or karma, is mental—it refers to the actions of body, speech, and mind. Actually actions of body and speech come from the mind and also affect the mind, leaving impressions upon it.

(a) Meritorious karma, variable or invariable, brings upper realm rebirth.

(i) Variable karma. For example a person has created karma to be both a dog and a pig. By taking a pig rebirth, although the person is reborn in the form of a pig, it is possible to experience the potential of the karma of a dog, because they are of the same "caste," i.e., in animal form. It is also possible for human beings to complete two results by taking one form—this can happen when a person has created the karma to be two different human beings, to take two different human forms, and takes one, completing the ability of both. This is the opposite of invariable karma.

(ii) Invariable karma. It is possible for human and animals to experience this, but there are some stages where this result cannot happen, such as in the world of form. In the form realm there are different four different mental categories, four different stages, that are attained through craving and, originally, samadhi meditation. This means that one receives these different stages through craving the rapturous ecstasy of samadhi. If one creates the karma to experience the third stage, for example, that potential cannot be finished in the second.

(b) Demeritorious karma brings lower rebirth, and also causes suffering in the upper realms.

(c) Neutral karma doesn't bring results such as suffering and happiness. However, you should check up whether a neutral feeling is the result of neutral action or not.

3. Mind has the ability to be conscious but as it travels around the six realms it is not necessarily so. Karmic impressions limit consciousness, and result in the five skandhas or aggregates—one that is form and four that are not.

The relationship between ignorance and the actions of body, speech, and mind is that the former creates the latter. When action is created it leaves an impression on the consciousness, like planting seed in a field. Ignorance causes action, which in turn affects the consciousness and leaves a karmic impression. If there were no consciousness then all the rest could not happen—the results, for example, or the experience of different things in different lives. Just as the monkey jumps from tree to tree, so consciousness goes from life to life. There is consciousness that is the result and consciousness that is the cause.

4. Name and Form (Page 97)

A house depends on walls and a roof—many things are fixed, and it's a house. If it doesn't have one of the walls it isn't a house. In the same way, without the five skandhas a person can't exist, and form cannot come into being without previous karma. The father and mother produce the form, which is the vehicle for the baby's mind, in the womb.

“Pung po” (aggregate) means “group,” or something that depends on a group. For example, consciousness depends on a group or continuity, just as it does on time. If it is form, each atom depends on the group or the parts. Skandha means group or aggregates.

5. Six Sense Organs

The organ is the pure ability, for example, of the sense of tongue, and where the tongue is situated. It is the same with body, ear, eye, nose, and consciousness. The sense becomes momentarily invisible after death and does not continue. Consciousness continues. According to the rebirth, it continues and enjoys the six different objects. When the pure ability, the very calm, essential ability of the body degenerates, the body loses it. It is the same, for example, with the eye—that which is inside the eyeball is the pure ability, the very subtle, essential ability, the physical ability. When this essential ability, very subtle, calm ability becomes loose, when it is endangered, simultaneously all the senses situated on it become loose because this ability is the vehicle. When it is disturbed so is the sense, because it is the vehicle of the sense. For example, how does eating things affect the mind and cause the mind to determine whether it is a healthy or a dangerous thing, for instance? It affects the pure, calm, essential ability. By affecting the eye, it indirectly affects the sense. Also, at death time why are there no feelings? Because the base, the vehicle, of the sense is absorbed, so the sense is also absorbed. Why is it that when some dangerous things happen to the physical form it has an effect on the senses, and they cannot be used? Because the sense base is damaged, through disease, for example. That doesn't mean that the sense is matter or a physical thing. Sense is sentiment.

Also, when we concentrate on one part of the body we have no feeling of the other parts; we become unconscious, not understanding the other parts of the body. This is due to the fact that where the mind concentrates, the vehicle of the mind, the mind, also concentrates, and as a result we are not conscious of other parts of the body. Usually, whenever the eye looks at an object it can see it, but when we pay more attention to sound, even though the eye is looking at the object it is not conscious of it. Because the mind is paying attention to and is more concentrated on the sound, through the nerves of the ear, it is the same thing—the energy also follows it. It is not as strongly

existent in the nerves of the eyes at this time; therefore, the sense of eye doesn't see the object when the mind pays attention to sound. Sometimes, also, we don't know that we feel hungry, and then someone also talks about food and our stomachs feel hungry. Other sufferings are also like this—becoming more apparent when the mind pays more attention to it. So, whatever the sense, if the person is looking at a flower, for example, then as the mind pays attention to that through the nerves of the eyes, wind or energy also comes and the person can tell the color and so forth, and discriminate the flower like this.

6. Contact

This is, for example, the mind thinking of permanent or impermanent things, or of the absolute true nature. There are many existing things that are the object of the mind.

7. Feelings

The feeling of equilibrium is the same as the feeling of indifference. With the equilibrium meditation, when there is the feeling of equilibrium for all sentient beings, there is a neutral feeling for all sentient beings. By meditating on the object of all sentient beings, a neutral feeling, an equal feeling, arises. But when we have the conception of friend and enemy there is a different feeling—pleasure, happiness, and attachment, and suffering, dislike, and hatred.

Contact brings feeling so that all negative minds arise. If we don't use the methods and follow their practice, as suffering, happiness, and so forth arise, hatred and greed also arise, building negative mind. Therefore we should always check up our feeling with an object. Why? Because of thinking that there is self-existent suffering or self-existent happiness due to an object. For instance, when we see a person who has a nice shape, our minds become attached and we enjoy looking at it, find pleasure in it, and experience temporal samsaric happiness. This feeling arises from contact of the object of the sense of eye with the eye. But my eye sense is not one with his body and his body is not one or interrelated with my organ sense; he is there and I am here.

However, generally, contact is a mental conception. There is no actual contact in my eye or on his body, it cannot be found on any part of his body or my eye—it is a conception of mind, it is made into belief by mind. Just his being close, in the view of my eye, is believed to be contact. This is just a mere mental conception, belief. It's the same thing with delicious food—contact is not in the food or the tongue. As it gets closer and touches the tongue, there is the mental conception of contact. Feeling happiness upon seeing the physical body is also merely mental conception. This pleasure is not on his body, arising only in dependence on him, existing only from him, the object. This pleasure does not only depend on that person, arising from his side alone. The attachment sees the object as beautiful on the basis of self-experience, sees it in the nature of beauty, then defines this as receiving pleasure. This it is merely our own conception or belief. This pleasure is mere conception, belief, our own creation—the mere creation of our own mind. Seeing the person in beauty is merely the conception of the person looking at the other, the conception of his mind. As the happy feeling is a mere mental belief, the contact and the beauty are also mental belief, conception.

Why is feeling pleasure by looking at a person mere mental belief? If it only depended on arising from the person's side, when we get angry with or tired of that person it shouldn't happen that one no longer sees the person in beauty and no longer gets pleasure from seeing him. Although the person still looks the same and has a similar shape, due to our negative minds of pride, anger, and

jealousy, we see the person as an undesirable object. Our feelings have changed yet this change does not depend on the shape of the object changing. This can happen in two minutes—that pleasure becomes anger, happiness becomes suffering. That’s why pleasure defined through contact with such a person is his mere belief, mental conception, and the creation of his own mind, just as contact and seeing a person in beauty is also only a mental creation. Therefore, suffering is only our own creation, our own belief.

Contact is not on the eye or the object, it is called “contact” by the mind. Being near the object, the object being in the view of the eye, is called contact.

The definition of pleasure is mere mental conception—that feeling is the creation of the mind. Besides this being the person’s belief, the pleasure derived from the contact of the object is also a mere mental conception. The object, thing or person, being closer to our view is defined as a meeting, and also seeing the object in beauty is a mere mental conception. There is no such beauty that exists from the object’s side. We usually believe that the beauty comes from the object’s side and exists as a self-entity. In fact, even if we seek the beauty as it is seen, we cannot find it or point to it. If that beauty that we see in our view were true, that beauty should be something that exists only from the object’s side, not depending on the viewer. That beauty should be one with the object. For example, if we are considering a person’s body a beautiful person, every atom of the body should be seen in beauty—the nose, bones, and flesh should be seen in beauty. But they are not seen in beauty. When we dissect the body into small pieces it is not found to have beauty in each part. So beauty is not one with the body, or any other object, and every single atom is not beautiful—not even one is beautiful—no cells of the body, inside or out, are beautiful. Therefore, like this, we can’t find beauty on the object. Thus, if even the parts are not beautiful, the whole group together cannot be, and there is no such beauty existing only from the object’s side. Even the beauty made by parts of the body grouped together doesn’t exist only from the object’s side. It has to depend on the person looking at it. Without depending on the person looking at small pieces of the body grouped together, beauty cannot exist. Either the beauty should exist without depending on the group or it should be one with it. But without depending on that body the beauty can’t be found. It never exists only from the object’s side.

How does that beauty exist for me? It’s only my mental conception. I conceive it as beautiful. That such aggregated part of the body I define as beautiful, my mind conceives as beautiful. My mind calls him beautiful looking. I call him in such a way, I give him a name, created by my mind. The beauty I define is only my mental creation, is only my name, called so by mind. So, now I can see this beauty created by my mind—I create something and I am attached to it; I create and I believe.

Our belief in beauty is only something created by ourselves. We are attached to the beauty that we create with our own mind, attached to a mental conception—this is senseless. We are attached to our own creation, to our own mental projections and reflections. The reason that we are strongly attached, one reason, speaking in the true way, is that it is our own mental creation. But we don’t recognize our own mental creation. Therefore, problems always arise between subject and object; attachment brings problems. Because of the fundamentally wrong conception that beauty exists only from the person’s side without depending on my mental creation at all, that beauty exists by itself no matter what it is called by my mind—as a self-entity, as self-existent. Therefore, because of that wrong conception, that beauty arises from the object, and then attachment arises also.

If we are conscious that it is our own mind's mental creation that comes from our own side, attachment does not arise. If we think, we can see that the mind attached to any title is always based on the wrong conception that the title is a concrete one, solid, and a self-entity. Because of this wrong conception of titles—king, minister, judge, doctor, lawyer, and so on—the mind is attached to the title, as if it is a self-entity, existing by itself. Therefore, generally speaking, for that reason the mind is attached to the solidly appearing title. We spend much time to get that name, study hard, incur many expenses, and maybe in the end we won't even get that name. And even though we may receive the certificate, paper, or job, where is the title we have received? After all this time and energy spent, this title that we received is completely opposite to the title we have been looking for.

The actual title—what it is irrelevant—sweeper, king, president, and so on—is merely words, only names, which is only a creation of mind. That doesn't mean that the mind and body of the person called "president" become one with president. And now it is clear how it is opposite to what we have been expecting, spending much time and energy, much negative mind, and much attachment to bring it about. The way that we see the title is as a self-entity and not as a creation of mind; it is as a title that exists by itself, not dependent on name, not dependent on mind creating it, calling it, but as something solid and concrete. This is the opposite of the real title, which doesn't exist in that way but in the opposite way.

The man receiving the title "president" is also only a mere name, a mental conception. It is the same thing with beauty. If beauty existed only from the object's side without depending on the mind of the person looking, then the object should be seen as beautiful to everyone. But what I see as beautiful is not seen as beautiful by all other beings. It is seen in different ways by different people. Even when a person or object is recognized as a most beautiful thing by one, others see it as ugly, and do not like it. Many people see it in different ways and give it different names, such as beautiful, ugly, and so forth. So is that object ugly and beautiful all together?

All living beings see things differently and this proves that such names are merely mental conceptions of the viewer, created by the person looking, and are only his way of viewing it. He is attached to his own mental creation. Good or bad depends on the person. The whole reason is this—as it is only a mental creation, a name, there is no reason to be attached to that beauty, that contact, as it is only our own mental creation.

The reason for saying all these details is only to show the wrong conceptions and faults of attachment clearly.

8. Craving (Page 98)

A person drinks, becomes drunk, and fights for no real reason. He knows this happens as it has happened many times before. Even non-drinkers fight, drunk with ignorance. People bring wine to a festival—no wine, no festival.

At the end of one life the person craves a human body, leaving this impression. But he may have to live the next life as an animal, a dog, for example. At the time of his death as a dog, the impression for the human rebirth causes craving for a human rebirth to arise, and so he may be reborn human again.

Each of the three kinds of craving causes suffering.

9. Grasping

The mind remembers the enjoyment of a past taste and is attached to it, wanting more. This is grasping.

c) The self-I concept is the concept of the independent “I,” an “I” free from the skandhas. This cannot be. “I” has to depend on body and mind, or on the mind alone. We make two divisions, body and mind, without talking of the problem of the five skandhas. Because of these two, “I” exist. But “I” cannot exist without my mind and it is not mind only, either. This is the “I” that is beginningless. Until one is enlightened there is always some body; at enlightenment we become the pure “I.”

“Self-existent I” means an “I” not dependent on the aggregates of body and mind. “Life” is the relationship between body and mind and when these separate, uncontrolled death occurs. The “I” goes on and experiences death, followed by rebirth, under the control of delusion and karma. As long as mind exists there is “I,” and if mind were to cease so would “I.” But “I” can die because if “I” is body and mind together, and the body dies when the body and mind separate at death, then this “I” dies too. The “I” does not cease, it just has this experience of death as it has many other experiences such as sleep, different physical forms, and so forth.

Each of the four kinds of grasping causes suffering.

10. Becoming

Craving, grasping, and becoming arise just before the result. We may have to wait eons before a particular group arises at death, and we may have to work off stronger karmas first. For example, humans crave human rebirth but may have to take rebirth in other realms before this is possible. The dying human creates craving, grasping, and becoming karmas for a human rebirth. But if he has great negative karma, these three impressions are delayed until just before the next human rebirth. In the meantime he may have to spend eons in the narak, yidak, and animal realms before these impressions arise to be followed by the next human rebirth. Grasping fertilizes the becoming link of the result and makes it stronger.

Alternatively, a person may be attached to peacocks, for instance, and wish he were a peacock, thereby planting the seed for rebirth as a peacock in a future lifetime. At the time of death the impression left by the ignorance wanting to become a peacock gets stronger due to karma. As it becomes stronger due to craving and grasping at the time of death, so the person is ready to become a peacock.

II. Rebirth

Past lives leave impressions on the consciousness as a result of the control of delusion and karma, resulting in the aggregates (skandhas) for that physical body. The impression, or ability, is like a seed and is made stronger by craving and grasping at death, just as elements such as water, heat, and so forth make the plant seed stronger and give it greater potential. The seed starting to sprout is equivalent to becoming.

In past times humans have also been born from eggs and from heat. Many animals are born from heat. Humans can also take spontaneous rebirth, as can pretas. The rebirths in the sura, asura, and narak realms are spontaneous.

FUTURE KARMIC RESULTS (Page 99)

Consider the person who spends his life killing animals, such as the hunter, butcher, or soldier. Even though he looks rich, like he is not suffering and is enjoying himself, it is definite that he will experience the result of his bad karma in the future as long as he doesn't try to stop the result before it arises, doesn't follow the path, and doesn't purify. If he doesn't try to purify himself, even the enlightened being cannot prevent his suffering, even if it has to be experienced for thousands of great eons. This is because the power of the sentient beings' karma and the power of the enlightened beings are equal. Karma is very strong, so each person has to make his own effort—it can never be cut off by God. Unless this person does so himself he will have to experience many horrible results.

It is definite that a being that creates so much negative karma yet seems to be enjoying his work does this for only a few years, and it is definite that in the future his suffering will be greater than his happiness. There is nothing to trust in the aspect of someone creating so much negative karma yet enjoying his work—we cannot think that because of this there is no karma. It's a big mistake to do so. This is a wrong conception, a conception that does not understand the evolution of karma, that does not understand Dharma, and a conception that can cheat someone out of creating positive actions and cause that person to be negatively influenced by a negative person, destroying his chance of happiness, wasting this and many other future lives.

We may create much good karma in early life, purify the mind a great deal, and then follow negative influences so that it becomes obscured again. We cannot trust such a negative yet enjoyable life, it is so short—we should not think that there is no karma or no suffering result just because the temporal life is happy despite such negative actions. The present enjoyment is the good result, but only for a few months or years—even one hundred years is nothing, because it is definite that after this life we won't enjoy life due to having created heavy negative karma.

Nagarjuna's quotation (Page 99) gives a complete idea of the evolution of karma and is very useful to know.

“Two deluded actions” refer to karmic formation and becoming.

“Three deluded causes” refer to ignorance, craving, and grasping.

“Seven uncontrolled results” refer to consciousness, name and form, the six sense bases, contact, feeling, rebirth, old age, and death.

The twelve links are involved in each samsaric rebirth. At the present moment we are in the result, the twelve links of this human life. What has finished for this life? Three causes: ignorance, craving, grasping, and two actions: karmic formation and becoming. Now we are in the seven results, on the way to completion. What still has to happen? Death—we are waiting. When this has occurred our work has finished, one set of twelve links will be over.

Each samsaric being is in the circle of these twelve links. This can be finished in two or three consecutive lives, but not in one life, or it can be finished over a longer period of time, for example

there can be a great eon between cause and result. We have already created so many horrible negative karmas many long eons ago, yet have not experienced their results.

How can the twelve links be completed in two lives? (Page 99)

(a) In my earlier life I created the karma to be reborn a monkey in a future life, but for the rest of the lifetime I live purely, in precepts, purifying, decreasing attachment, and creating much good karma. This karma is stronger than the monkey karma at the time of death since I desire to be reborn in the upper realms. My ignorance leaves an impression on the consciousness—the seed to be a human being as I desired, and for which I created much good karma. Each time as I desired this, this impression became stronger and stronger. At death there is craving for the human body and grasping in the mind to again take a human rebirth. The grasping makes the seed of the becoming human stronger. Now two actions have been completed in this life, and three causes also: ignorance created karmic formation by creating good karma and left impressions on the consciousness, and craving, grasping, and becoming finish at death time. Now there are seven results left.

(b) Those seven finish in the second future life, because the seed, the becoming link of the human life, becomes stronger at death and makes me take the human rebirth right after the intermediate stage, without a narak rebirth or one of another shape. This is how the twelve links of the future human life are completed.

c) But now there is still the karma to be reborn a monkey, created in the previous life (a) through ignorance causing negative karma, which left an impression on the consciousness. One cause, ignorance, and one action, negative karma, were completed in that life. The other action, becoming, and the two other causes, craving and grasping, are completed in the second life (b) unless in that life I create heavier, more habitual karma than the monkey karma. If the monkey karma is heavier than any other karma, then at death (b) the craving, grasping, and becoming to be a monkey make this seed very strong and so in the third life I take rebirth as a monkey and complete the seven results of then.

Between completing ignorance and karmic formation and craving, grasping, becoming, and the seven results there may be many eons. In many previous lives our ignorance caused many negative karmic formations, but we still have not experienced the craving, grasping, and becoming related to them. Of course in one life, even in one day, a person makes much preparation for the narak, preta, and animal realms by creating so many different kinds of negative karma. Our ignorance creates so many karmic formations in this life, infinitely more demeritorious than meritorious. For each one there is a different twelve links—all kinds of animal rebirths and so forth, and also some from good karma, the twelve links that bring upper realm rebirth. We create many hundreds in each life and all have to be completed in the future if not purified.

Our lives are really much more imprisoned than the jails we recognize—there is no way to get out of these many other sets of the twelve links, to be free. We have started so many in this life. Each time we create the twelve links we are caught in the chain. We start by ignorance and we catch ourselves—like fish in a net we catch ourselves. The fish have to end up as a person's food, and so each set of the twelve links started has to be experienced as each of these uncontrolled sufferings, as fish in a net, out of control. So our life is worse than a material prison—that kind of prison is like being in a house, but samsara is a real prison, a karmic prison. It has more to do with the mind, and so is very difficult. The karmic prison is created by mind, and so has to be cut off by mind. At least

in a material prison we can still practice Dharma, we can still meditate, we can teach Dharma to other people. But in the samsaric prison of the lower realms, we can't even have samsaric enjoyments.

Why is a person caught in an ordinary prison? Because his mind and body are in the real prison of the result of the human twelve links—he is in the ordinary prison because his mind and body are in the actual prison of the result of the twelve links that were started in a previous life, caught between birth and death. Even in this lifetime he created so many negative karmas for lower rebirths, as well as some positive karmas for upper rebirths. He started so many sets of the twelve links. He is really caught in so many other different prisons of which he has not yet experienced the results. Because his mind and body are not completely out of those actual prisons created by ignorance, he has no choice but to suffer in the ordinary prison. If he were out of the twelve links he wouldn't have the suffering body that others could imprison and torture, or the suffering mind. Therefore, the work of getting out of the actual prison created by ignorance is more important than the work of getting out of the ordinary prison.

Anyway, it doesn't matter.

Finishing the Human Twelve Links in Two or Three Lifetimes (Page 99)

(a) Ignorance creates karmic formations, leaving impressions on the consciousness that cause another human rebirth. Craving arises at or before death, since we like to be reborn human—there is especially strong craving at death time, causing grasping which makes the ability (becoming) for human rebirth stronger.

(b) Human consciousness, name and form, the six sense organs, contact, and feeling arise in the womb. Then there is rebirth, and old age, sickness and death. Old age is not definite, as we can die young. If not completed in this second life,

(c) Maybe completed in this third life if again born human.

Summary:

(a) Ignorance, karmic formation.

(b) This life not necessarily human, at death craving grasping and becoming for human body arise.

(c) Seven results completed.

THE THREE UPPER REALMS OF SUFFERING (Page 101)

1. HUMAN

Actually, ignorance itself is the cause of suffering, so any being that has no realization of the absolute true nature doesn't recognize his own mind, who he himself is. Everyone's life is in samsaric evolution, from rebirth to death we experience the eight sufferings, we are under the control of old age and death, not knowing where to go or how to control the time of death, not having the power to take a better way at the time of death, suffering from not finding beautiful objects. Therefore, everyone's life is involved in suffering. A person can be a beggar or a rich man and both are in the prison of the twelve links and the evolution of the eight sufferings. Some people think that suffering only means lacking material things—usually ordinary people think suffering is

like that. But suffering beings have their minds in the twelve links, their minds in the eight sufferings, their minds in problems. Those who think that suffering is only being materially poor limit suffering to the material conditions and don't have the understanding of the actual meaning of suffering. The ordinary person's conception of suffering is if one is rich or if one is poor there is suffering. But this is not the actual meaning of suffering—the actual meaning of suffering is ignorance, negative mind, and not understanding. Some people say, "I have materials, I have everything—many relatives, friends, wife, husband, children, a beautiful garden, and an apartment. I'm okay. I have no suffering, why should I practice Dharma, I don't need Dharma." Those who don't understand suffering think it's a question of being rich or poor, which is a big mistake. They think Dharma is something necessary only for poor people or for those whose minds are crazy.

If materials brought satisfaction without depending on Dharma, the inner method of mind control, then there would be no need to follow Dharma or for it to exist. If satisfaction depended on the collection of materials and the minds of those people who have these things are living in dissatisfaction, that is a problem. This keeps them always busy, worried—their minds are suffering, dissatisfied, tied in the twelve links, life has to go around and around. Their lives are under the control of the twelve links, begun by ignorance—so their lives are suffering and under the control of the eight sufferings—they have no control of rebirth and death, no idea where the mind will go, and no idea of what to do at death time. That means that their lives are suffering and the person who thinks like this is cheating himself, deceiving himself. How is that life suffering? It is already caught in the prison of the twelve links, is on the way to completing the present twelve links of human life. Each second is on the way to the end of the twelve links, to death. Before completing this result, this person is already caught in so many other twelve links, the mind caught is inside. Already this person's life is hooked for another life of suffering, or many other lives. Without even finishing the result of the human twelve links, on the way to death he has already created many hundreds of sets of the twelve links, ignorance causing karmic formation that bring many other sets of the twelve links. Just as the fish in the net waits to be finished by the person—cut, cooked, eaten, and so forth—so we wait.

Also, those who think their lives are perfect, not in suffering, are already caught in so many hundreds of other sets of the twelve links, ready to experience those many other sufferings in future lifetimes. Thinking like this, we recognize ourselves more and more clearly, and so get more and more upset as we recognize our own mind. Before this we felt happy and comfortable but that is a great mistake. It's like seeing a sort of a mirage of a river—when we look at the sand that reflects the sun, appearing to be running water, we are happy because we desire to bathe in it and run to it. But this is an exhausting thing because there's no river there, there is nothing there. We only think we are happy.

2. ASURA

The being in this realm is like a man who is very guilty, who does very unusual things, very criminal, beyond the usual range of human action. As this kind of person is not recognized as a man, is thought to be beyond usual human behavior and recognized as unusual, just like that, so is the asura a very cruel god, having much avarice, always fighting a great deal. He is deported from the sura realms as the most guilty person is expelled from a society. Due to his karma he is so ignorant, his mind greatly obscured, usually very jealous and avaricious.

Asura beings come from nearby, from a place situated near the shore of the ocean of Mt. Meru. From there they come up to fight the sura beings. As the teachings degenerate on earth, people become more evil, create more negative actions, and if the asuras fight at such times, the evil spirits defeat the good.

3. SURA

(a) Usually the bodies of these samsaric gods and goddesses emanate light, sweet smells, not dirty smells, and beauty. The gods are always surrounded by many hundreds of goddesses, always enjoying themselves greatly. At their time of death this changes completely.

(i) The body smells very dirty and not even the closest relatives approach them.

(ii) Flowers put on the body and around the neck become old and die.

(iii) The body gets dust all over it.

(iv) They experience great worry as karmically they see clearly that they will be reborn in the narak realms.

(v) While the whole thing changes they become very ugly, no one looks after them, the beautiful light fades, the goddesses desert them. They feel very lonely and suffer much.

(b) The sura beings are under the control of other gods who have more possessions.

(c) Those with little power and few possessions get deported. They are always fighting, and if any part of the body is cut it grows again. This is their karmic creation. If the net is cut they die.

4. GODS OF THE FORM AND FORMLESS REALMS

A being takes rebirth in the world of form as a result of getting tired and bored of enjoying the objects of the five senses (which is only the partially renounced mind) and through being attached to the rapturous ecstasy that their practice of samadhi meditation brings. From here, a being can also be born in the world of formlessness. As a result of getting tired of samsaric pleasure and having a kind of renunciation for its pleasure, while still feeling indifference, not happiness or suffering, a being takes rebirth in the world of formlessness, and from rebirth to death remains completely unconscious with no cognition, and becomes invisible.

In the world of form there are seventeen categories, and in the formless world there are four categories. The four categories of the formless realm are:

(i) Limitless sky—thinking the whole of existence, whether matter or not, is as emptiness, like the sky or empty space. Even after that, concentrating the mind more on this, one thinks only

(ii) Limitless consciousness. Then thinking only

(iii) Nothingness. Then

(iv) The Summit of Samsara.

Whenever a being is born in samsara it is always in the twelve links, suffering the eight different sufferings, and those of all the different realms. We must not be attached to any samsaric rebirth, even the human rebirth. The principal thing to do is to get out of samsara altogether, but if we can't get out this lifetime, we should take a human life next time, as a bridge to escape. As after one crosses a river there is no further need of the bridge, so after one is out of samsara there is no need for a human rebirth.

Not taking enjoyment from samsaric pleasures or possessions is the result of understanding samsaric suffering and is the purpose of meditating on samsaric suffering. If we don't meditate, we always have attachment to rebirth in those realms—for example, to rebirth as a rich human being. But one cannot always be a human being actually—sometimes we are up, sometimes down.

As long as we have negative mind we suffer. Without seeing samsara as a fire we cannot renounce attachment, and then it is impossible to get out of samsara.

THE MAHAYANA EQUILIBRIUM MEDITATION (Page 103)

This meditation is fundamental to all the Mahayana meditations and to tantric meditation. It is extremely useful and is used by those who have great psychic powers, their chakras open, who can fly, make footprints on stone, turn fire to water, make prophesies, and so forth. But this meditation is regarded as more useful than these powers, which can be acquired without the realizations of this meditation on the absolute truth of the equality between oneself and other beings. This meditation brings realization of the equality of all sentient beings—oneself, friend, enemy, stranger, animal, insect, and so forth. Those who acquire psychic powers without this realization are not inner beings, and have no realizations of the evolution of samsara, karma, and so forth. Powers thus acquired cannot cut suffering, cannot cut samsara. There, outer beings don't have inner peace.

The equilibrium meditation is especially useful for stopping attachment and anger. It is a meditation that makes equalizes oneself and all sentient beings by cultivating the mind not having attachment towards some and anger towards others. When this equilibrium is realized, the feeling of equality follows intuitively. If this is not felt then the meditation has not been realized.

We must stop discrimination—doing so releases the mind from so many problems with family, friends, and enemies, and brings peace. The achievement of psychic powers without realizations does not bring peace, release from samsara, realization of absolute truth, fully renounced mind, or lack of attachment and anger. This meditation is the best way to bring peace to the world. The discriminating, complicated, partial expectant mind is the exact opposite of that which this meditation brings and is the cause of all problems in the world—in families, in societies, and in countries.

So this meditation is very useful. Each time we do it the mind gets closer and closer to the subject, becoming more and more familiar with it. Little by little the mind comes into equilibrium from its unsubdued state. As it does so, the actions of greed and anger arise less and less often, since the negative mind responsible for them decreases. Also, as discrimination decreases, the mind doesn't create so many problems for other people—discrimination causes us to engage in negative actions towards family, friends, and all sentient beings—so all are helped by subduing the mind. We create less negative karma and so do those with whom we come into contact. All sentient beings become equal, and not by means of material possessions as in external political attempts at peace, but by our mind. They become equal to our view, without depending on their actions towards us, such as harming, helping, or non-action, as assessed by worldly thought. Such limited mind only thinks of the present actions and can't see the infinite previous lives, where all have been all things. Hence the worldly limited mind, which seems logical to itself, can never see all sentient beings as equal. A mind in equilibrium cannot be betrayed by friend, enemy, and so forth, as it sees all of them as equal. Such is a strong mind, unshakeable, a mind not complicated by attachment, anger, or ignorance, a mind

without confusion. This mind always generates happiness and brings peace to other people. Therefore this mind stops others from creating bad karma—the enemy no longer reacts with anger, the friend is no longer attached.

Thus the principal cause of not seeing people in equilibrium is the non-equilibrium mind. The mind of equilibrium sees all sentient beings in equality, and is the only way to bring peace to all, which cannot be done by trying to share possessions, wealth, land, and so on.

Guru Shakyamuni said, “Anything growing on this earth, any flowers, fruit-bearing trees, forests, or ayurvedic plants, is due to the lake called Matu, and that lake depends on its possessor, the nagas. Therefore whatever grows from the earth depends on those nagas. In the same way, every single past and each future happiness, be it samsaric or non-samsaric, of each being, and all realizations including enlightenment—all, from the tiniest samsaric pleasure such as a cooling breeze upwards—arises from bodhicitta, and without it cannot exist. Even the happiness of animals, insects, and so forth cannot exist and is impossible without bodhicitta.”

How does every samsaric and other type of happiness result from bodhicitta? Every single happiness of all our past lives, every present happiness, even today’s, and all future happiness up to enlightenment arises due to the power of bodhicitta. Therefore, bodhicitta is the most important thing, more important than this body or this life. Through bodhicitta we can have the best, most perfect, most meaningful life.

Why is bodhicitta more important than this life or body? Because it can never cause even a tiny suffering, in contrast to the body, which has been the fundamental base for suffering and its main cause. No matter how much we trust bodhicitta it can never betray us. But the body can cheat and bring many problems. Being attached to this body can cause great problems with living beings and non-living things. Every problem arising from this body is due to its very existence, but bodhicitta can never cause suffering.

This body can cheat, make us think as if we will always have it and it will always help us. Yet no matter how much care we take of it, it will leave us in time—even if we try to keep it happy, away from suffering, no matter. It doesn’t work as we usually see it, that’s how it cheats. It creates problems such as those of the family, of making children—all that suffering that we do not desire. We do not have control and after a time it cheats us. But no matter how much we work for, trust, and take care of bodhicitta it never betrays, not even for a tiny second; this is not in its nature. Just having life is not enough to stop suffering and always enjoy happiness—this doesn’t stop suffering. But bodhicitta can cut off suffering, so therefore bodhicitta is more important than life. It can cut off suffering and stop the need for the body.

People in a particular country worry that their country will lose its power and that they will lose their possessions, land, and so on. They give up their life or put it in danger to fight other countries so that they will not lose the possessions and power that they have. This is because they see these things as the source of their reputation and pleasure, as more important than life. This is complicated because we don’t know if they die to take care of their life or their possessions. Their main talk is that they want to take care of their life, so they give it up to take care of the possessions. This works opposite to the intention in fact. It is a strange action. They think power and land are the fundamental source of pleasure, giving happiness. I’m not complaining, just explaining—like telling you that the fire is hot, that ice is cold, but not complaining about fire and ice. This ordinary

example shows the meaning of the ordinary example itself, and also that of bodhicitta, but it doesn't mean we should practice the ordinary example. Those who end their lives through this kind of action have nothing to do with land, possession, and power—they are out of chance, they die for the enjoyments of the temporal life.

Bodhicitta is the fundamental source of our past, present, and future happiness and therefore is infinitely more important than material powers and possessions. Even if there is material enjoyment, it exists only for one life or even less, and can cause problems. But the help of bodhicitta is eternal—it has beginning and it results in everlasting happiness that is one with eternal mind, so its benefits are eternal and continual for us. Therefore, when we think of the infinite benefits of bodhicitta and compare them to the ordinary example, the latter looks so silly, like giving up our life for candy. That's why bodhicitta is more important than life. This practice is very worthwhile.

Anyway, it doesn't matter.

This well-controlled mind of bodhicitta is attained on the basis of the fundamental achievement of the equilibrium meditation, and the achievement of this depends on practice.

Visualize a friend, an enemy (animal or human), a stranger, and all sentient beings. Remember that the friend was the enemy and stranger in many previous lives an exactly equal number of times—it is not possible that he was one was more than the other. Since friend, enemy, and stranger are seen as equal, we should have equal feelings towards them. Then we should think why, in which way, do I get angry most, what bothers me most? For example, if we are attached to hearing nice things, we should visualize someone saying bad things. If we don't have any enemies, we can do this with anything that bothers us. At the same time we should check to see if there is a negative mind arising.

Sometimes if we think how someone is harming us, the more we think of it, the more angry we get. That mind of dislike comes to see that person as ugly, an undesirable object, and we can now use him to compare with the friend and stranger and to check the different feelings. By going through the twenty reasons (page 103-107) we will feel the same about them.

Then think of our parents nearby, they are also equal. Then think that all sentient beings are also equal, they were the enemy, friend, stranger, parents, and so forth in past lives the same number of times. We should think, "There is no being that I cling to more or detest more." We should feel neutral, the mind not clinging, not stuck to friend. This trouble becomes loosened, relaxed, so the mind isn't tight. Also, we should have no anger, but feel detached, and equal.

After each of the twenty reasons we should think, "Therefore there is no reason to be attached to the friend or to hate the enemy." This is the main resolution that we try to achieve with this meditation.

Animals such as the cat and spider have this deceptive mind. The way people fight is different, but the fighting is the same—one group against another, each an enemy to the other. Animals also have political minds and cheat one another. Even monkeys know how to throw things on people's heads. Humans fighting and trying to control each other are no different than animals, and this is not human knowledge. However competent a person is in such knowledge, this is not human knowledge.

In Tibet if a rat is left to live in a room it just runs here and there, but if disturbed it eats clothes and other objects of attachment belonging to the people. If someone harms the rats they try to harm the person as much as they can by destroying things or food that the people take great care of.

2. Anyway, this is not the purpose of the human rebirth. Its purpose is to try to bring every sentient being into everlasting happiness, and also to develop the neutral feeling, to see all sentient beings equally. Animals, those lower beings, cannot do this. Achievement of this meditation is the purpose of taking the human rebirth. Even animals have friends, enemy, stranger-dogs, rats, and so on. Humans shouldn't follow the same pattern, as this is not human behavior, but rather behavior similar to that of an animal. Also, animals help those whom they are attached to as much as they can, and try to destroy enemies as much as possible, so to do so is not human action from the Dharma point of view.

The human aim is to bring peace, perfect peace, not only to humans but to all sentient beings. Even if I achieve this, it cannot be transplanted to other sentient beings, and it cannot be shared. Therefore there must be some other way to bring them peace. Bringing peace to other sentient beings depends on completely releasing them from the unsubdued mind that disturbs perfect peace and this depends on their having the complete achievement of method. Thus, bringing them to peace depends on each of us achieving enlightenment—without this, without understanding their levels of mind, we cannot help each sentient being in the wisest way.

For each of us, receiving enlightenment must be achieved by following tantric practice and practicing the six paramitas. This depends on full realization of the absolute true nature. This depends on realization of great compassion and great love. For these, we should have the experience of the practice, the mind that is well trained in the practice of the basic Mahayana meditations, or the *citta*, the mind, that has been received through the practice of making oneself equal with other sentient beings, and exchanging oneself with others. These basic Mahayana practices depend on knowing that all sentient beings have been our mothers and that they are infinitely kind. To make ourselves well-trained in this basic practice depends on the fundamental Mahayana equilibrium meditation. Also, without higher Mahayana meditation we cannot receive the tantric path.

Therefore, the practice of the Mahayana equilibrium meditation brings peace and escape from suffering by achieving enlightenment. It also has the power to bring all sentient beings into perfect happiness. Therefore, meditation is the principal cause of the most perfect peace, enlightenment, and is the principal cause of the most perfect happiness, enlightenment, for all sentient beings. It can be the beneficial cause bringing perfect peace to every number of sentient beings.

So actually, what brings the world into peace? We always talk about “peace” society, country, family, group—each thinks it is making peace. In each country the different groups want peace their own way, they make constructions and arrangements for peace, and make weapons for peace. None of them brings peace to himself, let alone others in the group or country, or all sentient beings. Because these things are not done in cooperation with Dharma, they never bring peace. The practice of the Mahayana equilibrium meditation, however, can really bring peace. First we ourselves gain peace, and then with our own experience of perfect peace, with perfect power and understanding, we can enlighten all parents, relatives, societies, populations, all humans, even all sentient beings, into the highest, perfect peace.

Even if we haven't achieved perfect peace, the mind that is living in the practice of subduing the negative mind and killing the unsubdued mind, the cause of suffering for ourselves and others, helps other people a great deal. At the same time the practice does this, it subdues the negative mind, fertilizes the mind like a field, and helps others. Wherever one living in this practice goes and travels, for all surrounding people and other sentient beings, any sentient beings, there is less suffering and problems and fewer enemies.

Enemy is only created by the negative, unsubdued mind. This practice subdues the negative mind; therefore, this person doesn't create problems for others—parents, children, any others—wherever he goes, no matter which countries. His mind is always thinking of people as he helps others with understanding, with wisdom, as he doesn't create problems with the partial feelings towards friend and enemy. Traveling people always have problems like this—two people start a problem, it gets bigger and bigger, more people get involved—different castes, groups societies, and countries. Same problem, one country attached to one, not to another.

Even if there was only one human being on this earth, only one person left, would that person be in peace? Even though he killed all the others, he would have no peace. He may miss his friends, and there would be many other problems. Because the principal cause, the unsubdued mind, has not been controlled, there can be no peace.

Those who landed on the moon should have the achievement of perfect peace because there are no other people there that they can see. But real peace is the cessation of greed, hatred, and ignorance. Even if the mind is not completely out of it, we should engage in fewer actions that arise from greed, hatred, and ignorance; this is different. Peace doesn't depend on the place or on being alone—so this person living in practice becomes a person that all people like, his personality is good as he doesn't follow his negative, unsubdued mind, or greed, ignorance, and hatred. He doesn't create problems. If he was attached to one, he would hate another, and the hated person wouldn't like the person to whom he was attached, would be jealous, confused, and feel hatred, also causing others to fight in jealousy. But because his actions with others are equal he doesn't create problems of confusion, feeling hate, causing others to fight in jealousy. Because his actions with others are equal he doesn't make others confused. His mind is always in peace and happiness, not uptight, like water boiling. His mind is always relaxed, so good, and his vibration, his influence, is good towards others, making others like him. He always has fewer problems. Even though he has not achieved cessation, he is living in the practice.

This practice is only to do with the mind—it doesn't depend on bells, dorjes, or desks. It is only mental action. It has that much power, but if we go to find that mind, it is difficult to find. But its power is beyond the objects of our mind.

3. This is a very true, logical reason. Both of us desire happiness and don't desire suffering, therefore we are equal. I have life, he has life; there is no difference. Why should I care more for myself than for him? There is no logical reason to underestimate the other. So why should I harm him? If he disturbs me, if he enjoys my clothes or takes my food, as we are equal—both not desiring suffering, both needing happiness—there is no reason to kill him because he used my enjoyments, no reason to react to him. As I desire happiness, so does he, there is no reason to take less care of him than of myself. He also has life, mind, and feelings, so it is the same thing.

4. The falsely conceived self-existent “I” is not on any part of the body or the mind, and is not in the continuity of the mind. The self-existent “I” is the mind “I” that does not depend on body, mind, the creator of the “I,” or the word or name, “I.” (The creator of the “I,” and of every existence, is the mind. But “I” does depend on the word (and the other senses). For example, “Max” is an object of the five skandhas, and does not exist as an entity. The wrong conception of “self-I” is beginningless. As long as this exists it is perpetuated and leads to viewing others as self-existent. The pure “I” that is seen by the enlightened beings is within us all. False views of self and others means objects are viewed falsely, as self-existent. Attachment leads to greed and hate, and so the ignorant mind increases. To get out of suffering, first check in, and see yourself as non self-existent. The check out and see objects in their true nature. The self-I consciousness is the creator of samsara and can be cured by all these basic meditations.

The body is not “I,” yet if someone hits it I get angry. I say, “He’s disturbing me,” discriminating in words that are empty. If we check up right at that time, we can’t find the “I” that the anger feels anywhere in the body—none of the aggregates is “me.” We can check up if the anger is not strong. So there is no reason to get angry.

The partial mind is an expectant mind and makes a friend of someone who will help some time in the future, or who has helped in the past.

Palden Chodak (Dharmakirti) was a highly realized Indian Pandit who wrote the root of the logic (Compendium on Valid Cognition), originally explained by Guru Shakyamuni. This text proved past lives and so forth, and showed how Guru Shakyamuni was the founder of the presentation of the logical evolution of the mind.

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The self-I consciousness is ignorance. The “I” consciousness as such is not ignorance. It is thinking, “I am self-existent” that is ignorance. This causes attachment to the “I”, the self-entity, the self-existent “I.” The more profoundly the “I” seeks the less “I” can find it. But without checking, to my ordinary mind it seems it is always there, as if this whole body is “I,” one with “I.” We think, “This is I.” Without checking, there is this feeling. But although I’m attached to this “I,” I can’t find it—if I check and seek it—it exists nowhere. That’s why “I” is void of a self-existent “I,” that’s why the body-mind combination is void of the self-I. Anyway; it doesn’t matter.

On this basis, due to the feeling that this body is one with “I,” attachment to “I” arises.

So, that’s how this wrong conception is the base of attachment to “I.” As I feel this I can’t find “I,” so when I seek and find that there’s no “I,” I then lose attachment to it. The attachment decreases and loses its strength. The uptight feeling becomes loose, sort of free. For example, if there’s not the table supporting the objects, the objects fall down—there is no foundation. It is the same thing with the self-I conception and attachment that arises due to greed. Attachment doesn’t find an object to be attached to, like a person throwing eggs can’t find a target, or like someone trying to put things in space, expecting them to stay up. Since it can’t find the object of attachment, the attachment itself has to be lost. Attachment to the “I” is based on the wrong conception of self-I.

As this wrong conception sees “I” as a self-entity, also the “I” object of attachment is based on that view of the self-entity and is seen as good and beautiful. It thinks, “I am good.” In the same way that

there is attachment to “I,” this brings attachment to my pleasures and possessions, my body, and so forth. So now anyone who disturbs my pleasure is recognized as the enemy as the anger comes. As the anger sees the disturbing person as ugly, he is discerned as the enemy. That negative mind of hatred sees him as ugly due to the attachment to pleasure. Then attachment discerns the one who helps my pleasure to be friend. The one who neither disturbs nor helps is discerned as stranger.

There is much confusion between the enemy and the subject, “me,” and also between the friend and “me.” There are many kinds of confusion—in different ways the mind is uptight, attached, wants to react, and wants to give harm. There is being hateful toward one person by discrimination of self-I and self-you, as if he is also a self-existent person, or a self-entity. Then we fight, and so many other types of negative mind arise, such as anger and so forth. There are complaints, destruction of one’s own and of others’ things, life dangers, and also there is much confusion. Both actions, attachment and hatred, are negative. One makes us not realise the faults of hatred, the future suffering result, and the other makes us not recognize the faults of attachment, causing ignorance to increase and making one deeply ignorant. Therefore, as both are negative, many causes of suffering are created by the person. Some sufferings have to be experienced in this life, others in future lives, depending on the karma.

All these problems come originally from the self-I consciousness and the attachment to “I.” If we are not attached to “I” there is no way to be attached to pleasures and possessions. Then there is no way to dupe the enemy, or to help someone while discriminating “friend.” As there is no discrimination there is no negative mind creating future suffering. The main thing is this—all the problems, all these discriminations of friend, enemy, and stranger that are made by the negative mind, the whole thing comes from attachment to “I” from self—the “I” consciousness, the wrong mind of a non-existent object. So the whole thing is wrong, illogical. It is never true because the creator of discrimination, the negative mind, is a false mind, and this negative mind comes from the self-I consciousness, which views the wrong object that doesn’t exist anywhere. The self-I actions are wrong, because self-I is a false conception. For example, if the roots are poisoned the whole tree becomes poisoned—the branches, fruit, and so forth. Or, this wrong conception sees me barking and since he dislikes dogs he discriminates this as bad. This is illogical because it doesn’t exist as he sees it, his perception is wrong. He sees an object that doesn’t exist for the logical relative mind, and is not true to the omniscient mind. The object, dog, is not true and doesn’t exist. If it did exist it should be seen by the omniscient mind, and if it’s not seen by the omniscient mind then it doesn’t exist.

So it’s all false, since it starts with the wrong conception that views an object that doesn’t exist anywhere. The whole evolution from there is not true, so how can we trust the negative mind that discriminates the enemy? If we could, then we could trust the view of the self-“I” consciousness—“I” as a self-entity. This consciousness is like the mother who produces many children. But we can’t trust it because we can’t find it, (although if we don’t seek it we think it exists), and we don’t find it since it doesn’t exist. If we discriminate and trust the wrong view it only brings us more suffering and conflicts, only causes us to go deeper into conflict and sinking.

5. These two negative actions help us to remain in samsara longer, to continually experience all the different sufferings, and prevent all the realizations. That is the result of our following these negative minds in previous times—that is what those negative minds have done to us, and we should continually remember this. We have to work and examples are useful to understand Dharma, to advance the mind, but we don’t have to practice the ordinary examples. Without practicing, just by

understanding these examples, we can achieve all realizations. That is the power of the mind, although this seems impossible to the ordinary mind, from the ignorant point of view.

An ordinary example: if he touched me in earlier life, disturbed my relatives or myself, caused me trouble and suffering, beating or starving me, then because of this impression I have, I still remember the effects that I received from him in previous times, I still remember the suffering and how he caused me trouble. Because I keep on remembering this, my mind is always spiteful. The idea of him as a bad person remains in my mind, even if is not spoken—it continues to happen in the mind. As memory gets stronger and stronger, that much more I dislike him, that much more anger comes. I detest and dislike him more, and so the anger gets stronger. Just like this, anger and more dislike start to rise when we only talk about the effect of the suffering he gave me. Then feeling arises, the desire to destroy him, retaliate, and harm him. I am greatly willing to make him non-existent, I think how good it will be when he is non-existent, how happy I will be.

In this way, more and more we should remember the faults of the negative mind, continually remember the faults of the negative mind of attachment, and see anger and hatred as the worst poison—as poison in the stomach that causes us great suffering, not knowing when we will die. As we would wish to take that poison out of our bodies without even leaving it for a minute longer, we should develop a similar feeling towards our negative minds. Being afraid of these minds, we should renounce them.

6. Negative impressions arise from discriminating with hatred and greed, which leaves negative impressions bringing suffering results and similar actions. Each time we do this, the mind becomes more ignorant. Habitual actions of animals, people, and so forth are done without being taught, actions such as greed, anger, theft, and sexual intercourse are done intuitively—they are habitual actions, done in past lives. They don't depend on someone teaching them. Additional negative impressions cause us to repeat these actions in this life, and will cause us to repeat them again in the future. In this way the mind is made more ignorant, and as this happens we engage in different negative actions that will cause our future suffering for eons.

7. We think that there is a need to hate the enemy because he complains or because he hates me and so forth. Although it is my perception that there is someone there, that a voice or hand is raised, this means that my understanding of evolution is incomplete. If I react to this and get angry, it means I should also get angry with the miraculous, apparitional person transformed from an object by a magician, because as the enemy is dependent on the existence of his body, and we believe deep in the heart that his body is enemy, so is the miraculous person dependent on the object (that was the base of the transformation) and on the black magician. So for the same reason, I should get angry and fight and kill this miraculous person—he is also dependent. But this would be considered silly, ignorant, knowing that it's a mere transformation. The person who understands that this is only a transformation created by another person sees no reason to react to it—anger doesn't arise as he sees that the object is not a real, true person. And when the person who does not understand that it's only a transformation realizes this, he discovers himself to be foolish.

It is the same thing in terms of someone who understands the absolute true nature of a person, of karma, and has the same feeling as that first person, thinking that getting angry is meaningless and a waste of energy. He sees the person as being completely empty of that self-existent enemy. Therefore he doesn't react and get angry, just as that other person doesn't react to the

transformation. The person seeing the absolute true nature sees it only as dependent, a creation of the magician. He sees the “enemy” as dependent, and his body as dependent.

First, we got angry with the body as it is moving. But his head is not the body, and the hand, leg, and so forth are not the body, even the whole group is not the body, so how can I harm or kill the body? If I check up I can't find the body, so how can I harm or kill it? Secondly, think about the mind. It is also dependent, as is the body. His dependent body has no control, his mind causes physical action, so his mind is enemy. Then check up mind. “Mind” is only a word, merely a name, it is also dependent—on time, on the difference of continuity in different time, on each split second. Mind is not one with the enemy and the enemy is not one with mind, as he is not one with the body. If he was one with the continuity of mind, he should always be the enemy in the past and future. If he was a friend in earlier life or in previous lives, he should be enemy and friend together, and the same in the future, when enlightened. But we can't find the enemy since we can't find the body—his body is not one with all parts of his body, so the enemy is not one with all parts of his body, so the enemy is not one with his body. Nor is he one with his mind.

“Body,” “mind,” and “enemy” are only words. Just as the miraculous person is dependent on the observer, the magician, the object transformed, and so on, this enemy is also dependent. As it is a mere name, we cannot find it as one with body and mind. “Enemy,” “body,” and “mind” are the same—just words. We fight the enemy without recognizing what it is. Actually, getting angry for many years, fighting, making arrangements to kill him—all this is done for that word “enemy.” Many difficulties arise only for the name “enemy.” The whole life and all our energy is spent only for that name or word, to try to destroy it. But there is no reason to fight and make great arrangements just because of a name. It is impossible to find anything that is not a mere creation of name. We will never find anything that is not called by a name, such a thing can never exist. So the whole life's anger and so forth are all meaningless because there is no such thing. The enemy is only called by name, the mind getting spiteful, wasting energy. It's just like the child who builds in the sand, saying, “This is my father, this is my mother,” or who plays with toys and when they break worries and cries, “My house is broken.” Why does this happen? Because of the child's belief. Even though it is not true, the belief makes it seem real. From the point of view of the older person, the child's action is silly, not worth crying over. This is similar to our own actions, but we don't recognize it.

Our negative minds of attachment and anger make the quick changes of friend and enemy due to ignorance. Things keeps on changing—stranger, friend, enemy—going from one to the other, from beginningless lives until now. They change within an hour due to a desire based on attachment and ignorance, a desire of that moment. Therefore the friend is not a true friend, a real friend, and neither is the enemy true or real. Whenever we are attached to someone who offers things or says nice things we should be conscious that he has killed us in the past and that he will again do so in the future. This causes us to not be attached, because as long as we are in samsara he will be an enemy, so there is nothing to trust. The trusting mind of attachment arises from the feeling that he will be a permanent friend, so we spend much time and energy, not looking after our own life, not checking our own mind or following disciplines, but just becoming his tail, following him and doing as he does. We waste much time in life and don't look after it, don't create positive karma and merits, and therefore don't quickly get out of samsara. This is very dangerous. For the person who practices meditation this is one of the greatest disturbances to both Dharma practice and meditation. It doesn't mean that we should completely forget that friend, make him not be an object of true love and true compassion. This is a mistake. However long the road to enlightenment may be, it has to

be followed carefully and we can't run without looking. If any being, including an animal, is no longer an object of true love and true compassion then the person who forgets that being as an object is practicing incorrectly. Also, this breaks the bodhisattva vows. If we completely renounce anyone from being an object of true love and true compassion, it's very dangerous.

Also, it is a mistake to think that Dharma practice stops samsaric enjoyments. If we have achieved mental control, we can make actions that look like samsaric actions the cause of enlightenment. For example, this can apply to having a family, being king, (protecting the population in the proper way, through positive karma; developing the country in a negative way, through negative karma, brings confusion, however), or marriage can become the cause for receiving enlightenment more quickly. Ordinary actions, even killing people, can become a quick cause of receiving enlightenment by a person who has mental control, control over the negative minds of attachment, greed, hatred, and ignorance—this person we call a “saint.”

The person living in negative mind yet behaving as if he has control, having no discrimination but acting as if he has achievement of higher tantric realizations based on bodhicitta cannot be a saint, however beautiful the clothes he wears, however beautiful he looks, however sweetly he speaks. Dharma doesn't depend on how an action looks, it depends on the mind. One action that looks negative can be done with a negative or positive mind. The action that looks positive done with positive mind is really positive, and vice versa. All depends on the creator, which is mind.

We can transcend any samsaric enjoyment, such as the enjoyment of sexual intercourse, into a shortcut to enlightenment, which is more beneficial to other living beings than living in the discipline. But for that kind of higher tantric practice we need mental control based on bodhicitta. Without the achievement of bodhicitta we cannot transcend samsaric enjoyments and cannot make them a shortcut—we cannot receive such power. Until we have complete mental control through tantric practice, control over discriminations, the dualistic view, and dualistic mind, until we receive this kind of control and bodhicitta, it is more beneficial to oneself and to other beings for one to follow mental disciplines. In such a situation, following the moral disciplines is more beneficial and is a quicker way to receive enlightenment. But when one has this control, the purpose of the disciplines has been realized—the purification of negative mind and dualistic view—as has that of other practices such as offerings, prayers, prostrations, charity, and so forth. Then other actions, which were not allowed when in training, are much more powerful, and become a strong cause to receive enlightenment more quickly, for the benefit of self and others. One can use samsaric enjoyments in a much higher way, and make the happiness of these enjoyments much richer and greater by transcending the dual mind. Such happiness is infinite happiness and nothing can compare to it, even the pleasure of samadhi meditation, which is itself far greater than sexual happiness. The happiness the yogi achieves through mental control is incomparable to that of samadhi—happiness that fills the whole body—so how can it be compared to sexual happiness? In fact, this is not real pleasure but is suffering because it is changeable suffering, so it is in the nature of pervasive suffering.

The yogi's enjoyments may outwardly look samsaric but can be developed to only bring enlightenment, and make him more beneficial to all sentient beings. Until we achieve mental control and bodhicitta we live in negative mind, which only causes disturbance to the achievement of mental control, bodhicitta, and so forth due to the creator, the negative mind that is not purified. But if there is no negative mind, no negative creator of negative actions, we only create positive karma, so

we can transcend any enjoyments, bringing infinite happiness. The creator of bad karma is destroyed and purified by following mental discipline.

If we want to make samsaric enjoyment into higher, pure, transcendental, new experiences, different from the usual happiness, if we are born with the usual samsaric enjoyments, even if we don't want to think of enlightenment or future lives, then first it is necessary to achieve mental control on the basis of bodhicitta practice, which depends on the practice of the equilibrium meditation. This can be done even by a person who doesn't wish to experience suffering but who is not concerned with enlightenment or interested in Dharma practice. We must have mental discipline, making the disturbances to enlightenment less, otherwise we never get mental control. The mind has to be purified and the creation of new disturbances has to be ceased. For example, the criminal who engaged in negative actions is punished for breaking the law and has to vow in front of the judge that he will follow the law and not do it again.

If we ride on a crazy elephant to Katmandu, we won't get there on time and we might be killed as the elephant runs through fields, forests, and over rocks and so forth. Therefore we must control the elephant and subdue it. The mind, like an elephant, should be controlled and cured from its craziness. Then we can follow the path to Katmandu as we want.

Guru Shakyamuni's quotation.

In ancient times an ascetic was begging and came to a family in which the mother and father had died. Their baby was on someone's lap and there was a dog eating bones. Due to his psychic powers the yogi saw the past lives of all these beings. The baby had been the enemy before, the dog had been the mother, and the bones it was eating were from an animal that had been the father in its previous life.

This sutra quotation is medicine to cure the problem of attachment. There is not any point in killing the enemy, or even every sentient being, as we have already done this in countless previous lives and it still hasn't prevented enemies from arising. Killing an enemy only results in our own suffering in the lower realms for eons. Creating any negative karma only makes our own enemy. The problem cannot be solved externally—when we cease being an enemy to ourselves, then all other enemies disappear.

10. The enemy is the object of meditation and so is a fundamental thing for enlightenment. Therefore there is no such thing as enemies—they always help us. They help the practices of patience, of great love, and great compassion.

II. How Guru Shakyamuni Received Enlightenment from this Enemy

(i) Without having this body we can't have any of the pleasures that are experienced by the body. The body comes from the mother's body. All sentient beings have been our mothers countless times. Our present mother gave us our present body. Also, there is not one body that the enemy has never taken, therefore the enemy has been my mother. So we can reason that all the physical bodily pleasures of past times came from that enemy. But this is still a small reason.

(ii) When the enemy wasn't our mother and was the mother of other beings we received happiness from him. Take the example of the present life. Happiness depends on many other beings besides

our mother—clothes, food, entertainment, and so forth are produced by many beings who bore great difficulties to produce them, especially farmers who worked on the land to produce food, killing great numbers of other beings such as insects and worms. (These beings were thus sacrificed for our food.) Consider the work in a handful of rice—even a rice seed is the result of a previous seed and so on—each is the result of sentient beings' sufferings. If we check back clearly and see how many beings have suffered for that wheat or that rice, we don't feel worthy of eating it. So, too, with clothes and all other comforts. This is one reason why all sentient beings are kind. As this is the case, how can I spend my life on comforts without repaying all sentient beings? It is so selfish to work for my own perfect peace. In my countless previous lives such pleasures have also depended on other sentient beings.

So the enemy, apart from being my mother, has also been working for my pleasures without beginning. And as long as we are in samsara, my future pleasures also will have to depend on him.

(iii) Every past, present, and future happiness comes from the enemy and depends on positive karma. Even the pleasure of a cool breeze depends on positive karma, depends even on the enemy who cuts my body to pieces. The positive karmas that I created are all shown as such by the teachings of the enlightened beings, to whom the enemy was also kind. All enlightened beings received enlightenment through the path, starting with lower realizations of the perfect human rebirth and then the higher realizations of the equilibrium meditation and bodhicitta. Without depending on the enemy, they couldn't have received realizations, they couldn't have practiced the six paramitas, and they couldn't have practiced the equilibrium meditation. Without the realization of the equality of all sentient beings, there is no way to receive bodhicitta. Also, without the enemy we can't develop great compassion. The enemy has to be the object of these meditations, as does every sentient being.

Therefore, this enemy gave enlightenment to Guru Shakyamuni and all the infinite Buddhas (although this doesn't mean that his actual physical presence was with the Buddha) and so gave us the chance to study Dharma and to receive enlightenment ourselves. So in fact the enemy, this enemy that cuts my body, is even more precious than the infinite Buddhas.

The root of all happiness is therefore the enemy—if we trace this back we see that it is true, so can anyone more precious than the enemy be found?

12. Enlightenment depends on the development of bodhicitta, which depends on meditating on every sentient being without exception, including the enemy. To live in the bodhisattva path, we need the strong will that is able to renounce the body and anything else to give the enemy even a little happiness. This is exactly the opposite of our usual reaction. Such understanding is the medicine that sees the enemy as the most precious, and is of extreme importance. It is achieved through meditation practice and developed continually until enlightenment. It is not enough only to know the words, it has to be done by training the mind. But meditating on this point of the enemy alone is inadequate; we must gain the other understandings too.

13. If we are being verbally abused, before or as anger arises, we should do mental research on these points so that there is no hurt. This kind of hurt is only a conception, as opposed to the physical wound inflicted by a stick. In fact it is quite wrong to use the word "hurt" for any verbal assault and even physical hurt is really a mental conception. For example, when children are beaten by their parents they don't get angry, but they do when they are beaten by other children. Masochism is

another example. Any situation in which I am experiencing hurt because of a physical or verbal action is my own karmic result, and at this point uncontrolled. I should not create any more bad karma with anger.

15. Guru Shakyamuni's teaching is to have compassion for all sentient beings—these are instructions to me from the perfect guide to enlightenment. Therefore, to have anger or hate towards any sentient being, who is the object of Guru Shakyamuni's compassion, is to oppose him. If we don't understand his compassion then these are only words. His compassion sees every being's suffering and he wants to release them from suffering right now. Therefore, to feel anything but compassion towards any person or any other sentient being is to fight against Guru Shakyamuni, to oppose his work. Even though I don't have such compassion I must not oppose his. To do so is also against all the infinite buddhas. I must help the antagonist out of suffering, help him to reach enlightenment. Any method of help must have his enlightenment in view. This doesn't mean following his orders and so on. If he has no understanding, he is ignorant. But this does mean that I must help him not create negative karma. If possible I should check his mind and find its level to know how to help him.

17. As the infinite Buddhas are servants so must be the ignorant "I."

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Realizations depend on meditation (which creates some good karma) and on the creation of the good karma to purify negativity by such means as prostrations, offering, cleaning holy places, confessing past negative actions, and praying to Guru Shakyamuni for realizations. But to receive them we must have the will to make a decision. Guru Shakyamuni said, "Meditating without recognizing your own mind is faulty. At the time of death it goes the wrong way."

Thinking that meditation is easy because the words are simple is erroneous. But finding the practice easy is good, otherwise we tend not to do it. Ancient meditators took time to reach realizations, but experienced more great difficulties. So should we.

THE SEVEN TECHNIQUES OF MAHAYANA CAUSE AND EFFECT (Page 109)

Even if we don't receive realizations, meditating and practicing the seven techniques leaves an impression on the mind and brings it closer to realization of bodhicitta. Then in future human lives when we hear the explanations again we can understand them more easily and achieve realizations more quickly. We must keep the practice of the equilibrium meditation close to the heart. Its purpose is to receive realizations and it is very worthwhile to spend several years or the whole of our life on this; this varies with the person. Understanding depends on the level of mind and is related to previous karmic impressions from practices in past lives and to the amount of merits.

1. How are all sentient beings my mother? When meditating on this point we should visualize our mother, father, enemy, and a stranger in front of us surrounded by all sentient beings. All are equal.

Remember, when a relative gives you a gift don't be attached, and when seeing an enemy don't get angry. Father has also been mother in countless previous lives, as have enemy and stranger.

(iv) It is true that Buddha sees everything that exists. As the beginning of the mind, which is the time that sentient beings began to be our mother, doesn't exist, he with omniscient mind doesn't see it. The time of my present mother being my mother has no beginning either.

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2. Remembering the Kindness of All Mother Sentient Beings

As life goes on and we experience enjoyments, we should always remember to check that this is due to the kindness of our mother. Everything we do—check the whole life and sees that this is true. Good karma is the principal cause that allows us to receive the mother's kindness. She is the cooperative cause.

(i) The bad karma created by the mother is due to the body's bad karma necessitating its rebirth. This can be responsible for many of the beings suffering in the naraks—all have been my mother. So also have all those suffering in other realms.

(ii) Getting out of samsara releases all future mothers from creating bad karma by giving us rebirth.

(iii) Therefore, it's a very selfish mind that keeps being reborn.

(iv) Even if we don't see it, the enlightened being does.

(v) Once we realise this we can see how selfish it is to work for our own everlasting happiness alone. We must help all these suffering mother sentient beings as they helped us. They remain ignorant of the truth and rely on us.

Such realizations build strong Mahayana practice. As this will is built stronger, we make charity with our bodies for the sake of sentient beings through the development of bodhicitta. The pain decreases.

Remember—as the mother did this, so was the father the mother, as was the enemy, and the stranger, and every sentient being. We should consider the difficulties of the mother as a bird, as a dog, and so on, in all sorts of lives.

The mother here refers to the continuity of the one person

3. Repaying the Kindness of All Mother Sentient Beings (Page 111)

The limited mind repays the trivial kindness of the moment without understanding that they have given countless cups of tea over countless lives. There are far greater debts that we owe to all sentient beings.

We have not yet repaid them with the true realization of Dharma.

4. Equalizing Oneself with Others (Page 113)

The essential way to practice this meditation is to regard the suffering of other beings exactly as we regard our own, and help the other as if he were “I,” with no expectations, as if I were helping myself. Live in the practice. Completely change the old motives and actions of beginningless lives. Care only for curing his suffering with sincere, generous, and un-crooked mind. This is how the bodhisattva acts, renouncing himself and suffering instead of others. We are nowhere near approximating this. We must really believe that the other’s body is our own and feel as if what happens to his body happens to our own. If we don’t do this, other things won’t come.

When we fight we do so with self-I and self-other discrimination—these things are just conceptions and we can train the mind to feel another’s body as our own. We feel our own body’s pain as a conception, so why not others? Originally our body was the father’s and mother’s but the mind learned to regard it as our own, thinking, “This is me.” Why does such a conception exist strongly and why do we take best care of it? Because this thought has been habitual for beginningless lives. We have had much training in it. We take better care of this body than of our parents’ bodies even though it was theirs. This conception originally arose from ignorance. To bring perfect peace to oneself and others the practice of exchanging oneself for others is essential. It is an essential bodhisattva practice.

Anytime we need to meditate on all sentient beings, we should just think of how many insects there are on a hill, how many tiny creatures in the ocean, how many humans, pretas, suras, asuras, and bodhisattvas there are in existence.

We should think, “Since beginningless times, of all sentient beings in the universe I have been taking most care of myself. In order to reach enlightenment I have to change this old character, which did not care for other beings’ suffering, into the complete opposite, i.e. into the other being, and so take less care of myself than of other beings. The object has changed from me to the other.”

This is regarded as a mystical practice, a high practice needing great knowledge, but with numberless benefits. It brings perfect peace and enlightenment more quickly than the earlier meditation practices. It is the best puja, and can stop hindrances to the realizations of Mahayana practices, such as realizations of the six paramitas. It is of the utmost necessity for tantric practice, this great holy thought of taking care of others more than oneself.

Why is the tantric path such a quick path to enlightenment that it can bring this state in a lifetime? This is caused by this practice of exchanging oneself for others. Due to this powerful practice there is a shortcut to enlightenment. But it depends on how strongly the mind can live in this practice—the definition of how quickly tantric practice brings enlightenment is principally in this point. It is how Milarepa and other Indian and Tibetan yogis reached enlightenment. It is the most powerful way to purify negativity.

This was the instruction given to Guru Tsong Khapa by Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom. Tsong Khapa was given many instructions, especially regarding shunyata. When he was training his mind in these practices in retreat, he created many merits, and created further merits by also doing many other purification practices, such as offering the mandala and making prostrations. He trained in absolute truth, shunyata, and so forth, and Manjushri appeared many times to give him a pure view of these realizations. Therefore Tsong Khapa’s views of these subjects are very pure and clear, and to study Tsong Khapa’s teachings on absolute truth is the best way to study, never bringing wrong realizations. Tsong Khapa was told by Manjushri that the tantric path is not quick without living in

the practice of exchanging oneself for others. For such a mind, it is unbearable that sentient beings are not enlightened and are suffering for even one second. Without this mind, enlightenment in a lifetime is impossible, even if one spends one's whole life in a cave, as many animals do, and in silence. To follow the tantric path and practice it, one must take more care of others than of oneself.

Also, any kind of heavy negative karma created, such as killing your parents and so on, can be quickly purified by this practice. Living in this practice can purify a negative action into a positive result. For example, when Guru Shakyamuni was living as a bodhisattva he took birth into the family of a leading trader-businessman who carried jewels by ship from other countries. On the ship one day there were five hundred other business people and Guru Shakyamuni saw that one of them wanted to kill all the others, and that if he did so it would be good for neither those five hundred nor for the killer himself, who would create much heavy negative karma. Therefore he thought it better that he himself suffer for one hundred thousand eons in the narak realms rather than the other person. In killing the would-be killer, he renounced his own happiness for the other's due to his great bodhicitta mind. Guru Shakyamuni killed the other person, but since it was done with great compassion, the action became positive, a method of purification. This action actually diminished the length of time he had to remain in samsara by one million eons. He spent less time in samsara rather than more even though he killed that man. The man he killed was actually saved from far worse suffering, and Guru Shakyamuni also had great compassion for the five hundred threatened people.

At another time Guru Shakyamuni was born into a family that made clay pots. He was celibate, living in precepts. One day he saw a girl about to commit suicide because of incredible great greed—she was desperate because she couldn't find a man. Due to great compassion he renounced himself, his mind based on taking care of others more than oneself, and without experiencing the pleasures of temporal life, samsaric pleasures, he spent twelve years living with the girl and family. Then he left and resumed celibacy. But due to his pure mind, guiding the girl from suicide and living without samsaric pleasure, this potentially negative action of breaking precepts became positive, and the time he would remain in samsaric life decreased from thirty thousand eons to four thousand.

Maitreya's disciple Pagpa Togme (Asanga), spent twelve years in meditation before he saw Maitreya. During this time he developed the great compassion that one day suddenly purified his obscurations and allowed him to see Maitreya. He went to Maitreya's realms for teachings, a god realm, for one human month there, which equaled fifty years of earth time.

Atisha's guru also had to develop great compassion before he saw Avalokiteshvara—one has to purify many obscuration before one can do this—and he also saw Maitreya. Atisha purified and saw Tara, the female aspect of Buddha, who appears in such form for the benefit of sentient beings. She gave Atisha many instructions, including the instructions that he was also to go to Tibet and give teachings. He did this and purified the corrupted Dharma there. Purification leads to contract with enlightened beings. The aspect of Buddha that one sees depends on the karma of the meditator—whichever aspect is the closest is the one you will see. You can then have discussions, ask questions, and receive instructions. There are infinite aspects of the buddhas.

We should ease the sufferings of others as the hand removes a thorn from the foot. The principal instruction for curing the suffering of others is to have no expectations. The highly mystic and holy teaching of taking care of others more than oneself was kept close to the heart by Atisha and other great pandits. A most purifying practice, it was secret for a long time. Shantideva received this

equalizing practice from the Buddha of Wisdom. It is the most pure way to receive bodhicitta. It stops any hindrances and dangers to life, and other dangers. It is the best medicine to cure suffering.

As Guru Shakyamuni received bodhicitta before Maitreya, he came to earth first. He had such a strong, holy mind, taking care of others more than himself, that while still a bodhisattva he prayed to be born in a bad place amongst ignorant people at an unfortunate time where there was darkness of teachings. Therefore he appeared on earth prior to Maitreya to give us the possibility of studying these teachings and purifying our negativity. Understanding the teachings of the meditation course is due to the kindness of his holy mind, taking care of others more than himself, as is finding the purpose of human life.

We should pray for the continued existence of the teachings until samsara ends, since without them there is far more unhappiness and suffering. Good karma brings happiness and we need teachings to know about this. If they don't exist we can't practice. Even the temporal happiness of a person who knows nothing of teachings, of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha is the result of the teachings because it depends on the creation of good karma in previous lives, and was done then with knowledge of the teachings. This temporal happiness doesn't come intuitively and thus all happiness depends on the teachings.

We should know what a bodhisattva is and understand how he works and how we can try to follow him, even though we won't be a bodhisattva in this life. But copying his actions, acting like a bodhisattva, is good training for the mind, helps to develop bodhicitta, and gets closer and closer to the original. It also helps others. Receiving bodhicitta is a slow process dependent on energy and effort. There are ten levels of bodhisattvas, and even a low bodhisattva without all realizations can be reborn in any place he wants by praying for it, i.e. by controlled rebirth. For example, the Tibetan generation of mankind came from a male monkey (a transformation of Avalokiteshvara) and a female cannibal (a transformation of Tara) who had children whose births were samsaric, or uncontrolled.

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Appendix I

The Eight Mahayana Precepts

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The benefits of keeping the precepts of ordination (dom pa) for a day, when taken with the will of enlightenment, bodhicitta, are infinite. Mahayana ordination includes eight precepts.

Ordination means protecting or guarding the mind from negativity (negative mind and action), and from the problems (or suffering) that arise from negative mind.

Taking ordination is the best way to purify negativity that has already been created. Generally, ordination is an action that controls or fights the eight temporal desires, which are the cause of suffering. Ordination causes them to not arise, or helps to destroy those that exist. It protects the mind from greed, hatred, and ignorance, and diminishes what is already there.

Plans and actions are required in the war against suffering. Essentially, ordination means avoiding negative actions. So it is important:

- (1) to know the benefits, or else it is harder to keep precepts, and
- (2) to know the shortcomings of the negative mind. These two understandings make one more interested, and build the courage to keep precepts.

Benefits of Ordination

(1) As the earth is the basis of this world, ordination is the basis of all the realizations of meditation, Dharma practice, and so forth.

(2) If precepts are kept correctly, it is a quick way out of ignorance, an action with immediate benefits. This means living in a discipline to avoid negative mind, so that we avoid the suffering results.

(3) It means not being born in the three lower realms.

(4) It is the best perfume—a natural smell compared to chemicals. Ordination is the best water to cool us from the heat of suffering.

(5) A great Indian pandit said, “Keeping the eight precepts for a day gives greater benefit than one hundred years of charity.” Following the precepts correctly is a serious action, it fights the negative mind. We can pretend many things, saying prayers and mantras, but they’re not action.

(6) The benefits are greater than making offerings to Buddha, who said in his sutra teachings, “Keeping precepts is of much greater benefit than making great offerings to as many buddhas as exist in the number of eons equal to the number of grains of sand in the Ganges.”

(7) Taking precepts causes one to become a disciple of Maitreya in the future. He prophesied, “Any being following the eight precepts, listening to the Dharma of Guru Shakyamuni will be reborn as one of those surrounding me.” In this situation, we get the greatest chance to hear teachings and attain enlightenment—a much better human rebirth.

The Precepts

The precepts are a discipline to make the mind conscious, as much negative karma is created unconsciously. They make the mind a spy.

(1) Not Killing

Not killing brings longer life in the future and no sickness. It also becomes the cause to receive the Buddha’s holy vajra body, which is indestructible.

(2) Not Stealing

Not stealing results in becoming rich, having enjoyments in future lives, and not having other people disturb our possessions. It also results in the appearance of one thousand spoked wheels on the hands and long webbed fingers when enlightened.

(3) Not Having Sexual Intercourse

Not having sexual intercourse, including masturbation and so forth. This results in a rebirth in the upper realms with beautiful shape and color, and perfect organs. Loss of seed causes the organs to lose power, the mind to become unclear, the senses to lose power, and the body to lose color.

(4) Not Lying

Not lying results in not being betrayed by lies in the future, and in our words being trusted by others.

These are the four root precepts. The four branches follow.

(5) No Intoxication

No intoxication results in clear wisdom and senses, and improves consciousness. This does not include tea, which can stimulate the mind.

(6) Fasting

If we are reborn in the upper realms, keeping this precept will result in our getting food enjoyments easily, without much effort. Also we will have forty very white teeth and have a powerful, transcendental, sense of taste that brings infinite happiness, even if we eat shit.

The reason for fasting is that Guru Shakyamuni's followers existed on one meal a day (to practice Dharma) and more than that is not necessary, and only develops greed. Fasting can help stop greed and decrease the negative mind.

(7) Not Sitting on High or Large Beds

The bed should be no higher than the length of the forearm plus the hand. Keeping this precept prevents us from acquiring an expensive bed, to which greed will make us attached. A high seat increases pride, depending on whether the negative mind is present or not. The benefit of keeping this precept is that in future lives we will have respect, admiration, and exultation. Also, a better bed.

(8) 1 - Avoiding Perfumes and Ornaments

The result of this is that the body smells naturally good, with a better shape in the future.

2 - Avoiding Singing, Dancing, and Playing Music

Keeping this precept makes mind well subdued, and the body also. We are kept away from creating negative actions, and we are always preaching Dharma.

When we are enlightened we attain the thirty-two and eighty physical signs and perfections of a Buddha's holy body. The Buddha's holy body is immeasurably large—so huge that we cannot see the top of the double head. The cause of this result is making prostrations to the holy abbot with the five points of contact (hands, feet, and forehead) on the floor.

Mental Disciplines

When we take Mahayana ordination (the eight precepts), there are certain foods that we cannot eat, such as meat; also radish, garlic, and onion (these block the nadis). These are called “black” foods. Also, we cannot smoke cigarettes—this destroys the ability of the physical body and affects the mind.

We should always keep in mind that we have taken the precepts for the purpose of getting ourselves and all sentient beings out of suffering. Whenever we see people, animals, and insects we should recall that we are keeping precepts.

Disciplines

1. Hinayana - no enjoyments or things for samsaric temporal happiness.
2. Mahayana - stricter; done for all sentient beings.
3. Tantricism - enjoyments used as a drug. Very strict laws for rapid enlightenment. It is based on Mahayana practice.

If one cannot practice the Hinayana, the other two are impossible.

The Eight Mahayana Precepts

Much benefit arises from keeping these precepts for a day. In ancient times in India the kings made laws that everyone had to take these precepts. By keeping them, we can become an arhat, a bodhisattva, or an enlightened being. At the very least they help us to attain a higher rebirth or a more perfect human rebirth.

Ordination means protecting ourselves from negative mind and from negative mind arising, and from creating negative actions. It is one of the main things that make us holy in the quickest way. It is like the fuel of vehicles, like the spring of a watch. Keeping this ordination is something besides the fundamental thing—it is the source that brings enlightenment, the higher realizations, the lower nirvana, and the cessation of samsara more quickly. It is the quickest way to escape from samsara and can definitely cause us to be born in an upper realm in which we will meet the Dharma again, besides helping for those future times. We think this is so far away but it can be very close—only three or seven years to reach nirvana, enlightenment, or the state of an arhat. It can be so easy because you don't have to build a rocket, machines, and so on, it is only mental work by the mind. It is up to the present mind.

Besides bringing all these realizations and bringing future lifetimes of happiness, it also brings peace. Whenever the person makes a vow from the mind, and is willing to observe it, and tries not to let the negative mind arise in order to purify negativity, it brings peace at the same time. Peace is brought to the mind at the same time that the person makes the decision to follow it. As much as we observe the precepts, there is that much peace established in the mind. The purpose of precepts is to not allow the arousal of the negative mind. We think, “I am responsible for looking after the precepts.” This also stops the creation of negative actions of body, speech, and mind, the three negative doors, and so it stops all the suffering result of each negative action that would have to be experienced in the three lower realms. It stops all those future sufferings. It is creating peace. Also

the person always experiences the happy result, like being born in the human realm and having all one wants—luck and so on. Besides stopping all future dangers, itself bringing peace, it also purifies all the negative karmas that have been created in past previous lives until now. This is the best purification, because the person's past negative karmas have no number as the mind is beginningless, and because ignorance of the understanding of karma has not yet ceased and is also beginningless. Thus negative karma is too great, and just creating a little positive karma is not enough. So keeping ordination really purifies the past negative karma.

If we keep the ordination all day then there is always purification and ceasing of the negative mind and negative actions, and past negative karma is purified. Perfect peace is received when the cause of suffering is ceased. The cessation of the samsaric cause doesn't happen straight away, it happens little by little. Thus does perfect peace come. As this purifies negative karma that has been created, then that much peace comes to the person's mind and stops negative mind, negative actions, and suffering results. Without this discipline we continually create further suffering. The mind that really makes the decision to follow the mental disciplines is the sincere mind of practicing Dharma, and this mind is not involved in any of those eight temporal desires. The motivation of that mind is pure of samsaric desire and pure of the wish for temporal comfort. It is much more pure than the usual mind that meditates because it is out of and opposite to the desire attached to the temporal comfort. This is a very powerful practice, having many benefits. This is the best way to bring peace. All the suffering of sentient beings up until now is due to not having mental control over the negative mind.

The Eight Mahayana Precepts are:

1. Not killing: human beings or others, even with the mind.
2. Not stealing: anything of value possessed by another being, or taking anything with force; also borrowing things for a long time so that maybe the owner will forget.
3. Not having sexual intercourse: the power of the physical thing going out; any action that brings an orgasm.
4. Not telling lies.
5. Not taking intoxicants; not smoking poisonous plants.
6. Not sitting on a high and rich throne without Dharma reason, or on a high rich bed.
7. Not eating after noon until the following sunrise. This is mainly to control the negative mind of greed. Also, eating at night makes the evening meditation hard. The one meal is taken to protect the life for Dharma.
8. Not putting on perfume or jewelry with greed that is attached to temporal comfort; also no singing, dancing or playing music with samsaric desire, being attached to the temporal comfort. All of these are totally to combat greed.

These precepts have to be taken when there is just a little light, from one dawn time till the next.

Avoiding samsara is your decision. Be here at five a.m. Visualize Guru Shakyamuni giving the precepts, otherwise it doesn't make sense.

A person keeping the precepts for a day becomes that much more holy. Purity comes from a cause—mental discipline. As a body in a quagmire is not clean until it is removed and properly cleaned, the person living in the action of creating negative karma, not stopping the negative mind from arising, is a negative person. The clean, pure person is one living in the mental discipline, and while doing so is pure and clean—this person doesn't have to wait a long time. This is real

cleanliness from the Dharma point of view, what is in the mind. The best way to be clean is to clean the mind first, and then the body. For beginningless lives we have not cleaned the mind but only the body countless times. If we discover more deeply, with feeling, the evolution of karma, we can really get bored with this body and not want to take it again. There is no beginning to the times that we have taken a physical body. This is like someone who has eaten the same food day after day and feels hatred. But we feel attached due to the wrong conception that all this life's experiences are new. However, due to beginningless previous lives, the experience of cleaning this body has no beginning, it has been cleaned countless times before and we are still washing it. Why has it not ended yet? Due to the fault of never having cleaned the mind. As long as we don't clean the mind through mental disciplines, the action of cleaning the body can have no end. For endless future lives, why are there so many impure things coming from this body? It is the fault of this samsaric body, the body under the control of delusion and karma.

Actually, our life consists of two things—cleaning the outside while making the inside dirty. It is our fault that we do those two things to our mind and body, to ourselves, our object. Due to this, the action of cleaning from the outside hasn't yet finished. The wise person's way of cleaning is to clean the mind, that which is the main creator. By cleaning the mind the body is cleaned; this stops the continuous arising of dirt, stops the continual action of washing, keeping busy, incurring expenses to wash the body, stops old age, sickness, pains, and many other problems that arise due to the physical body. Cleaning the mind can stop the necessity of the body and can stop the suffering of this body as well as the dirt.

From rebirth to death all actions are only to take care of the body. By cleaning the mind we clean all the external impurities that are seen in our view—those that are not one with the body, that are separate, and even those are cleaned. That's how the great yogis have the power to enjoy impure, filthy things, to taste and enjoy kaka in complete safety, in the nature of infinite transcendental happiness, only increasing their realizations and bringing them closer to the enlightenment that is the creation of their mental power. They can enjoy the higher transcendental taste in such a pure way because their mind is purified. First they cleaned their mind so that things seen in their view are purified, and the objects of the senses are enjoyed in a pure way, seen as such, giving only infinite, transcendental happiness. This is just one example. The same thing is definitely possible for us. Besides cleaning our minds, all objects become pure, everything transcended. Yogi means one who can taste everything in a pure way.

The purpose of keeping ordination, of keeping precepts, is totally to clean the mind and the suffering body, to clean even the objects of the senses and also to stop the suffering that may arise between subjects and objects. Such a mind can stop any fear, any ugly object. This is the way we create enlightenment, that is how the Enlightened Being can enjoy all offerings at the same level, whatever it is, no matter—fantastic delicious food or dirty food with a filthy smell—both are enjoyed by the Enlightened Being in the same way, in the nature of transcendental happiness, a feeling that has no limit. How does this happen? The non-dualistic feeling arises from the power of first cleaning the mind, and the best way to do this is through mental discipline and precepts. Some people read books, but don't know how that power comes, just think that it is the same taste or the same level of feeling. But this is not easy, and without cleaning the mind only causes suffering and keeps the mind dirty and impure. To try and enjoy such high results as the Enlightened Being can experience is very foolish. Trying to enjoy the senses with the unpurified mind still covered with dirt is not a wise action, it is a mistake. If we don't follow a mental discipline that cleans the mind, we can never enjoy in that way. That is like standing in the market expecting to have food given to you.

If we want to enjoy non-dualistic enjoyments, then it is best to clean the mind through mental discipline.

Following mental precepts is the best ornament. The Enlightened Being doesn't need material ornaments, which only create problems. The Enlightened Being has the greatest beauty but is completely free of material, yet we are dependent on so many materialistic ornaments. The power of the Enlightened Being's beauty comes from following the mental precepts, but the materialistic ornaments cause much worry in the mind. There is much fear of others stealing them, or the problem of never having enough. Precious ornaments can endanger the life—we can even be killed for them—but precepts can never cause risk to life. Ordination is the best water in which to keep cool and out of suffering—it is the best weapon for protection because it does cause not one tiny danger to us or to others. Material weapons, guns, and so forth can cause much danger to ourselves and to others—they can often become the cooperative cause to harm us through other's reactions, and they also give other beings ideas to create more weapons and so on. The best protection is ordination because it protects us from all samsaric suffering and from other living beings, too.

The person whose mind is living in this ordination is the richest person in the most absolute way. The person with numberless jewels not living in ordination is externally rich and internally poor, so there is always confusion and suffering in the mind, continually. Why is he like this? Because these riches can never continue. For that moment, that period, he is externally rich but not recognized as rich from the Dharma point of view. The really rich person has inner riches that continue, inner purification, and realizations. The Enlightened Being is the richest person, internally rich.

As we have taken the ordination, when we see other people and animals we should continuously think that most sentient beings are suffering. It is important to remember that we are keeping the precepts for each of them—we are working to follow the discipline not only for ourselves, but also for numberless other sentient beings. According to our mental power, that much can we feel precious, that we are doing well, and the mind can always be pleased, happy, and in peace, because we are working for all sentient beings to attain enlightenment and to release them and ourselves from suffering. This is a very worthwhile job—we can see that we are doing actions of value whereas the ordinary job is mostly concerned with taking care of only ourselves.

Shantideva said, "Even just thinking, the will to benefit just one sentient being has inexpressible benefits so why not have the motivation to benefit all sentient beings."

Which is the more dangerous, death happening or breaking precepts?

Guru Shakyamuni said, "Dying is easier than breaking precepts." Dying doesn't always cause us to be reborn in the worst suffering stage of the narak realms and experience the suffering for eons, but breaking precepts can often cause much suffering in the narak realms. Therefore, keeping precepts is more important than our life; we should take care of the precepts as we do our own life, but to do so requires much energy, which in turn requires an understanding of the suffering nature and the evolution of karma. Little understanding brings little belief or faith in these facts. If we break precepts, even the enjoyment of this life will not occur, nor will success in temporal works, and we will experience confusion with ourselves and others, as well as much sickness and troubles. It also always results in rebirth in the three lower realms, especially the narak realms.

Since we make the vow to Guru Shakyamuni, to break it is like telling a lie to Guru Shakyamuni and the infinite buddhas and bodhisattvas who we visualized at the time of precepts. Therefore we have to be so careful of breaking precepts, beware of it as we fear touching a fire. Then we can gain great control of mind, receive realizations, and our future lives will be in a better condition for the perfect human rebirth.

An example of the result of breaking precepts is the naga, Ela Dama Shing, who was the King of the nagas. He was born a naga because he didn't correctly follow the teachings of the Enlightened One. When Guru Shakyamuni was teaching, the naga came in another form, a transformation, disguised as a very rich person having much material power, many jewels, and many possessions. Guru Shakyamuni immediately recognized him, saying, "You criticized the teachings of the past buddha called the Buddha of Infinite Light, the protector of life—would you again criticize my teachings? Take your natural form and listen to the Dharma." So the next day the naga came in the form of his own body, a snake, with a tree one *pak tse* in length growing from his head. When the wind blew the tree moved and so did the roots which were attached to his brain, causing so much suffering. His neck was in front of Guru Shakyamuni but his tail was down in the village a long way away—he was a very long snake.

The followers who were all taking the teachings were afraid of the snake and began to try to escape, but Guru Shakyamuni said, "Don't be afraid, the one who was here yesterday in the form of a rich man is this snake." Then he explained to them how this had happened. The naga had been a full monk in the time of the previous Buddha's teaching. One day he was going around this tree called Eladama when he was bumped by the branch of the tree, suddenly became very angry, his mind not peaceful, and broke off the branch. Since the tree belonged to the Sangha he had broken this precept, and this karma caused him to be born as a naga in the form of a snake. The tree he got angry with then grew from his head, causing him much suffering. This was his own karma as a result of getting angry and breaking the precepts. There are so many stories told by Guru Shakyamuni that explain karmas and their results. Often you can see many types of animals, strange shapes, and so forth—this is all due to karma.

The Benefits of Each Precept

1. Not killing any other sentient beings, especially with the desire of the three negative minds. Usually there are four things involved in each action: (i) object; (ii) thought or motivation—to kill; (iii) action; (iv) goal (death of the other before one's own).

The benefits of keeping this precept are that it makes our life longer in future lifetimes when born as a human being. We will not have diseases and we will look very strong. If we break this precept we will have a short life. For example, we may die in the womb and have many diseases.

2. Not stealing. (i) Object possessed by others; recognition of object to be stolen; (ii) motivation—wanting to take without permission; (iii) action, all kinds including force; (iv) goal—the mind thinking, "now I have received it."

The benefits of keeping this precept are that it brings future enjoyments in other lives and no disturbance from other beings stealing our possessions. If we break this precept, even in this life our own things get stolen.

3. Not having sexual intercourse. (i) object; (ii) motivation—wanting to take action, mind in the three negative thoughts; (iii) action; (iv) goal—pleasure achieved, sexual happiness, orgasm. The worst things are sexual intercourse in a holy place, where there are gurus or holy objects, intercourse with a female arhat, a celibate person, or the mother, or oral and anal intercourse. This precept includes anything that causes loss of sperm. Nocturnal emission in dreams and so forth is not exactly the same as if it is done consciously, but we still create negative karma. To do it consciously creates much more bad karma than dream time.

The benefits of keeping it are that in many future lifetimes the shape of the person's body will always be beautiful with fine complexion and body color. It's always like this—the person reborn with good physical features has created the cause, the karma, before—following morality and patience.

Generally, the action that is the opposite of the precept brings the opposite negative result, takes us further from enlightenment, and keeps us longer in samsara. Even if the person is near to realizations, if he breaks the precepts he tends to lose knowledge and continuously suffers, mostly in the three lower realms. This is the basic total result of breaking any of the precepts.

It's the same thing for sexual intercourse, loss of seed—this takes us further from enlightenment and makes us always attached to temporal happiness. On this basis even if the person is born in the three upper realms the person is continuously attached to the action and the temporal happiness of it. This mental habit always continues to get stronger in future lifetimes and is difficult to control, and even though one receives a human body it has ugly colors and imperfect organs. Also in the present lifetime, for the person who wants to meditate, this can be the greatest disturbance. We may think that doing the action a great deal will stop it, but this is wrong, a big mistake. This action is extremely old.

Actually there is not one sentient being that we have not had sexual intercourse with. This action is not new—we have done this action with each of the present people countless times—friends, insects, and so forth. It is something with no beginning, a very old thing, something we have to get bored and tired of—but we forget all this, we don't see the true evolution of karma. Also the gods of the senses have their own way of having sexual intercourse—it is not the usual action, it is just by looking at each other that they can enjoy it, or just touching. For all sentient beings, as humans we did it, and we have done it in every form, countless times. None of this experience is new. It is because of the habit, ignorance, and attachment to this action that it has not stopped, and it is endless if an effort is not made to stop it.

This is one of the greatest disturbances to meditation—it doesn't keep the mind relaxed and as a result of the attachment to temporal happiness, the mind is taken out of meditation. Due to this, we are always attached to other people and much distracted. Memories always come into the mind; and also it causes us to have unclear visualizations so that when we meditate we don't see the object clearly, and may not remember it even if it's a usual object. Besides this, it is one of the greatest disturbances and barriers to opening the chakras and to gaining control over the winds—it causes us lose the pure ability or power of the body and therefore the mind. Being situated in the body, the mind is therefore dependent on it. This is like pouring water into cloth that can't retain it. From the Mahayana tantric yoga practice point of view sexual intercourse is the worst disturbance.

4. Not telling lies. Keeping this precept results in not being betrayed by others' lies in future human lifetimes. All other people will respect and believe our words—for example some peoples' words are so powerful that we can believe them. And also, telling lies and gossip mongering with a negative mind causes us to lose the pure power of speech. If we don't lie, then due to our pure and straight speech, our prayers are more powerful and can bring success to ourselves and others. This precept applies to our own lies and to getting another person to lie, or it can be a physical action, or avoiding answering a question and thereby lying by implication, such as if someone asks, "Are you out of samsara?" and we do not reply, as if we are. Another person has to hear the speech or see the action to complete the lie. The worst is to lie to holy beings or to our parents.

Taking ordination to help all sentient beings is important work, yet we feel that other jobs like being a government minister or working in a business and so forth are more important than taking precepts, because for work like that we get money. Therefore we think that it is important. But generally these jobs are not done to take care of all sentient beings, to lead them from ignorance. Such people as kings, ministers, and so forth are supposed to take care of the population of a country, but if we check up their motivation, generally they wouldn't even have the motivation to take care of their people. Usually they get elected, it's a job, they have to do it—to take care of the population with great compassion is extremely difficult; most of the time it's done for reputation, so they can go higher, only to gain the temporal life's comfort. These people think, "This is my responsibility, if I don't do it I will get a bad name and maybe lose my position." So much worry and so many problems. "If I have a good reputation maybe I will go higher and become President." Generally it is like this. The goal of those jobs is limited, so taking ordination with the right motivation is the highest and most beneficial job, and it's also the most dangerous. The mind that makes a complete decision to do this job is without attachment to temporal comfort. Taking this responsibility especially with the strong motivation to enlighten all sentient beings, when compared with other responsibility, is the greatest. The reason it becomes dangerous is because it becomes telling a lie to those numberless sentient beings if we do not follow through.

Taking precepts, we also becomes like a helper for the enlightened beings, not just taking care of a family which is only involved in our own comfort and is so limited. As the motivation is limited, the mind is limited. The benefits of an action depend on the motivation. In an ordinary job, only our temporal needs are fulfilled—maybe our reputation, and material things which may be useful until death—nothing to do with other future lives, enlightenment, or getting out of samsara.

But I'm not complaining, this is only giving general information on how it is, comparing actions and motivations in jobs that are not Dharma. As the person is not involved in getting out of negative mind then that person only cycles around, and his body and actions only create bad karma, never ending.

But taking ordination, besides being the basis for receiving material needs, also brings perfect peace, cessation from suffering, and enlightenment. Many people think, "This is an empty job." If we have no understanding or wisdom, then even practicing Dharma becomes suffering for us. It is not created by other people, it is only created in our mind. So this job is the most important job on this earth—taking ordination with this motivation we are much purer than the person not taking precepts and we are that much more important. It is something to do with your own choice.

The Benefits of Each Precepts (continued)

5. Not taking intoxicants. If we do not abstain from taking intoxicants, unless we have a Dharma reason, the mind becomes unconscious, not remembering, not having perfect wisdom. In the future lifetimes we easily forget things due to this cause.

There are different kinds of intoxicants—for instance why stop smoking tobacco? There is much talk about the cause of tobacco. This plant started one hundred years after Guru Shakyamuni passed away. The evil female spirit dropped her monthly period on the ground and then that became a plant—this is just a little description, sometimes it may be useful. The female prayed as it became a plant, “May this be enjoyed by all people in the future and may the smoke going up destroy hundreds of the cities of the gods, and may it destroy hundreds of the cities of the nagas by going down under the earth. May there always be fighting and sicknesses, famines and hells in the world.” It spread all over the country due to her prayer.

Also Padmasambhava, invited by the King of Tibet to subdue the negative minds of the evil interferers and make them protectors of the people, made a prophecy when he was subduing the spirits. He put them all under his control, but one escaped. The rest were under his orders and he gave the order not to disturb other beings, saying, “If you don’t listen to the vow then more terrible things will happen due to the power of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.” So they had to obey the vow they made. But the one who had escaped, the last one, said, “Brothers, don’t worry—I shall transform—I shall transform the tobacco in China and other tobaccos into a cigarette.” That poisonous plant’s name was *hala nak po*.

There are all kinds of poisons that cause a person have hallucinations, but tobacco is recognized as the worst one. Also this evil spirit said that it would grow all over Tibet and that most people would enjoy it, and that due to that condition the five negative minds would arise, and due to that they would practice the ten immoralities. As the smoke was going down to the earth it would destroy so many cities of the nagas, and so the rains wouldn’t come and there would be famine and sickness, and by this smoke going into the sky it would destroy many cities of the gods, there would be inauspicious stars coming, like comets that make very inauspicious times of fighting and disaster.

Anyone who smokes loses his pure vitality—the ability of the nadis causes the pure power of the body to be lost, the chakras remain closed. It also causes the four hundred and twenty four sicknesses to arise. Smoking without purification or practicing Dharma causes one to be born in the three lower realms. Even those meditators who try to practice Dharma for one hundred eons don’t reach enlightenment. Also, when the body has died and passes into the bardo it cannot be guided. Also, it is very easy for the person who smokes to get sick because it is easy for other spirits to give interference; they find an easier place. Generally it is very difficult for the virtuous actions of the person who smokes to create benefit.

Also wine and alcohol—in Tibet they have a powder like yeast they use to make beer. This creates many problems that maybe we have experienced.

6. Not sitting on high and rich thrones, and high and rich beds such as those made of jewels and so forth, or on a bed with animal skins such as tiger skin, because the skins have a bad vibration due to the animal’s mind—proud, angry, and so on.

The result of keeping this precept is that it causes us to be admired in the next life and to have material comforts, but it is kept mainly for the purpose of enlightenment.

7. Fasting. The foods we shouldn't have are onion, garlic, eggs, and meat—these are recognized as black foods. Also, radish has a bad element, a bad power. Taking these foods affects the pure power of the mind. If we are only concerned for the body, it is okay, but for a person practicing Dharma and following precepts the reason is keeping the body clean but not with attachment. These foods destroy the power of the body and the power of the mind, making one sleepy, unconscious, and so on. People who don't take this observance won't notice this, but for those who eat purely it is easy to notice a difference in the body that becomes concrete in feeling. Egg easily arouses the negative mind, it is the seed of the chicken so it produces vibrations, and attachment arises.

White foods include curd, fruit, vegetables, wheat, rice, milk, cheese, and butter.

If you eat much radish then the smell of the body becomes worse—the element is bad and causes gas in the stomach and also affects the pure power of the body.

Food can be taken before twelve noon but is not to be taken twice in a day—it has to be only one meal, taken for the purpose of taking care of life to practice Dharma. This precept is mainly for the purpose of not letting attachment arise and not creating negative karma through attachment. Also, it purifies the negative karmas. It is also very useful for meditation. But if you are really sick, not artificially sick, with exterior sickness, then you can't practice Dharma, taking precepts and getting sick afterwards. First recover.

Also, following precepts depends on your realization because taking precepts can end. Taking food in the evening may be more beneficial depending on your inner realization, the control of the mind, such as having the achievement of bodhicitta and fully renounced mind. But at the moment, as long as we don't have these realizations, it is better to take precepts, it is not always definite. If you follow your desire to eat food it disturbs the meditation practice—there is no discipline. Also, if the stomach is full it is difficult to digest the meditation because of the food.

Benefits: in the next life we shall have good crops without depending on much effort.

8. Not using perfumes and ornaments, jewels, that which is unusual—this cannot be done with attachment otherwise it increases the attachment.

The benefits of keeping this precept are an intuitive sweet smell on the body that is received with the body and helps the minds of other people. Also the person may be born with a body of beautiful shape and have many good physical qualities.

Not singing and dancing and so forth. The benefits of keeping this precept are that in other lives the person's mind and body will be very controlled and subdued. Also, the person can intuitively talk about Dharma.

Even if a person cannot make high practice or receive high realizations during his life he can easily keep eight precepts for a day—they are very little compared to the thirty-six or two hundred and fifty-three of the monk. If we keep them without a break either continuously or alternately, it is so helpful to protect us from suffering at the time of death or from rebirth in the three lower realms. This is due to the power of the precepts.

As earth is the foundation for the many people, other beings, houses, trees, and so on that are situated on it, so the precepts are fundamental to all knowledge and happiness, the foundation of practice. Precepts have the power to close the door of rebirth in the three lower realms and can bring an upper rebirth for those born in samsara. They can cause us to meet the Dharma leader again in the future life so we can receive teachings and realizations. Keeping precepts creates much more benefits than creating charity and also more than making the usual offerings. Following precepts is the best offering to the enlightened beings. Also, when we take precepts, an arrangement is thereby made to be reborn as a follower of Maitreya, the future Buddha. When this eon has ended he will appear and found the Dharma in the next eon. He will do the same thing as Guru Shakyamuni, the twelve deeds: descend from Tushita, be born as a prince, marry, renounce his life, receive enlightenment at Bodhgaya and so on as did Guru Shakyamuni, giving sermons and so forth. This has been prophesied by Maitreya, “Anyone who follows the eight precepts at the time of Guru Shakyamuni will also follow me in the future.”

How does taking precepts close the doors to rebirth in the three lower realms and bring rebirth in the upper three? In a previous time in the world there was a Buddha called Kum Rinpoche Gingwa who traveled widely in Dharma circles and had many people as his followers. As a result of following these eight precepts they many had upper realm rebirths, some were reborn asuras, some became lower arhats, some bodhisattvas, and some received enlightenment.

Another Buddha, Sangye Sheshi, eons ago, also led so many other sentient beings in the eight precepts and they also achieved the same goals—the lowest ones were born in the three upper realms. After some time, when the teachings were close to degeneration, there was a Dharma King who promoted the benefits of keeping the precepts but there was no actual prayer. He invited many Sangha and brahmins and asked them to try and find the text that contained that subject recorded by Buddha. He told them if they could not find it he would punish them. They were afraid but could not find or remember the text. However, there was an old lady who recalled that when she was a young girl her father used to take the eight precepts and that he had put the text in a crack in an old pillar in their house. They searched the house and found it, read the text, read the benefits, and brought and offered it to the King. He was very pleased and gave them all, including the old lady, many gifts. Then he made a law that the whole population should follow the precepts on certain days of the month—the full moon day, the eighth, and the fifteenth days. Due to the power of all those people keeping the precepts, even the gods were pleased because more people would go to their realm with better rebirths. Also in that country there were benefits—rain came at the right seasons, fighting and epidemics ceased, crops grew well, and there were no famines. Those people also had the door to the three lower realms closed.

Keeping precepts now is different than in ancient times. Those times were fortunate but the times now are degenerate. We are experiencing the degeneration of living beings’ fortunes (the positive mind degenerating), of positive actions, of the teachings—there are many degenerations. Keeping precepts in such poor times as these, with so many problems, with people unhappy, fighting, much famine, fewer and fewer people creating positive karma, fewer people having realizations—keeping precepts now has so many benefits, more than before, even for a day. Then, it was easier to follow precepts but now it is getting more and more difficult.

How does keeping precepts create more benefits than making offerings to the Enlightened One? The benefit of keeping precepts at these times is greater than that which arises from making

offerings to the number of enlightened beings equal to the grains of sand in the River Ganges. Also, each of these precepts brings the result of the holy signs of his body, and his great knowledge.

Lecture by Lama Yeshe During Fourth Meditation Course

There are some people here who want to take Upasika ordination. Taking ordination is beneficial for oneself and for sentient beings. The lamas' experience is that before taking and giving there should be some understanding. It is not just a custom of samsara.

We all want perfect peace, happiness and liberation, and everlasting satisfaction. So we should act in that direction since we look that way. Otherwise we become hypocritical, saying we want, we want, but acting completely the opposite to our desire. A simple example—in the West if people have psychological problems they are put into mental hospitals, which is radical treatment instead of soft, peaceful treatment. This is wrathful treatment, putting someone in jail, not soft or peaceful. Lama's rule is that mental hospitals are okay, but be peaceful, understanding—slowly, slowly the person should understand himself, not by force.

By putting ourselves in ordination we can slowly develop the mind. We are not ready for immediate development, being forced to meditate and so on. We create peaceful conditions so that the mind develops in a certain way, becomes stable, not up and down. From there it can be liberated without coming down to the samsaric world.

So ordination is method. Lord Buddha never said to take that rule without knowing how. He said if you keep this kind of precept it gives this kind of mental feeling, safe from certain problems. For example the five precepts—not killing, meaning taking other's life, not lying, not stealing, not becoming intoxicated, and not engaging in sexual misconduct. Lord Buddha never said, "Don't do these five things," but what kind of mind, what kind of confused mental attitude is killing, selfish motivation, wishing to change others' wills and acting so?

Before taking the five precepts the mind is dissatisfied with others' actions, the mind is berserk. Lord Buddha said this confused mental attitude brings conflict in action. If you are controlled in actions such as killing, lying, and so forth, they never bring conflict in mind, the reaction. He never said, "You stop that forever," just that it is useful for your mind. When we reach enlightenment there is no need for ordination rules. For example, small children are told not to touch electricity, and mother makes the rule, but older children don't need the rule, they already know. It's the same thing for the higher consciousness, liberated, stable consciousness—it doesn't need that rule, it is already free from that condition. If there is an uncontrolled, deluded motivation, do not do such an action. That is all Lord Buddha said.

One experience of how ordination is helpful—it is not just lama's giving, it is us taking it ourselves. If we have great determination and understanding of samsaric mind and the wrong conceptual mind's reaction, and when taking the ordination we have great psychic mental determination, not just saying ignorantly "I want this," but having perfect determination through understanding, then that mental power can lead one for a long time in that direction. Samsara is power of mind and the result of liberation is also the power of mind—the whole thing is mental attitude; the whole thing is really simple.

Lord Buddha also said, “What do we need to be qualified to take ordination? Renunciation of samsara.” This is nothing outside, such as robes etc. We all have a different idea of renunciation. Lama means on the mental level, not giving on the physical levels with mental attachment, thinking, “I wish I hadn’t given,” and giving the object with the mind still in it. This mental reaction only gives trouble. We can renounce lunch today but still eat it—it’s only mental attitude. This is difficult but possible, it varies between people—some have very high consciousness, control over negativity and problems, and at the same time act in unity with phenomena, but some when they touch electricity they get burnt. Similarly, some experience suffering when they contact the negative mind—we can call it karma, mental reaction; karmic result of action, causation, mental attitude, or movement of the mind. How to build consciousness? If we always put the mind in unconscious situations, we cannot build higher consciousness. We should make it possible by putting the mind into a peaceful atmosphere. Then we realise, “I thought I am something like that, but when I put my mind into such a situation how my mind tricks me.”

Ordination is just like a test. For example, maybe someone has no idea, thinking, “I am perfect, pure, and don’t tell lies.” Since we are put into a situation when we are always aware, we realise that there is much negative mind involved in what we are doing—trying to change others’ mental attitude is telling lies. Although we don’t say the words, “I am always right,” the mental attitude is so. Until we can trust ourselves there is no truth at all. For example, we can have one experience in meditation, a flash, but that doesn’t mean the truth is found.

Also, taking ordination is basic, fundamental to samadhi meditation, because when we take ordination, the body, speech, and mind are already in a positive, relaxed atmosphere. Through this basic atmosphere we can develop the mind into the peaceful path of liberation. Otherwise, if someone is making us agitated all the time, it is an impossible situation, we are not ready for such control. Therefore we cut the situation, and make our own atmosphere as we want.

This is not pushing that people should take ordination, and it is nothing to do with Buddhist attitude, they don’t care. But those who want to should understand. If you don’t want to, then better not take it. But no action—ordination is part of everlasting peaceful liberation, nothing outside.

Look at some people—some have problems with others all the time. Check those suffering people—they cannot wake up to the fact that there is the possibility of a free life, the depression is too strong. It is the same thing with the confused mental attitude; it stops the mind from opening up. When the atmosphere is calm and relaxed we can open the mind. That doesn’t mean cutting it open, it means understanding wisdom so we can see things better. It’s the same thing taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Buddha (Sanskrit) means complete understanding wisdom, not narrow like ours. It means he who can see all things with all-embracing, understanding wisdom, the being who knows all phenomena. “Being” means nothing on the physical level, this is only our concept from the realm in which we were born. Consciousness is being. Why take refuge in Buddha? He can liberate by giving us his knowledge. Why Dharma? We take refuge in his absolute knowledge and wisdom, and this can guide us to discovering it in our own consciousness, and becoming enlightened beings. Dharma is not just a book; the real Dharma is the understanding and the knowledge of the absolute nature of mind. That knowledge, which every living being has, can be used for liberation, it is insurance for reaching liberation. How? That knowledge, understanding the nature of one’s own mind, is insurance for liberation. Why Sangha? One who has the understanding of his own mind never has an ignorant

attitude, confused. He only gives a peaceful atmosphere, good vibration, perfect. By seeing this we can develop our own mind. If a close friend is always smoking a chillum and for a month I don't take it, after some time he may not take it either. In the mind we may have a Western attitude, such as the way we see war and so forth in the mind. So if we visualize it, we wish to change it to the opposite. But even then the West comes into the mind—this is not necessarily negative, but it is just a way of transforming our way of looking; then we see the West in a different way. So we take Refuge in Sangha.

How does the Enlightened Being help all sentient beings compared to the ignorant person? If we are together and if I understand his mentality while I am in contact with him, I act with his wishes. If I don't understand, it brings conflict. It is the same thing—if one who is enlightened has absolute wisdom understanding the psychic nature, there is no problem at all, that being can give the solution to any psychological problem—if one understands. If one doesn't, then there is no solution. If I'm sick and one doctor completely understands the disease, he gives me the correct medicine. If another doctor doesn't understand the elements of my disease he can't give me the right medicine. One doctor may have much medicine but doesn't understand, and then the medicine is useless. Compare this to the doctor who does understand. It is the same thing—the Enlightened Being, who has absolute wisdom and the understanding of all the psychic functions of all living beings, can give the solution according to individual psychic problems, and gives better help than one who knows only how to cure fevers. This person cannot cure all problems.

Bodhisattva Ordination

What we give is when we really actualize bodhicitta in the mind and realise that the selfish ego is the root of samsaric problems, and are willing to change attachment to the “I” by understanding that all sentient beings are the same—they do not desire suffering and they do want happiness. One who really has this understanding gets the bodhisattva ordination. It is not certain if one who is not really actualizing or understanding how bodhicitta is useful and powerful to the mind gets the bodhisattva ordination.

For example, the bodhisattva's power is to press ourselves unbiased on education, nationality, personality, and so forth. First Lord Buddha says the power of bodhicitta stops that. For example, we say, “My friend comes to see me,” “What are you doing?” and “I am this—” I, I, I, I. Automatically I mentally put some people down—this is so good, this no good—even a flower is good, and even if we don't say it this implies that another flower is bad. One who takes bodhicitta should not praise oneself or put down other living beings—is this easy to do or not? Honestly check your own life spent with friends and so on.

This also means that we cannot praise ourselves. Lord Buddha wants us free and happy, but if I think “I am best, I am good,” obsessed with my own goodness, that itself is a problem in the mind, makes it go down, unfree. Its nature is samsara, uncontrolled, conflicted mind. But not emotional sitting relaxed with no physical problem—but check mind, it has problems.

That's why Lord Buddha says we are dangerous. You cannot put down any religion, can't think, “I take the bodhisattva ordination, I have the highest mind, all sentient beings need me,” and so forth—“I do things perfectly but other religions are no good.” The bodhisattva mind cannot complain about any other doctrine, nor can one say, “My country is nothing, no good,” and put it down thinking only Lama's teaching is right. Old people think okay, but young people want to go

“bang.” Check Lord Buddha’s rule; he never says, “Only I am right, others are wrong.” If you think that way then you have dual mind, conflict. It’s difficult to think, “I do meditation and only that’s right,” and “Other religions use sacrifice therefore they’re no good,” and so forth. One who takes ordination cannot say (or think) that.

Also Lord Buddha says that the bodhisattva can’t show perfect samadhi, can’t stay in it, enjoying it, but must help all sentient beings. Samadhi meditation is bliss greater than all physical enjoyments, but Lord Buddha knows it’s dangerous. A bodhisattva can’t run around telling all about it. However, we can’t doubt it since we don’t have the experience. One who becomes a bodhisattva cannot enjoy bliss all the time, the power of samadhi, staying there.

Questions

1. Bodhisattva ordination?

Having the understanding and knowledge of our own attachment, the selfish ego, as the root of all problems, and acting like this for countless lives. Now we are willing to change that object of that attachment from “I” to living beings—that this is the perfect solution to this mental disease. From now until enlightenment I’ll never act with such a selfish attitude—I give my body, speech, and mind for all sentient beings.

2. How does my enlightenment help other sentient beings’ enlightenment if it depends on my own efforts?

If I have control of mind and experience, through this control and experience I can give this to others. When we understand other’s psychological problems we can reach beyond, so we have the method to stop them.

Western psychologists, when they treat patients, don’t try to get them to understand their own problems—they try to get them to forget them or sublimate. Lord Buddha says one’s own understanding is part of one’s own liberation. Scientific experiments are external, but Lord Buddha’s method is internal, having to do with how the mind gives information. Does the mind control me or do I control the mind? When Lama shows the way to meditate then can check our own wisdom.

3. Learning charity?

Practice giving from one hand to the other.

4. Sense perception?

Sense perception deceives us, our own mind gives an interpretation. It is not best to say that all the world is an illusion—it is better to check one’s own mental conception to see if the reality is the same as our concept of it’s reality. Some can see the absolute reality.

5. “Inner Voice”?

Listen to it with awareness.

6. Pride is destroyed by prostrations, less ego?

When prostrating first check up the action of the uncontrolled mind—what actions are done in an impure way. When we realise the experiences of actions done in impure way, we think, if I don't purify this mind, there will definitely come a reaction giving complicated mind, as well as another such action—such a circle, samsara. Now I have the chance to purify so I must. But not only me—all mother sentient beings are not purified, in the circle of samsara. This will raise great compassion. Visualize parents, enemies, all sentient beings all around you. Then prostrate with body, speech, and mind—go down, say the mantra, visualize. This puts much energy into the nervous system, so it becomes very powerful. Mind, speech, and body energy has the greatest power together, compared to saying “mind has power.” This is like learning a language by writing as well as reading. It is the same for learning Dharma—the greatest impression comes from the three doors. Always stay aware of vibrations. For example, before the sun comes we see light, the vibration of the sun, and similarly before negative mind comes there are signs coming, something unclear comes—we should be aware of this.

7. How to be sure that we have the correct method to purify the self-I conception?

By the experience of first purifying small wrong conception attitudes, we can increase purification. Through meditation we see things better—calm, relaxed, and better. Then think, “I can do better than that,” and so build up slowly.